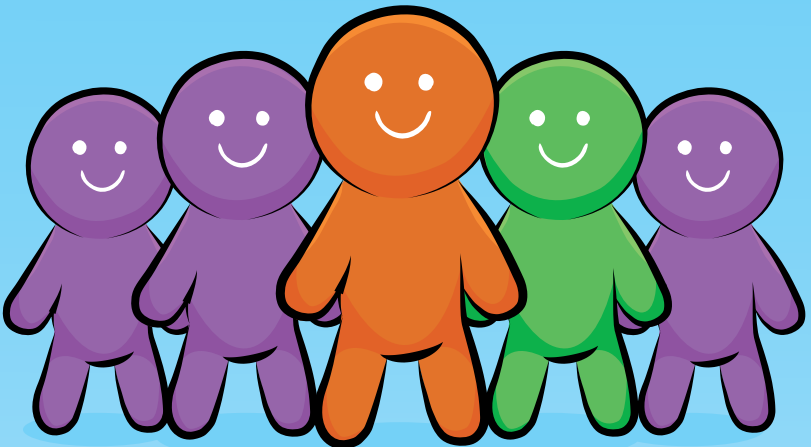


AMAZING SCRUM

Volume 1 Episode 1

WHY "SCRUM" ISN'T MAKING YOUR COMPANY VERY AGILE

HOW MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE
HARM YOUR ORGANIZATION, AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.



BY MJ

This story first appeared as a video at
<https://youtu.be/cr2rjaGmUzo>

以下のサイトにて、本ストーリーの日本語版ビデオおよび
コミック版をご覧ください。

<http://seattlescrum.com/jp/>

MJ thanks Shinya Shibusa, Benjamin Leffler,
Tommi Johnstone, and Yoko Hinoue
for their help telling this story.

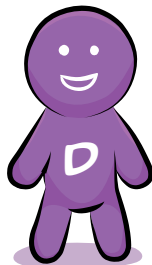
Please send comments and corrections to
mj@seattlescrum.com
or tweet them to
[@michaeldotjames](https://twitter.com/michaeldotjames).

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SCENE 1:
**HOW IS THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE
SUPPOSED TO WORK?**

I FIRST DID SCRUM AS A
PRODUCT DEVELOPER IN
A VERY SMALL COMPANY.



DEVELOPER



**VISION
AND
PRIORITIES**

IT WAS EASY TO KNOW OUR
PRODUCT VISION AS IT
EVOLVED, AND OUR **PRIORITIES**
AS THEY EMERGED.

OUR **PRODUCT OWNER**, AN ENTREPRENEUR,

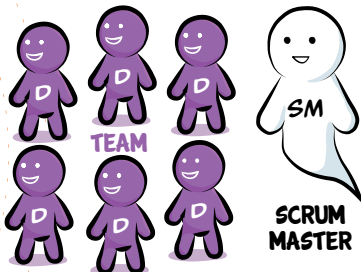
PRODUCT OWNER



**VISION
AND
PRIORITIES**



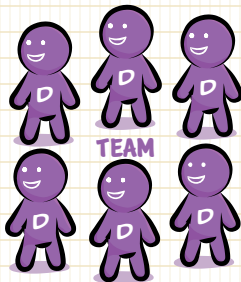
WAS RIGHT THERE SHARING
OUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES.



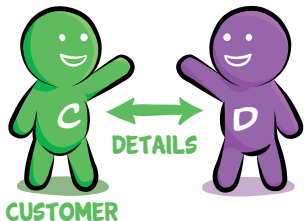
HE PRIORITIZED
**ONE PRODUCT
BACKLOG** AND WE
REFINED IT
TOGETHER.



**PRODUCT
BACKLOG**



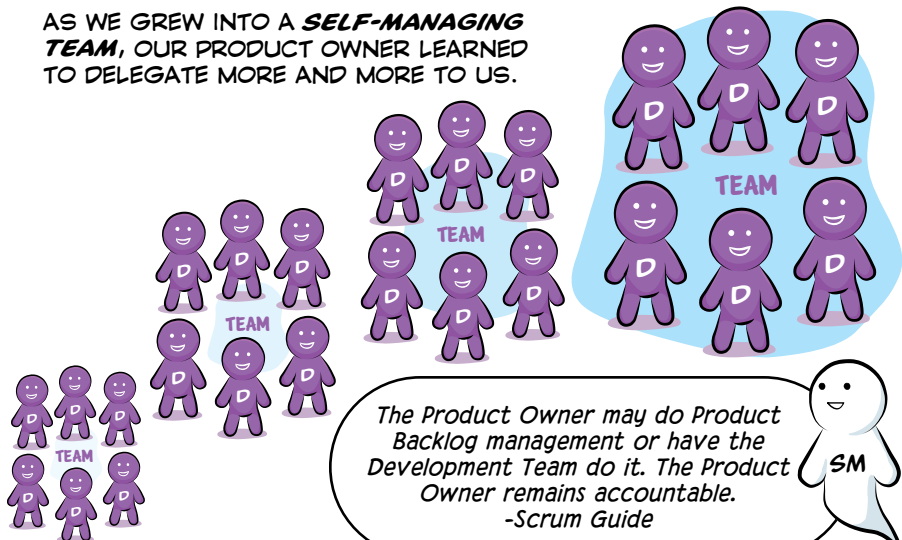
CUSTOMER INTERACTION
HELPED US KNOW THE
DETAILS OF WHAT TO DO.



IT ALSO HELPED THAT WE WERE
A **CROSS-FUNCTIONAL** TEAM,
INCLUDING A UI DESIGN
EXPERT.

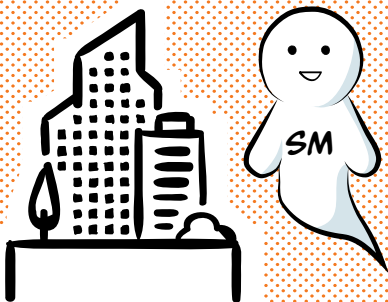


AS WE GREW INTO A **SELF-MANAGING
TEAM**, OUR PRODUCT OWNER LEARNED
TO DELEGATE MORE AND MORE TO US.



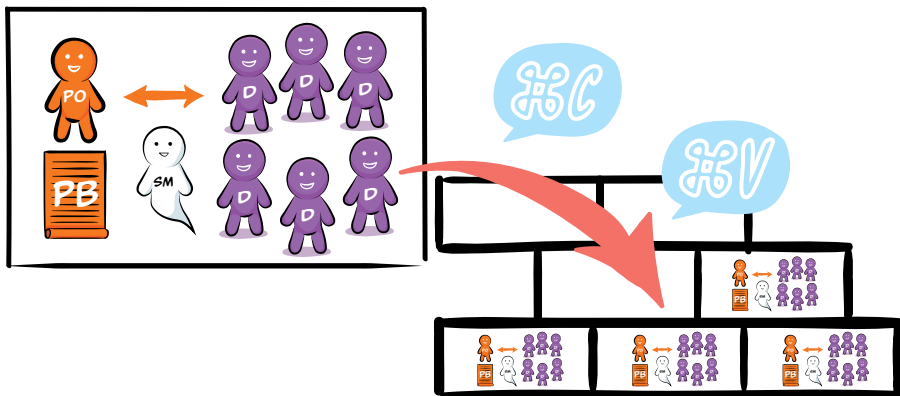
SCENE 2: HOW DOES YOUR LARGE ORGANIZATION MISINTERPRET THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE?

