

Professional Scrum Foundations

Introduction

On one of my posts on LinkedIn someone ([Bart Van Brabant](#)) reacted that "Professional might be replaced by disciplined and dedicated". And he is right; it could be. Yet "Professional" in Professional Scrum is way more. And this was the trigger to write a series of small thought provoking paragraphs about it. About what it means to use Scrum in a professional way.

You can "do" Scrum by doing the Scrum Events, having the Scrum Roles in place, and using the Scrum Artefacts. Pretty fast though it will feel mechanical. Scrum Team members and stakeholders will quickly start feeling bored and questioning the use of these - what people call - "ceremonies".

Professional Scrum though is not about "doing" Scrum. Everything we do while aiming for Professional Scrum has something to do with at least one of the following, probably a few, or hopefully all of these concepts:

- **Empiricism**: knowledge comes from experience, and we make decisions based on what is known. Empiricism has three pillars, and Scrum is built on these: transparency, inspection and adaptation.
- **Scrum Values**: when the Scrum Team lives the values of commitment, courage, focus, openness and respect, then empiricism starts to work and trust is being built.
- the Scrum Team becomes more and more **self-organising and cross-functional**. They build up all skills needed to deliver working product increments and can decide how the work can be done most effectively.
- during each Sprint, a **Done** Increment of working product is created that can be released if it provides enough value to the market, the users, the stakeholders.

These are also the core concepts I cover in the Professional Scrum courses. Interested in more? As this is and will stay work-in-process, follow me on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/stevendeneir/>) for the latest blog posts in this series, or enroll in one of my upcoming courses (latest agenda available on www.co-learning.eu/academy and <https://www.scrum.org/steven-deneir>).

I hope you find value in these short articles and if you are looking for more clarifications, feel free to take contact.

Wishing you an inspiring read and a wonderful journey.
Scrum on.

Steven

Professional Scrum core concepts linked to the Scrum elements

Empirical Process Control - Transparency

Scrum is founded on empirical process control, and transparency is one of the three pillars.

During each of the Scrum Events, and throughout the Sprint itself, the Scrum Team and the stakeholders need transparency so there is a common understanding.

Transparency as such is way more than bringing “visibility”. It is about reaching “a common understanding”.

I do repeat the above few lines each time: learning = repeating.

1. Transparency / Sprint Planning

Let's take Sprint Planning to start with.

Common understanding about what?

About the goal for this Sprint. About the Product Backlog Items that will help the team achieve that goal. About a forecast of what is possible to realise. What will we as a team target to develop for our users?

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the entire Scrum Team: the Product Owner, the Development Team members, and the Scrum Master.

Summary: At the end of your Sprint Planning, does your Scrum Team have a common understanding about the Sprint Goal?

2. Transparency / Daily Scrum

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Let's take the Daily Scrum.

Common understanding about what?

About the progress towards the Sprint Goal. Where are we now? What is the next best thing we better take up today to bring us closer to our goal?

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the Development Team. These are the people who develop. They need to have that common understanding and agreement how to move forward.

Summary: At the end of your Daily Scrum, does your Development Team have a common understanding about their progress towards the Sprint Goal?

3. Transparency / Sprint Review

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Let’s take the Sprint Review.

Common understanding about what?

About the Increment. What is the status right now? What capabilities, features, etc does it have? What outcomes do we expect of it as it stands? What would we need to have next? How does the market evolve for our type of product? ...

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the Scrum Team and the stakeholders.

Summary: At the end of your Sprint Review, does your Scrum Team and the stakeholders have a common understanding about the latest Product Increment?

4. Transparency / Sprint Retrospective

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Let's take the Sprint Retrospective.

Common understanding about what?

About how the Sprint went. About which actionable improvements the Scrum Team will take on in the next Sprint. What do we feel worked well? What do we want to improve? What actions will we take for this?

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the entire Scrum Team: the Product Owner, the Development Team members, and the Scrum Master.

Summary: At the end of your Sprint Retrospective, does your Scrum Team have a common understanding about the improvement actions they will take?

5. Transparency / Sprint

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During each of the Scrum Events, and throughout the Sprint itself, the Scrum Team and the stakeholders need transparency so there is a common understanding.

Transparency as such is way more than bringing “visibility”. It is about reaching “a common understanding”.

So far I have covered the Sprint Planning, Daily Scrum, Sprint Retrospective and Sprint Review.

What about the Sprint itself?

Note that each of the events is a formal opportunity to inspect and adapt.

This does immediately mean that during the entire Sprint itself there are informal moments to do that.

As such I expect that the common understanding we are looking for in each of the events is also maintained throughout the entire Sprint.

