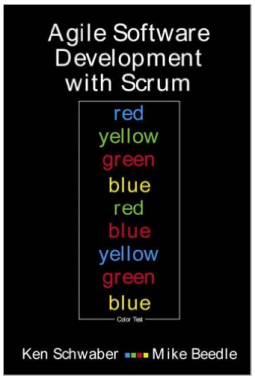
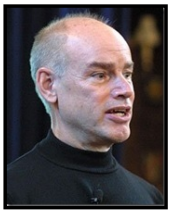
302

Scrum

@rchatley #doc302

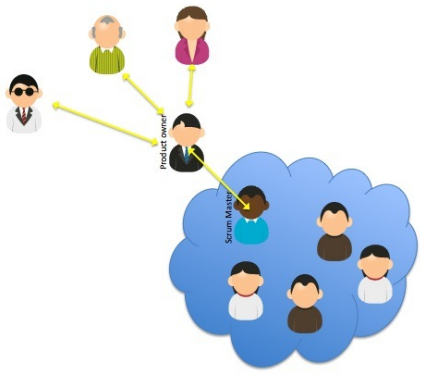
Here we give a brief introduction to Scrum. Scrum is an agile method which is used by many agile teams in industry. It defines a set of roles for different people taking part in the project, and processes that they should follow in order to plan and deliver on a regular schedule.





Scrum is described in this book (and later editions) by Ken Schwaber (pictured). The name Scrum comes from rugby. It is supposed to describe a team activity where everyone is involved all of the time, doing whatever they can to help delivery the project, instead of working in separate phases. Sometimes people wrongly write the word Scrum as if it is an acronym (SCRUM) - it isn't. Don't do that.

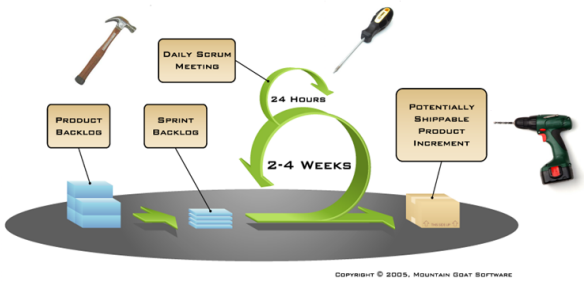
Scrum Roles



Scrum defines three different roles. The Scrum Master is in charge of making sure that the process is followed. They are supposed to be the expert on (master of) the Scrum process. They are not the team manager telling people what to do. Agile teams are supposed to be self-organising, not managed top down.

The Product Owner is in charge of making decisions about the product, what features to build, in what order. In some teams this is someone from the customer, or the business. In other teams these people aren't available, so someone from the team takes on the role as a customer proxy, so at least there is one person who can perform this liaison role between the developers and the stakeholders.

Everyone else is a Team Member. Their job is to develop, test and deploy software. Sometimes one person can take on two roles.



https://www.mountaingoatsoftware.com/agile/scrum

Here is an outline of the overall Scrum process. A list of all the requirements - in the form of user stories - is maintained in the Product Backlog. The team works on developing features in timeboxes that Scrum calls "sprints". Teams can pick their own sprint lengths, but typical lengths are 1 week, 2 weeks or 4 weeks. At the end of the sprint a new version is released. Inside the sprint is a shorter cycle. Every day the team meets for a "daily scrum" meeting. This is a short standup meeting where we check what has happened since the last daily scrum. Sometimes the Scrum Master asks everyone three questions "what have you done since we last met? what are you going to do next? do you have anything blocking you?".

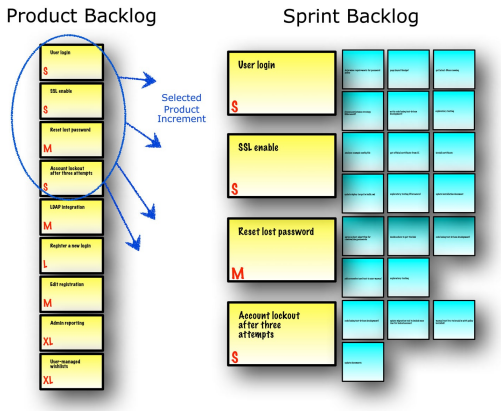


diagram from http://scrumreferencecard.com/scrum-reference-card/

During Sprint planning, the goal of the team, in a meeting with the product owner, facilitated by the scrum master, is to come up with a commitment for what they will deliver in the next sprint.

They pick stories from the product backlog, normally based around a common theme (e.g. in the picture here, user authentication). They break down the stories into technical tasks. They estimate the stories to work out what they can commit to, based on their current velocity, and clarify the requirements with the product owner as to what is actually needed for each story.

Once enough work has been discussed to fill the next sprint, the Sprint Backlog is complete, and the planning session can end. At the end of the sprint, the team review what has been completed and demo it to the product owner (and ideally other stakeholders).

No Technical Practices

Scrum does not define any technical practices - as it is purely a project management method, rather than a software development method, even though it is often used by software teams. This can often lead to teams "doing Scrum", yet delivering (or worse, not delivering) software that is not of good quality.