WHEN I STARTED WORKING
AS A SCRUM MASTER WITH
LARGER ORGANIZATIONS,
I MADE THE MISTAKE OF
FOCUSING ON
TEAM PRODUCTIVITY.



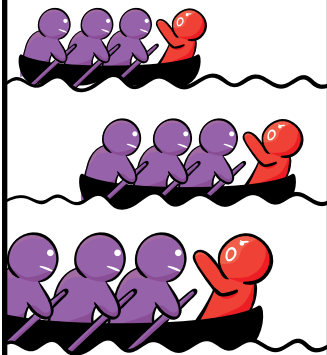
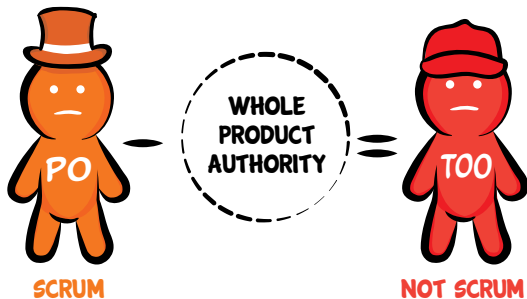
SCRUM WORKED SO WELL FOR ME IN A SMALL COMPANY,

WHY NOT JUST **COPY-PASTE** THE SAME
PATTERN INTO A LARGE ORGANIZATION?



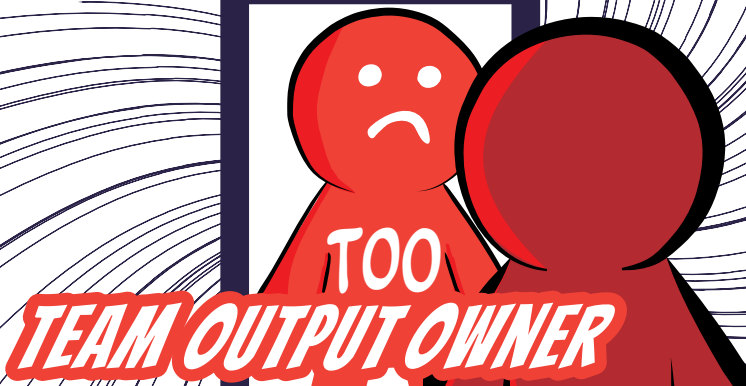
THINKING ONLY ABOUT TEAM PRODUCTIVITY, IN THOSE DAYS IT SEEMED
TO MAKE SENSE FOR EACH TEAM TO HAVE ITS OWN PERSON TRYING TO
ACT AS PRODUCT OWNER.

BUT UNLIKE MY PRODUCT OWNER FROM SCENE 1, THESE PEOPLE LACKED THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE MAJOR BUSINESS DECISIONS ABOUT THE WHOLE PRODUCT.



THE ORGANIZATION EXPECTED THEM TO FOCUS ON THEIR TEAM'S DELIVERY.

I'LL CALL THIS COMMON DEVIATION FROM SCRUM A **TEAM OUTPUT OWNER**, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT THE ORGANIZATIONS I'VE SEEN ARE ACTUALLY EXPECTING FROM THEM.



WITH RESPECT, WHEN I SAY TEAM OUTPUT OWNER, PLEASE CONSIDER THAT IT MAY APPLY TO YOU OR OTHERS YOU CURRENTLY CALL "PRODUCT OWNER."

PRODUCT
BACKLOG



SCRUM

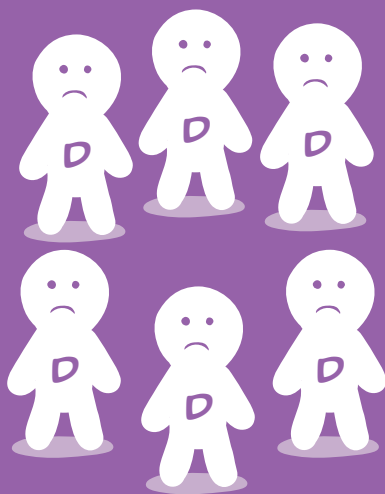
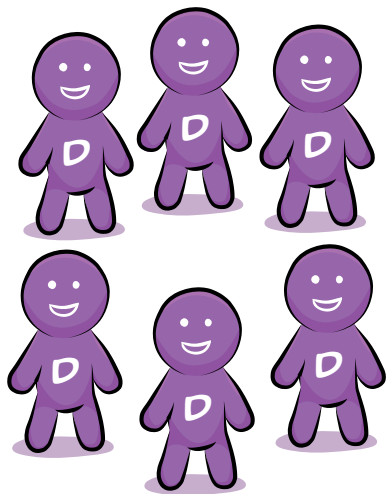


TEAM
BACKLOG



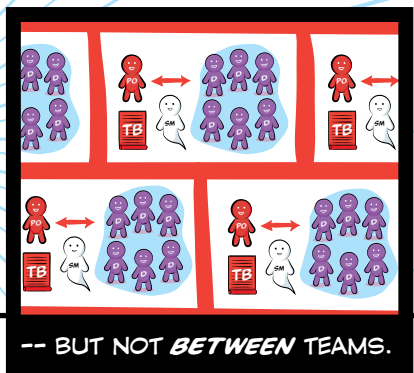
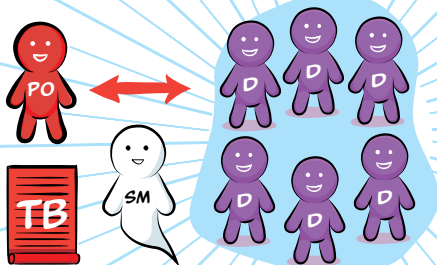
NOT SCRUM

WITHOUT AUTHORITY TO PRIORITIZE THE WHOLE PRODUCT BACKLOG, EACH TEAM OUTPUT OWNER WAS IN CHARGE OF A **TEAM BACKLOG**. WE'LL SOON SEE WHY THIS IS NOT A SCRUM ARTIFACT.

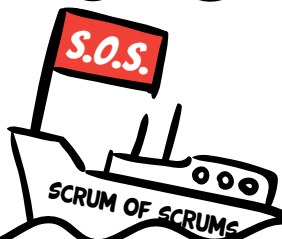
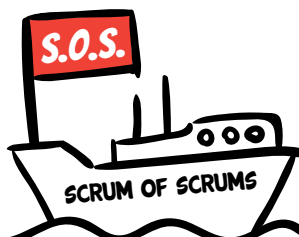


THOSE TEAMS INITIALLY SEEMED **PRODUCTIVE** AT STUFF AND THERE WAS KIND OF AN ILLUSION OF IMPROVED AGILITY.

