IMPLEMENTING SCRUM

GUIDE

PART 1 of 5: KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL CHANGE

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A STORY ABOUT NIC AND SKIP

> I don't understand why Scrum isn't sticking. We do sprints and retrospectives, but the team hasn't delivered like we expected. What are we supposed to do now?

> I really expected to see some progress by now... Based on everything I've read, our team should already be making dramatic improvements.

SKIP WAS OUTWARDLY FRUSTRATED. They had been implementing Scrum for about six weeks, and after the third sprint, things didn't really appear to be getting better.
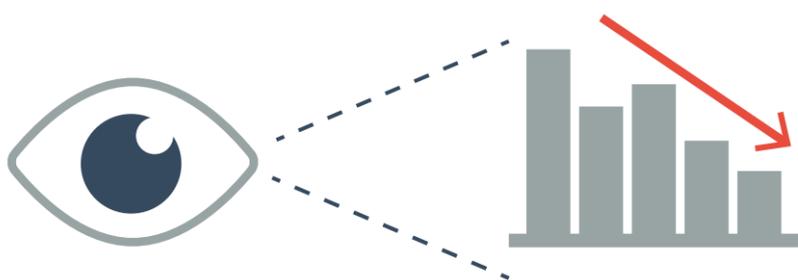
UNFORTUNATELY, NIC, THE SCRUM MASTER, DIDN'T HAVE ANY ANSWERS FOR HIM. Nic is still technically the project manager and he was the one who suggested their company start moving in the direction of Agile, with Scrum as their chosen framework.

There was no budget for training or coaching, so Nic ramped himself up by reading some information on the internet, asking questions in forums, and using those suggestions with his team. Nic was sure they would see an immediate improvement, but instead there's been nothing but confusion. Now the team doesn't get time for a full requirements analysis, QA is often asked to test stuff that is not done, and Nic is acting as project manager, Scrum Master, and Product Owner. Meanwhile, Skip, the guy who sponsors the projects, is frustrated and ready to end the whole experiment.

UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO SOLVE

The first key to a successful organizational change is: Understand the problem you're trying to solve.

When using the methodology effectively, your team will be focused on small iterations and a prioritized feature list...

Shipping Sooner = **Faster**

Without a clear vision for the desired future state, you can't set goals or measure results. Scrum is great at solving specific problems and generating certain benefits, but teams need to ensure that these gains fit their objectives.
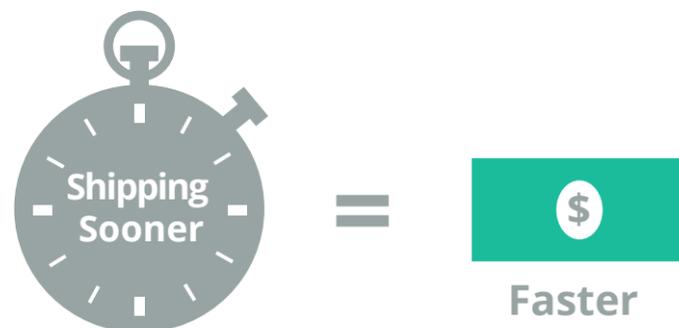
so you can release what's most valuable to the customer early, receive feedback, **get to market faster,** and make money sooner.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM *cont.*

Scrum also increases project visibility and enhances the quality of your products thanks to the iterative "inspect and adapt" nature of the framework. Often times project leaders aren't aware of the obstacles that keep team members from completing tasks, but Scrum, which involves daily standup meetings, removes the mystery and keeps everyone on track. That means the feedback cycle is no more than 24 hours long! In addition, Scrum use can reduce your risk of project failure and improve your ability to manage change, because working software is the primary indicator of progress, not milestones in a certain "phase". Scrum welcomes new changes and integrates them as quickly as possible, so there's an opportunity to improve software in real time, rather than at the end.

Inspect-and-Adapt

Measurability

Visibility

Daily Stand-Ups

Shipping Earlier

Key Scrum Features

Enhanced Productivity

Everyone On Track

Identify Problems

Manage Change

Income Sooner

Key Scrum Benefits

WHAT SCRUM WON'T FIX

As great a framework as Scrum is, there are certain kinds of problems Scrum will not solve.

✗ UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Unrealistic expectations are a common issue that often manifest as a desire for overnight success and instant, exponential productivity improvements. While these benefits will eventually come, progress is hindered by people who demand dramatic results NOW. Another ill Scrum can't cure is an unsupportive leadership team.

✗ UNSUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP

Sometimes executives take a "wait and see" approach, only participating in the implementation if success seems well on its way. However, a successful Scrum adoption requires leaders who lead from the front, and become the primary cheerleaders for the transformation.

✗ LACK OF STRATEGY/VISION

Similarly, a lack of strategy or vision cannot be fixed by Scrum (though it can help teams rapidly iterate through ideas to find the right concept).

