

IMPLEMENTING SCRUM

GUIDE

PART 2 of 5: HOW TO GET TEAM BUY-IN

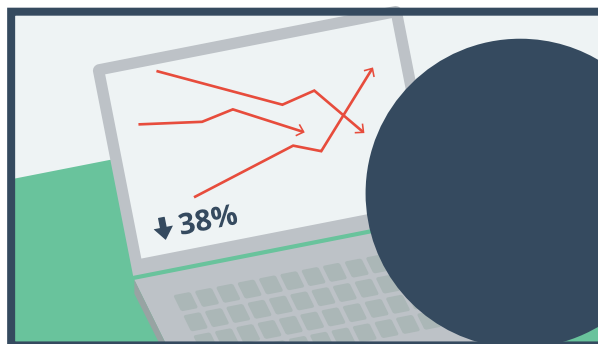


Created by Axosoft, makers of the #1 Scrum software,
in collaboration with writer and coach, Tirrell Payton.

THE SITUATION



Max was named VP of Software Engineering for a mid-sized company, and although he was excited for the new challenge, he saw a lot of problems in the company's future. Problems he was tasked to solve.



The industry was moving faster than ever, and there was a danger that his company could fall seriously behind its competitors.



In the past, Max had used his ability to drive new initiatives as a problem-solving tool, so he suggested a transition to Scrum as a way to help the company react to market changes more quickly and maintain its competitive edge.



Two years later, all Max could do was watch, horrified, as the initiative died, despite his "carrot and stick" approach. Even in the pilot phase, changes took so long to implement, their effectiveness was constantly questioned.



He had a hard time getting the proper funding for coaching and training; and eventually his own staff became impediments to progress.



There was no urgency, no support from staff and colleagues (because they didn't know what was in it for them), and no communication about why this initiative was important or necessary.

CREATE A SENSE OF URGENCY

Without a sense of urgency, it's difficult to get your team to support the Scrum effort. That's why it's important to start by setting company benchmarks based on industry competitors. Honestly assessing where you are versus where

you want to be by using customer data and potential missed market opportunities creates concrete numbers that can help set obtainable goals and light the fire of urgency.



Look for areas of weakness and underperformance that seem like they correspond with the kinds of problems Scrum solves well.



Talk to your customers as a way to discover core improvement metrics. What do your customers say you aren't good at? Better yet, where do they say you could get better? These points should reinforce the importance of swift, corrective action.



Point to something a competitor is doing that you are unable to do, or call attention to market opportunities that you are unable to take advantage of in your current state.



BUILD YOUR GRASS ROOTS CAMPAIGN

Whether you're talking to the team, managers, or executives, no one will get on board with your initiative unless you can explain what's in it for them. A grassroots campaign... grassroots campaign should be targeted at people in every level of the organization, toward anyone who can

help anchor your buy-in efforts. You are going to need support from all areas of the company to avoid some of the same mistakes Max made in the opening paragraphs; and people are much more likely to endorse your initiative if it appears to have traction within their peer group.

Find Contributors who are already interested in Scrum. They can be recent hires who come from a more agile environment, or people who know a little about Scrum and are excited to try it. Either way, convert these contributors into evangelists by giving them responsibilities and decision-making ability on your transformation team.

Developers love Scrum because it allows them to circumvent heavyweight processes and use working software as the primary measure of progress. Rather than relying on half-baked specs that have been "tossed over the wall," developers should now act as technical advisors who collaborate to meet goals, determine how work gets done, and devise solutions to business problems with outside stakeholders.



Managers on a Scrum team get to focus on finding new ways to empower their teammates. In this new role, they have the opportunity to create a strategic vision for talent development and an environment that encourages team members to excel.