THEY IMPROVED THEIR INTERNAL
COLLABORATION -- ***WITHIN*** TEAMS

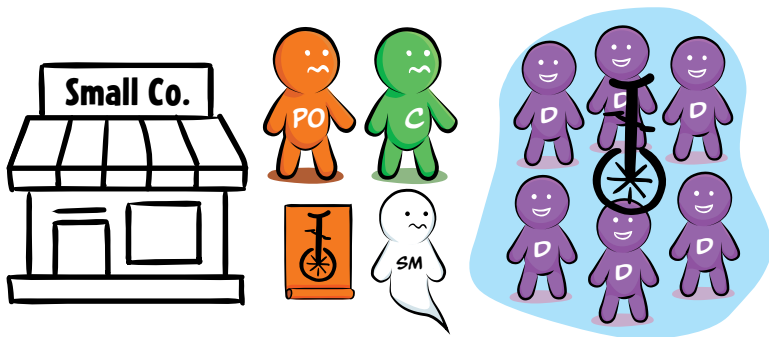


AS A NAIVE AGILE COACH I
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO
EXCEPT A PATTERN I'D HEARD OF
CALLED "SCRUM OF SCRUMS."

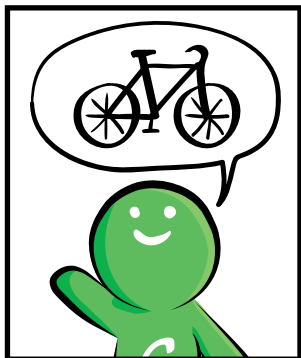
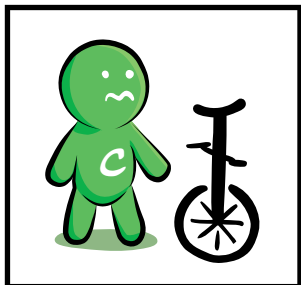


THAT OFTEN DEVOLVED INTO A
TRADITIONAL PROJECT MANAGER
STATUS MEETING.

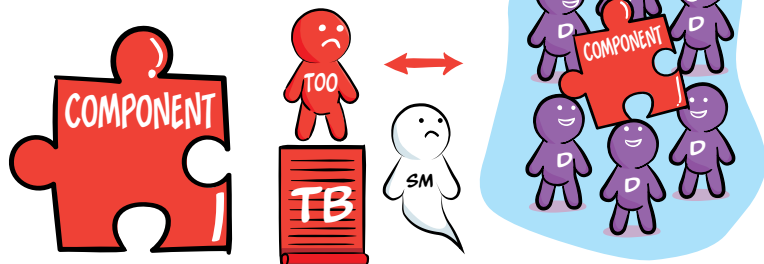
SCENE 3A:
**HOW DOES MISINTERPRETING THE PRODUCT
OWNER ROLE DELAY CUSTOMER FEEDBACK?**



**REAL SCRUM TEAMS TRY TO DEVELOP SHIPPABLE PRODUCTS
EVERY SPRINT**

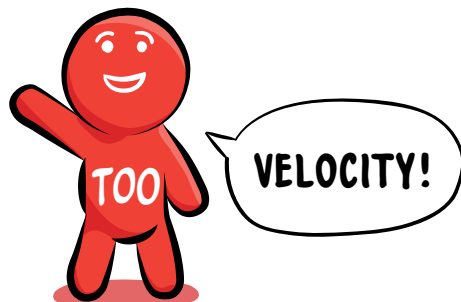


TEAMS IN LARGE ORGANIZATIONS SOMETIMES ONLY MAKE **COMPONENTS** THAT ARE NOT END-TO-END, CUSTOMER-CENTRIC FEATURES.



FOCUSING ON THE **INTERNAL OBJECTIVES** OF MIDDLE MANAGERS INSTEAD OF BROADER **BUSINESS OBJECTIVES** CAN CAUSE TEAMS TO TRY TO INCREASE OUTPUT,

SOMETIMES MEASURED AS "VELOCITY."



TEAM OUTPUT IS GOOD, RIGHT?



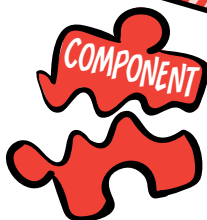
COMPONENT

WHAT WILL HAPPEN LATER
WHEN COMPONENTS MADE BY
BY DIFFERENT TEAMS
DON'T FIT TOGETHER?

COMPONENT

FROM TEAM 1

FROM TEAM 2

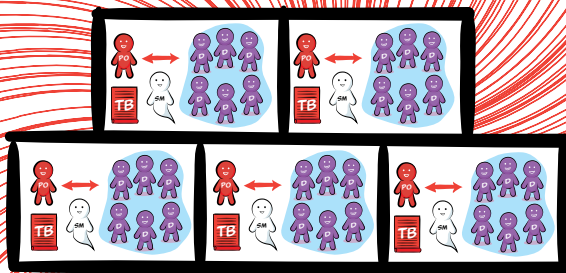


FROM TEAM 1



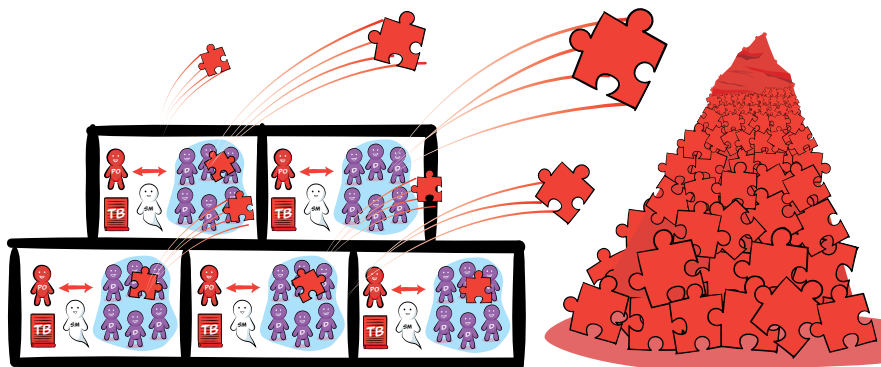
FROM TEAM 2

PEOPLE SOMETIMES THINK TEAMS SHOULD FOCUS ON
INCREASING THEIR OUTPUT. IT'S EASY TO GET DISTRACTED
BY MEASURABLE THINGS LIKE "VELOCITY."