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING

✓ OPENNESS TO CHANGE

Scrum, at its core, is a framework that elicits change, and sometimes that change can be painful. Unfortunately, many companies recognize their problems, but don't want to experience the uncomfortable shifts needed to make things better. If an organization is in that situation, they shouldn't be looking at Scrum as an option because the transition is bound to be unsuccessful.

✓ HONEST EVALUATION

Lastly, and probably most important, is the concept of honesty. A company has to relentlessly self-reflect and be honest with itself, warts and all, for the most effective Scrum transition.

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR TRANSFORMATION

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

There are a few key factors that will improve your chances of success during a Scrum transformation. **First, you've got to have team members who already know each other.** Scrum will put a new set of pressures on the team to perform, and existing work relationships make the transition easier by allowing them to focus on Scrum, not group ice-breakers. This doesn't mean you can't have success with newly-formed teams, it just means the process may take a bit longer than a team that already gels.

CO-LOCATION

Since Scrum is optimized by face-to-face communication, it's also better if the team is co-located. **This will make it easier to connect, receive feedback, and enjoy the serendipitous innovation that comes from water cooler conversations or impromptu whiteboard sessions.** That's not to say Scrum doesn't work for distributed teams, it just adds one communication barrier.
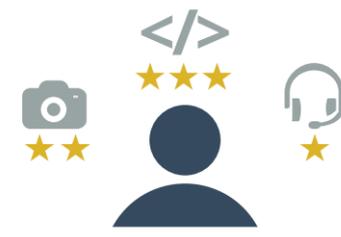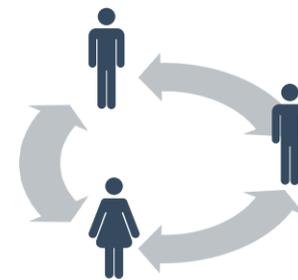
CROSS-FUNCTIONAL

Success also depends on cross-functional team members who have a willingness to help each other. While specialists are always needed, **teams that capitalize on each member's strengths and build general skills will achieve more of their goals each sprint.**

For instance, if Tom can help Sally with the web copy once he's done coding, and Jeff can help Bill with testing, we get a more effective team. When the whole team participates, it eliminates the assembly line environment, so everyone is responsible for the entire product's creation (full dash) soup to nuts.

TWO TYPES OF TEAMS

1) **Product-focused teams** (cross-functional) - These groups are truly invested in the overall success of your product development AND they get really good at learning from each other. Their end goal is to create a complete, high-quality product.

2) **Component-focused teams** (functional) - Here teams are broken into sub-groups, so the software development team only codes, QA only tests, etc. These teams independently focus on completing one component of a product and have less ownership of the finished product.

THE ROLE OF PRODUCT OWNER

Companies tend to think of Scrum as a "software development method," and assume it only requires development and QA input to be successful. Instead, Scrum is actually a "product development framework" that relies heavily on the "business side" and key stakeholder involvement. To that end, having the right Product Owner on the team is essential. This role connects the dots between your team, stakeholders, and executives, so everyone is on the same page. He or she also creates, clarifies, and guides the product/feature vision through the product backlog where user stories are prioritized to align with business goals.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENCE

Make sure your leadership knows there will be a short term hit to productivity and output as the team learns the process. **Additionally, try to communicate that it takes about a year for a team to become truly productive with Scrum, and around three years to achieve hyperproductivity.** You will be investing lots of time, and patience is the essential factor that allows your investment to pay off.

A Scrum transformation, just like any other change, is difficult and often unsuccessful. Large-scale culture shifts can be challenging for many reasons, but the length of time it takes to see significant results is usually a primary issue. Your company's culture didn't become what it is overnight, therefore it would be unreasonable to expect it to change overnight.

Implement	1 year	2 years	3 years

PRODUCTIVE   **HYPER PRODUCTIVE**

■ Low Productivity
■ High Productivity

ONGOING INVESTMENTS IN TRAINING AND COACHING

Once the initial Scrum coaching is complete, it's important to facilitate ongoing training for existing employees and new team members who need to learn the ropes. Not only will your team benefit from an exposure to the Scrum community's cutting-edge techniques, this refresher can also stimulate conversation about original ways to work with the methodology on a day-to-day basis.
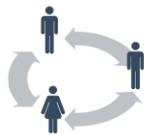
HERE ARE SOME TAKEAWAYS

Make sure Scrum is able to solve the kind of problems your team is focused on, and know that a methodology can't fix everything.

Figure out which parts of your vision or strategy need clarity before implementing the Scrum framework.

Get a clear understanding of your team's skillsets, makeup, and geographic distribution to create reasonable expectations around those constraints.

Obtain executive buy-in and ensure that the business/product side of your organization is fully on-board

Have patience and be willing to make ongoing investments.