And if, as a team, we feel this is no longer the case, we take immediate action, be it on the common understanding of the Sprint Goal, the progress towards the Sprint Goal, the state of the Product Increment or the agreed improvement actions.

6. Transparency / Product Backlog

Scrum is founded on empirical process control, and transparency is one of the three pillars.

Each of the Scrum Artifacts exist to bring transparency to the Scrum Team and the stakeholders. If you feel that there is a lack of transparency for any aspect of your initiative, have a good look with your team at your Artifacts.

Note: transparency is way more than bringing “visibility”. It is about reaching “a common understanding”.

Let’s take the Product Backlog.

Common understanding about what?

What is still needed in the product? A forecast.

What is expected to reach a specific goal?

What is work remaining for this goal?

Still need a separate “release plan”...?

Trends of remaining work Sprint after Sprint: bringing transparency in the likelihood of achieving this goal by a desired moment in time.

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the entire Scrum Team and the stakeholders

Summary: Does your Product Backlog bring a common understanding about the future of your product?

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Let’s take the Sprint Backlog.

Common understanding about what?

What Product Backlog Items are selected for this Sprint?

What work do we see to deliver the Product Increment and the Sprint Goal? How will we approach this?

What process improvement will we address during this Sprint?

What is work remaining for the Done Increment and the Sprint goal?

Trends of remaining work day after day: bringing transparency in the likelihood of achieving this goal by the end of the Sprint.

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the entire Scrum Team.

Summary: Does your Sprint Backlog bring a common understanding about your next Product Increment to the Scrum Team?

8. Transparency / Increment

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Let's take the Increment.

Common understanding about what?

What are the completed Product Backlog Items? This Sprint, and previous Sprints? So what value, features, etc. does our Product contain right now?

Given the Increment is Done, there is transparency on the quality level of the product, right?

What step did we now make towards our vision, and towards our next goal?

Common understanding amongst who?

Amongst the entire Scrum Team and the stakeholders

Summary: Does your Increment bring a common understanding about the current state of the product?

9. Transparency / Product Owner

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Each of the Scrum Roles exist to bring transparency to the other Scrum Team members and the stakeholders. If you feel that there is a lack of transparency for any aspect of your initiative, check who is best placed to bring clarity.

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Let’s take the Product Owner.

Bring common understanding about what?

What is the current state of the product? What value does it bring? What capabilities does it have?

What is still needed in the product? What is expected to reach a specific goal? What is work remaining for this goal? What is the likelihood of achieving this goal?

...

Bring common understanding to whom?

To the entire Scrum Team and the stakeholders

Summary: Does your Product Owner bring a common understanding about the current and future state (near and long term) of the product?

10. Transparency / Development Team

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Let’s take the Development Team.

Bring common understanding about what?

What are the completed Product Backlog Items? “Done” means what with regard to the quality level?

What process improvement will we address during this Sprint?

What is work remaining for the Done Increment and the Sprint goal?

And what is the likelihood of achieving this goal by the end of the Sprint?

...

Bring common understanding to whom?

To the entire Scrum Team and the stakeholders

Summary: Does your Development Team bring a common understanding about the current state of the Increment?

11. Transparency / Scrum Master

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Each of the Scrum Roles exist to bring transparency to the other Scrum Team members and the stakeholders. If you feel that there is a lack of transparency for any aspect of your initiative, check who is best placed to bring clarity.

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Let's take the Scrum Master.

Bring common understanding about what?

Why Scrum? What is Scrum? Why and what is the theory behind Scrum? Why and why are the Scrum Rules? Why and what are the Scrum Values?

Why and which interactions of the stakeholders with the Scrum Team are helpful and which aren't?

...

Bring common understanding to whom?

To the entire Scrum Team and the stakeholders

Summary: Does your Scrum Master bring a common understanding about the Scrum framework and its use?

Closing

This is it for now. So far I covered how the different Scrum Events, Scrum Roles and Scrum Artifacts can link to the core concept of Transparency.

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Scrum on.

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Overview

The matrix below shows in which article we cover each core concept mapped to one of the the elements of Scrum - numbers indicate the article.

	Transparen cy	Inspection	Adaptation	Scrum Values	Self-Org & Cross-func t Team	Done Increment
Events						
Sprint Planning	1					
Daily Scrum	2					
Sprint Review	3					
Sprint Retrospect ive	4					
Sprint	5					
Artifacts						
Product Backlog	6					
Sprint Backlog	7					
Increment	8					
Roles						
Product Owner	9					
Developme nt Team	10					
Scrum Master	11					