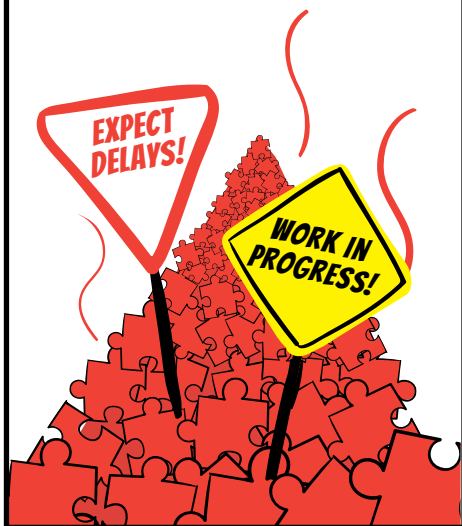


BUT IN THE BIG PICTURE, FOCUSING ON THAT CAN
INCREASE INTEGRATION PROBLEMS AND ACTUALLY ***DELAY***
OUR ABILITY TO GET A CUSTOMER RESPONSE!

IF OUR WORK HAS TO BE INTEGRATED WITH OTHER STUFF TO GET SHIPPABLE FEATURES, IT CAN TAKE LONGER TO GET A REAL CUSTOMER REACTION, LEARN FROM IT, AND ADJUST OUR DIRECTION.



MORE FOCUS ON INTERNAL OBJECTIVES FROM INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL LAYERS MEANS **LESS FOCUS ON BUSINESS OBJECTIVES.**



"HYPERPRODUCTIVITY"
CAN HURT.



LONGER END-TO-END CYCLE TIMES WITH THE CUSTOMER
REDUCE AGILITY.

SCENE 3B:

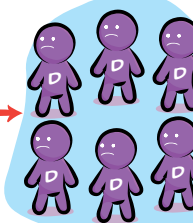
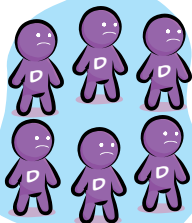
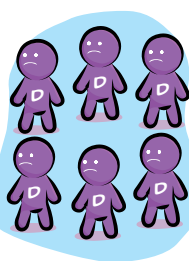
HOW DOES MISINTERPRETING THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE REDUCE DEVELOPER MOTIVATION AND EMPATHY FOR CUSTOMERS?

ANOTHER **WEIRD** THING ABOUT LARGE ORGANIZATIONS ...



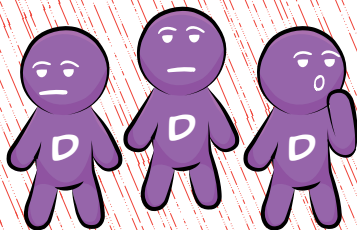
DEVELOPMENT TEAMS OFTEN **DON'T TALK TO CUSTOMERS AND END USERS!**

DEVELOPERS SEE GO-BETWEENS AS THEIR MAIN CONNECTION TO THE CUSTOMERS



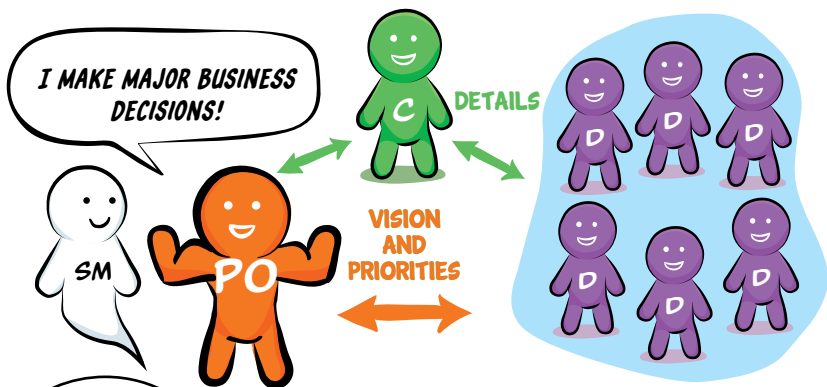
OR EVEN THE OTHER TEAMS.

TRYING TO SATISFY INTERNAL GO-BETWEENS ISN'T NEARLY AS FUN OR EFFECTIVE AS TALKING TO REAL CUSTOMERS USING OUR PRODUCT.



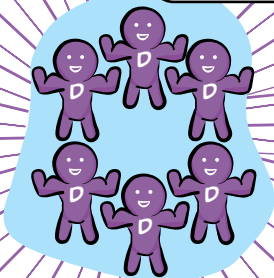
SCENE 4A: HOW DO REAL PRODUCT OWNERS DELIVER THE HIGHEST CUSTOMER VALUE?

A REAL PRODUCT OWNER CAN MAKE MAJOR BUSINESS DECISIONS
AND EVOLVE THE PRODUCT VISION AS WE LEARN MORE.



THE CUSTOMER-CENTRIC PRODUCT
BACKLOG DESCRIBES PROBLEMS
— NOT TASKS—

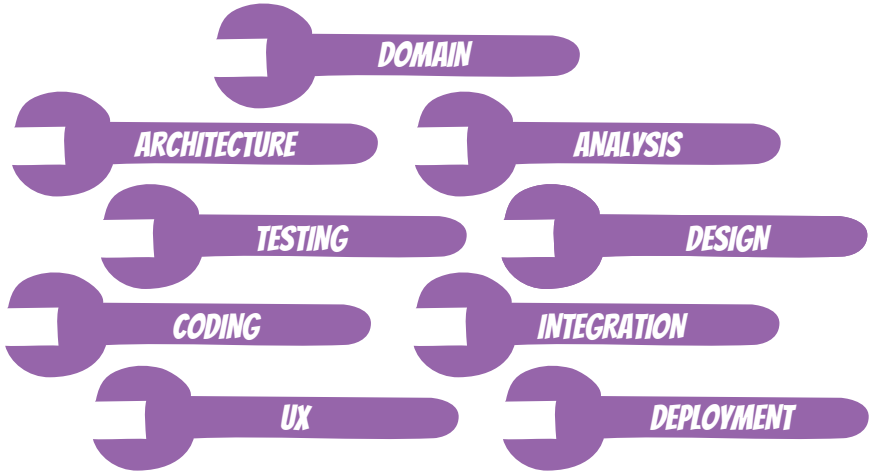
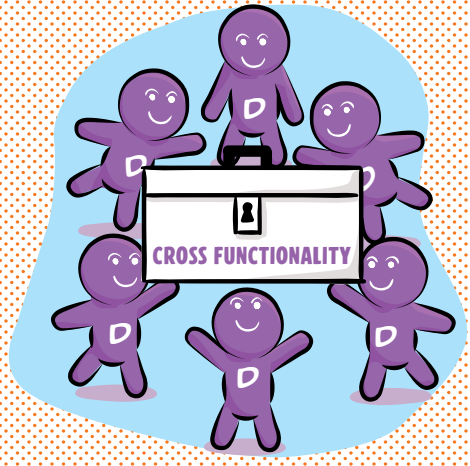
AND THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM CAN DO THE
HIGH-ORDER WORK OF DEVISING SOLUTIONS.



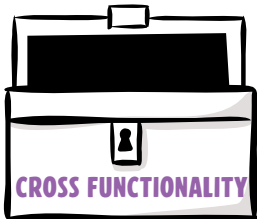
WE DO HIGH ORDER WORK!
WE ARE NOT JIRA TICKET TAKERS!