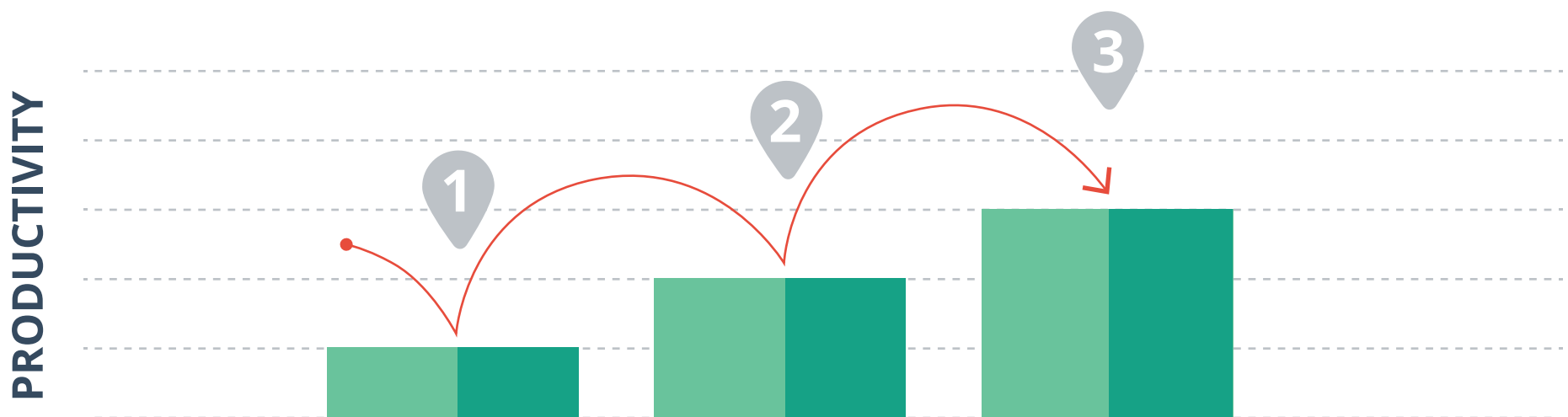
Scrum gives Executives the ability to get their product to market more quickly, manage changing priorities, and receive better project visibility. All of these factors directly affect the bottom line, and executives like to focus on tangible, measurable outcomes like this key number.

IF YOU WORK WITH YOUR EVANGELISTS, THESE TALKING POINTS WILL HELP SOCIALIZE THE TRANSITION WITHIN THE COMPANY COMMUNITY.

JUMP IN: GENERATE SHORT-TERM WINS

Because Scrum focuses on quick iterations and constant improvement, look for short-term wins throughout the implementation process. The achievement of these micro-goals generates evidence that can help justify the cost and pain of adoption. You should also find use-cases

from similar companies that show how Scrum adoption has “increased ROI by X%” or “improved efficiencies by Y.” Don’t be afraid to run a pilot program yourself because the team can use positive outcomes to gain support.



These efforts provide positive reinforcement for individuals who endorse the Scrum initiative, and give them reason to further support you. **Short-term wins also help fine-tune the vision and strategy of Scrum within your organization.** Implementation is a “hands-on” process that will require constant tweaking while your team figures things out. When teammates see the success of your first Scrum project, it’s easier to influence others to buy-in. Be

available and be involved. Inspect and adapt. **Generating positive outcomes from your first Scrum project undermines the power of naysayers and shows them how the methodology can help your company.** The quick turnaround of beneficial results can keep management engaged, build momentum for buy-in, and eliminate months of negative feedback while things get going.

EMBRACE CHANGE AND LEARNING

As you get buy-in for your Scrum initiative, make sure to emphasize the importance of change.

That being said, feel free to take some risks in pursuit of quick wins, even if your strategy isn’t perfected.



There’s a lot of potential for mistakes when your team first jumps in, but failure can present a huge learning opportunity.

When you embrace a mindset of change, you open up the team environment to a variety of new improvements.

USE EVERY STEP, SUCCESSFUL OR OTHERWISE, AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY.

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE!



The ability to communicate your vision is another essential skill for teams who want company-wide buy-in. Keep your vision simple by using minimal jargon, and try to explain it with a metaphor or analogy. These verbal pictures are a

much better way to illustrate your goals than a long, technical description. Startups use this tactic all the time when explaining what they do: "Airbnb for boats," "Netflix for College Books," "Birchbox for Dogs."

COMMUNICATE IN MULTIPLE FORMS:



big meetings



small meetings



email



formal



informal

Leverage your grassroots evangelists to help deliver the message in multiple formats, and be willing to explain the mission over and over. People will need to hear your vision many, many times before it starts to sink in. But communication is more than what you say - make sure you're also leading by example, because how you act is just as important as verbal reinforcement. Lastly, be aware of any incon-

sistencies. If you talk about being nimble and agile; yet demand requirements that are exhaustive and unchanging, you need to address why this specific situation runs counter to the vision. Don't forget communication is a two-way street, so these types of conversations should be receptive to your teammates' positive and negative feedback.

HERE ARE SOME TAKEAWAYS



Getting buy-in can be the most difficult and overlooked part of a Scrum implementation.



Create a sense of urgency in the organization, so people start looking for solutions that can solve the current problems.



Build your grass roots campaign at all levels of the organization to ensure you have anchors of support throughout.



Jump in and **generate short term wins** to prove that Scrum can work for your organization.



Embrace the changes that come with a transition and don't be discouraged by any bumps in the road.



Communicate, communicate, communicate!