THEY DON'T ONLY CODE
TO SPECIFICATIONS.

*Development Teams
are cross functional,
with all the skills as a
team necessary to
create
a product Increment.
- Scrum Guide*



AS A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAM, THEY SHOULD BRING OR LEARN ALL
THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO DO HIGH-ORDER WORK.



NO ROLES

ELIMINATING ROLES PUTS PROCESS OWNERSHIP
IN THE **TEAM'S** HANDS!

SOME PEOPLE THINK SCRUM IS ABOUT **ADDING** STUFF LIKE
BURNDOWN CHARTS, FIBONACCI NUMBERS, VELOCITY.



*Scrum recognizes no titles for
Development Team members, regardless of
the work being performed by the person.*
- Scrum Guide

THOSE ADDED THINGS MIGHT SOMETIMES BE
USEFUL, BUT THEY AREN'T PART OF SCRUM.

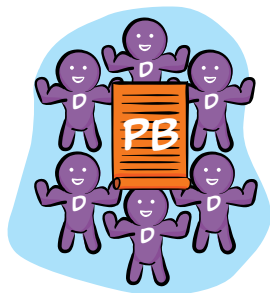
THE MAIN BENEFITS OF SCRUM ARE FROM
ELIMINATING PROCESSES AND ROLES.



NEW ITEM
NEW ITEM
NEW ITEM
ITEM
ITEM

WHEN THE PRODUCT OWNER
HAS MADE A MAJOR BUSINESS
DECISION, HE OR SHE CAN
CHANGE THE PRODUCT
BACKLOG TO REFLECT THIS.

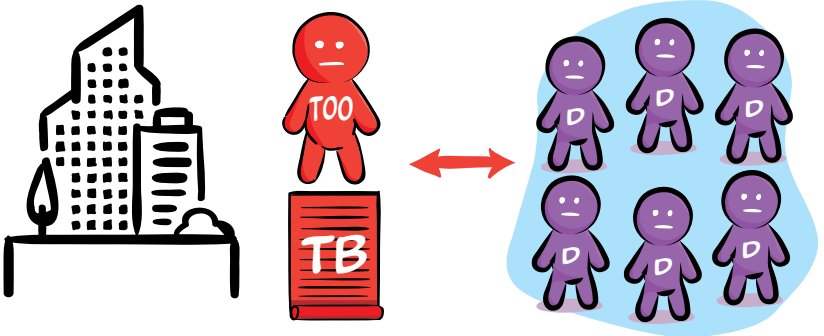
THERE'S NO STRUCTURAL CHANGE
TO THE ORGANIZATION, AND THE
TEAM IS ALREADY IN THE HABIT OF
TAKING ON HIGH ORDER PROBLEMS
AND LEARNING NEW THINGS.



SCENE 4B:

HOW DOES MISINTERPRETING THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE REDUCE VALUE DELIVERY?

A TEAM IN A LARGE ORGANIZATION RUNS THE RISK OF BECOMING **OVERSPECIALIZED** IN ONE AREA OF THE CODE.



(OTHER TEAMS CAN'T UNDERSTAND THEIR CODE EITHER.)

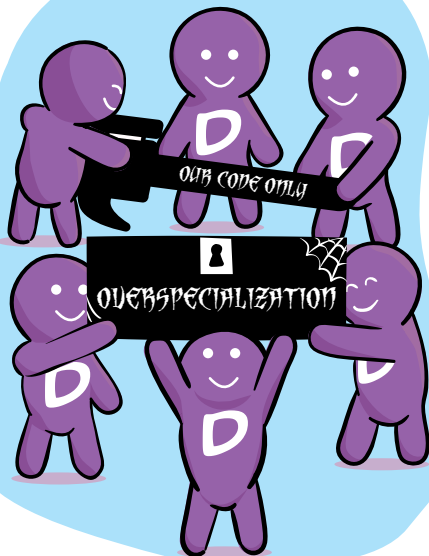


THEIR SKILLS WILL BE OUT OF DATE. THEY WON'T KNOW THAT THERE ARE OTHER USEFUL TECHNIQUES.

THE TEAM OUTPUT OWNER
WILL TRY TO **ORDER** THE
LOCAL BACKLOG TO DELIVER
THE MOST VALUE.



WE'LL HAVE THE ILLUSION
THAT SCRUM IS WORKING.



TEAMS ALSO FALL
INTO THINKING THIS
IS OPTIMAL,

MAYBE FROM BEING TOO
FOCUSED ON OUTPUT. OR
MAYBE TOO COMFORTABLE
BEING TOLD EXACTLY
WHAT TO DO.

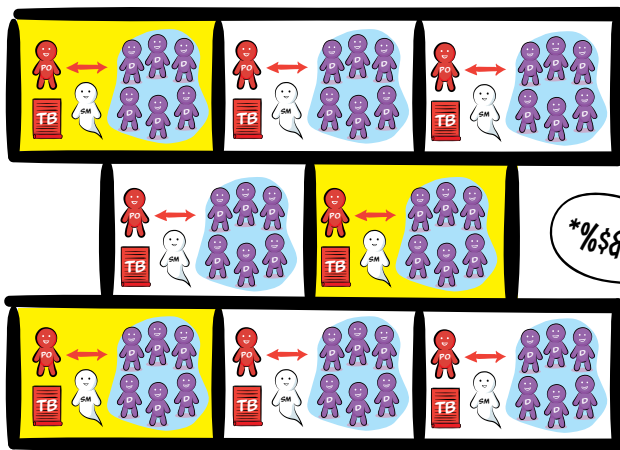
SCRUM MASTERS,
MANAGERS, COACHES,
AND TRAINERS CAN ALL
BE FOOLED BY **LOCAL
OPTIMIZATION**.

BUT THE BENEFIT TO CUSTOMERS
IS LESS THAN IT SHOULD BE.
**THERE'S MORE IMPORTANT
WORK HIDDEN IN OTHER
BACKLOGS THAT OUR TEAM
ISN'T LEARNING ABOUT!!**

\$8000 ITEM
\$8000 ITEM
\$7000 ITEM
\$7000 ITEM
\$7000 ITEM
\$6000 ITEM
\$6000 ITEM

OUR TEAM'S TOP ITEM IS **LESS IMPORTANT** THAN
THE WORK OTHER TEAMS DON'T HAVE TIME TO START!

KEEPING SEPARATE TEAM BACKLOGS
— SEPARATE LISTS — HIDES THIS PROBLEM.



ONLY A FEW
TEAMS ARE
DOING THE
MOST VALUABLE
WORK!

*%\$&@#!

OUR IMPACT ON THE CUSTOMERS WILL BE LIMITED.

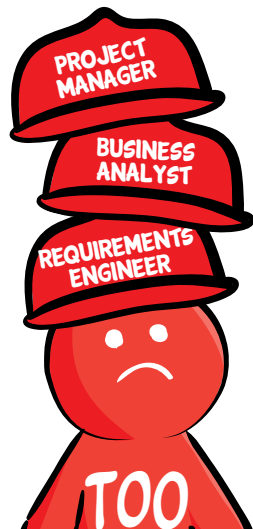
AND **CHANGING DIRECTIONS - THE WHOLE #&\$@*%\$ POINT OF
AGILITY - WILL BE DIFFICULT.**

SCENE 5:
**WHAT SUCKS ABOUT BEING A TEAM
OUTPUT OWNER?**



TEAM OUTPUT OWNERS
ARE STUCK IN THE MIDDLE.

THEY ARE INTERMEDIARIES WITHOUT THE
AUTHORITY TO MAKE MAJOR BUSINESS
DECISIONS.



THEY RISK BECOMING
REQUIREMENTS
ENGINEERS, BUSINESS
ANALYSTS, OR PROJECT
MANAGERS.

THEY ARE
"ACCOUNTABLE" FOR
THINGS THEY CAN'T
CONTROL.



THEY MIGHT TRY TO
WRITE PERFECT
"USER STORIES" AS
DETAILED
REQUIREMENTS,
THEN CLARIFY THEM
WHEN THEY AREN'T
PERFECT.



THEY MIGHT COORDINATE
THE TEAM'S WORK WITH THE
WORK OF OTHER TEAMS,
TRACK DEPENDENCIES, DO
ADMINISTRATIVE WORK,
STATUS REPORTING.

OR PUSH THE TEAM
FOR MORE OUTPUT.

THE TEAM OUTPUT OWNER
IS UNDER PRESSURE FROM
ELSEWHERE, NOT ABLE TO
BE AN ENTREPRENEUR.

*In no way did I envision the Product Owner
becoming a business analyst that was
responsible for requirements engineering.
-Ken Schwaber*

<https://kenschwaber.wordpress.com/2011/01/31/product-owners-not-proxies/>

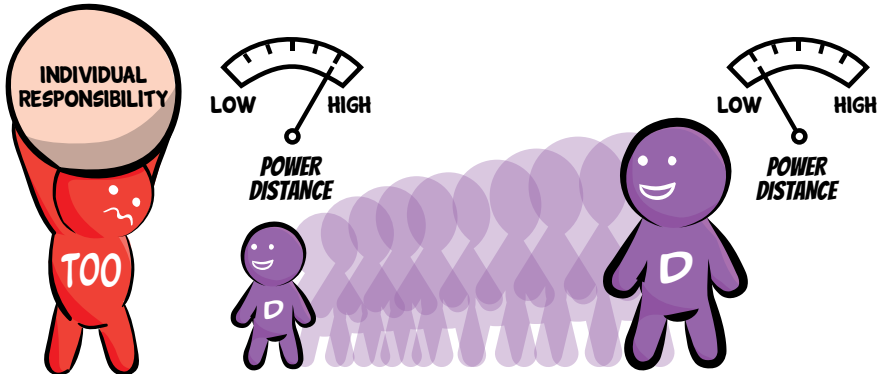
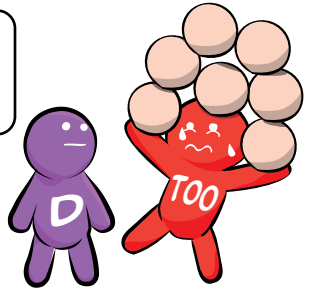


SCENE 6:

HOW CAN WE HELP PEOPLE STUCK IN THIS ROLE WHILE INCREASING TEAM SELF ORGANIZATION AND CROSS FUNCTIONALITY?

I RESPECT PRACTITIONERS WHO FEEL THAT ONE PERSON PER TEAM PLAYING THIS ROLE IS APPROPRIATE **FOR THEIR SITUATION**.

THEY GET A LOT DONE HAVING SOMEONE IN THE ROOM WHO CAN GIVE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK. OF COURSE WE ALL WANT THAT.



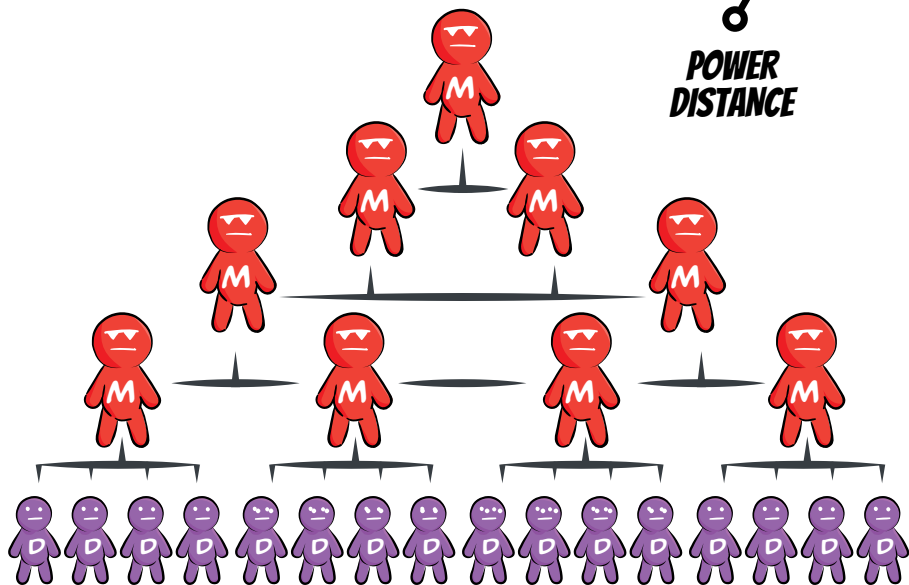
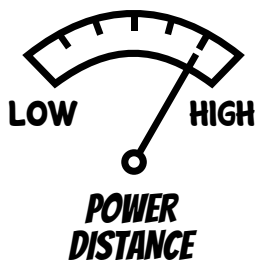
THE PLACES THIS WORKS ALREADY HAVE A SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT THAT MINIMIZES POWER DIFFERENCES AND PEOPLE SHARE RESPONSIBILITY NATURALLY, JUST AS A ROLE-FREE TEAM IS REQUIRED TO DO.



*Individual Development
Team members may have
specialized skills and areas of
focus, but accountability
belongs to the Development
Team as a whole.*
- Scrum Guide



BUT IN **TYPICAL** ORGANIZATIONS, PEOPLE ARE INFLUENCED BY LAYERS AND TITLES.



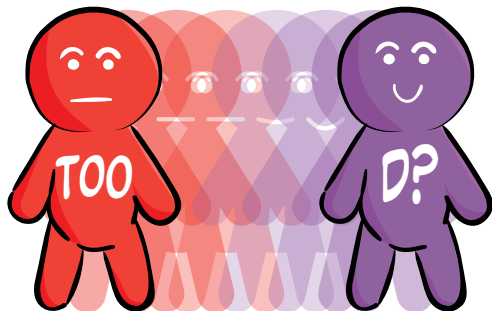
FOR THEM, **STATUS DIFFERENCES LINKED TO ROLES ARE VERY REAL ...**

IS A TEAM **SELF ORGANIZING** IF WE GIVE ONE MEMBER A SPECIAL ROLE? DO WE SEE THE CONTRADICTION OF SAYING "ALL MEMBERS ARE EQUAL," BUT ONE MEMBER IS MORE "EQUAL" THAN OTHERS?



WE LIMIT AGILITY BY PRETENDING THAT TEAM OUTPUT OWNERS ARE THE PRODUCT OWNER.

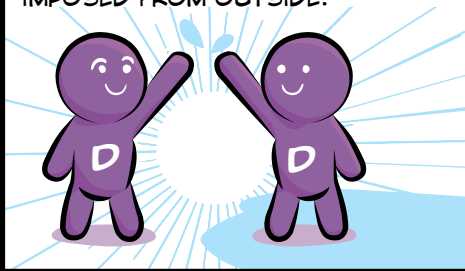
TO AVOID ADDING UNNECESSARY LAYERS,
CONSIDER THE REASON SCRUM HAS ONLY THREE ROLES,
AND THE POWER OF ROLE-FREE TEAM SELF ORGANIZATION



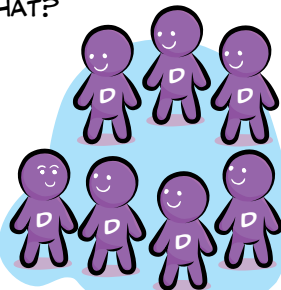
... WHEN THE SCRUM
MASTER AND MANAGEMENT
CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT
THAT ALLOWS IT.

WHY BE AFRAID OF THIS
PERSON JOINING WITHOUT
ANY SPECIAL ROLE
DESIGNATION SEPARATING
THEM FROM THE OTHERS?

THEN THE TEAM COULD FIGURE
OUT FOR THEMSELVES WHO
WOULD DO WHAT IN EACH
SITUATION INSTEAD OF BEING
CONSTRAINED BY A PROCESS
IMPOSED FROM OUTSIDE.



TEAM SELF ORGANIZATION
HAPPENS WITHOUT ROLES.
WHAT'S SCARY ABOUT
THAT?



*They are self-organizing. No one
(not even the Scrum Master) tells
the Development Team how to turn
Product Backlog into Increments of
potentially releasable functionality.
- Scrum Guide*



PLEASE WRITE TO ME
ABOUT WHAT BAD
THING YOU IMAGINE
WOULD HAPPEN AND
I'LL MAKE FOLLOW-UP
COMICS ABOUT
THOSE CONCERNS.



SCENE 7:

WHY IS IT UNNECESSARY TO CREATE NEW ROLES SUCH AS "CHIEF PRODUCT OWNER"?

In the long run, the only sustainable advantage is your organization's ability to learn faster than your competition.
- Peter Senge

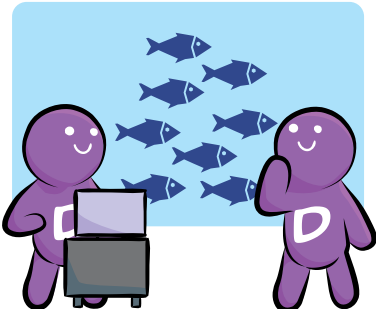


IF I WERE TRYING TO DEVELOP A PRODUCT WITH MULTIPLE TEAMS, AND ***IF OUR LONG-TERM SURVIVAL DEPENDED ON LEARNING TO FOCUS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS***, I'D KEEP THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS IN ONE REAL PRODUCT BACKLOG. I'D ASK THE TEAMS TO FOCUS ON OUR ONE REAL PRODUCT BACKLOG,



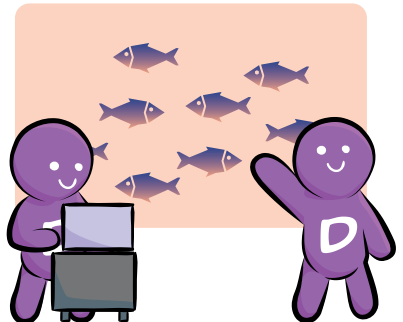
NOT WHAT WAS EASIEST FOR THEM IN THE PAST.

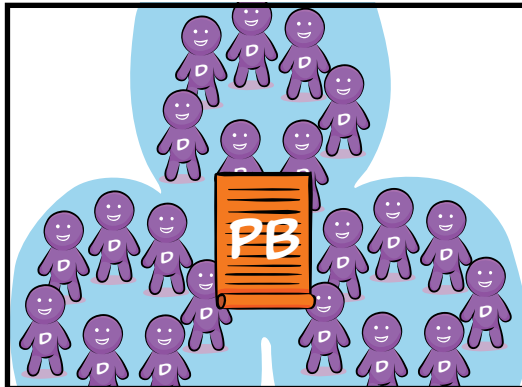
LET'S IMAGINE WE'RE ON A TEAM THAT USUALLY PROGRAMS ROBOT FISH TO STAY TOGETHER IN SCHOOLS.



BUT THIS WEEK THE HIGHEST PRIORITY WORK FOR THE COMPANY IS TO PROGRAM THE FISH TO CHANGE COLORS WHEN THE WATER TEMPERATURE VARIES.

OUR TEAM MUST LEARN NEW SKILLS TO HELP THE BUSINESS SUCCEED.





OF COURSE TEAMS
WON'T BECOME
INTERCHANGEABLE.

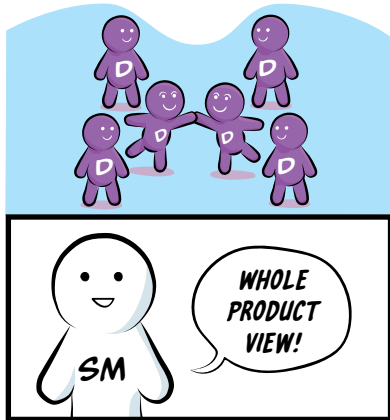
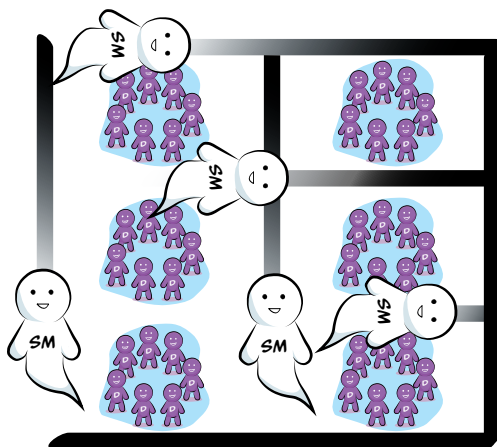
THAT'S SOMETHING THEY
CAN WORK OUT WITH EACH
OTHER AS THEY **DECIDE
FOR THEMSELVES** WHICH
TEAMS WILL DO WHICH
PRODUCT BACKLOG ITEMS
EACH SPRINT.



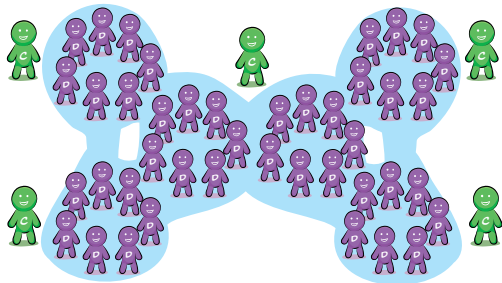
*One Product Backlog is used to
describe upcoming work on the
product.
-Scrum Guide*

TO FOSTER A **WHOLE PRODUCT
VIEW**, I WOULD ASK THE SCRUM
MASTERS TO **REMOVE THE
BARRIERS** BETWEEN TEAMS,

AND TO TEACH THE PRODUCT
DEVELOPERS THAT
COLLABORATING ACROSS
TEAMS IS NOW A DEVELOPER
RESPONSIBILITY.

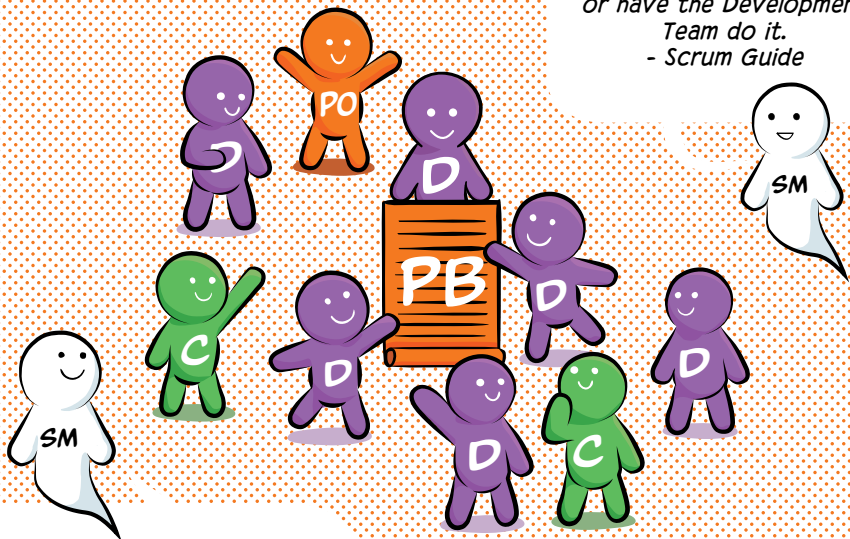


I'D ALSO WANT TO REMOVE BARRIERS PREVENTING DEVELOPERS FROM GETTING DETAILED CLARIFICATION FROM CUSTOMERS SO **WE DON'T NEED TO SPOON-FEED DEVELOPERS** ANYMORE.



NOW THE DEVELOPERS WILL HELP MANAGE THE PRODUCT BACKLOG.

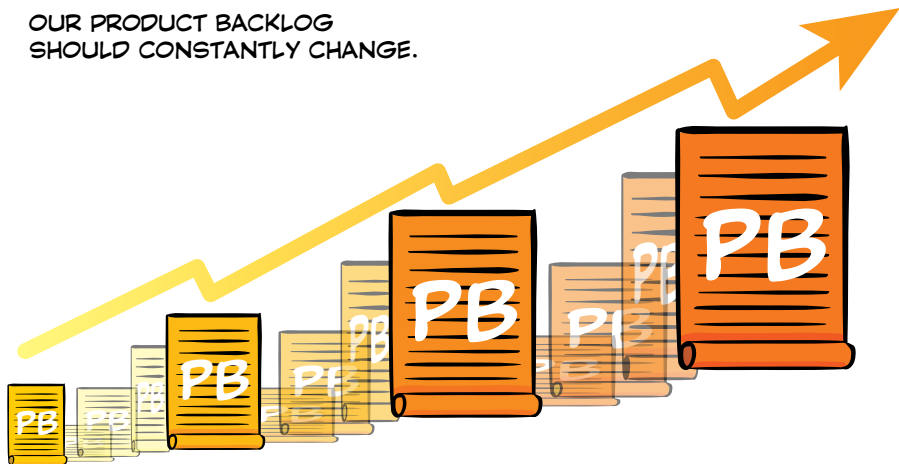
The Product Owner may do Product Backlog management or have the Development Team do it.
- Scrum Guide



Everyone must spend face time with customers and users to build empathy and insight.
- Jeff Patton

IT COULD TAKE **YEARS** BEFORE ALL THIS WORKS THE WAY I'M DESCRIBING, BUT IT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE.

OUR PRODUCT BACKLOG
SHOULD CONSTANTLY CHANGE.



WE'LL NEED SOMEONE WITH REAL **AUTHORITY** AND **VISION** TO
MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF OUR WORK.

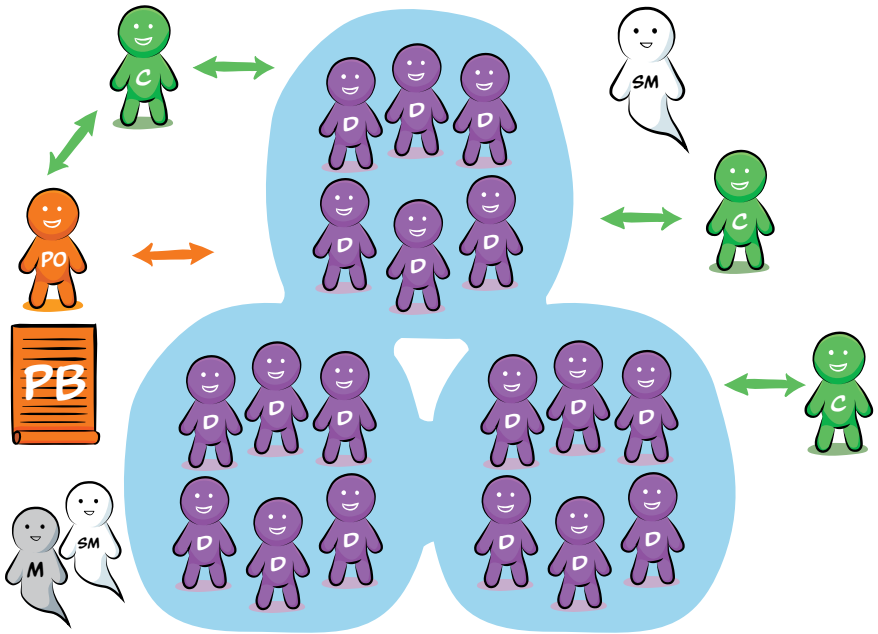
WE DON'T NEED TO
INVENT A NEW NAME
FOR OUR ULTIMATE
SOURCE OF
PRIORITIES, BECAUSE
**IT'S NOT REALLY A
NEW ROLE.**



LET'S CALL THIS PERSON
PRODUCT OWNER.

PRODUCT OWNER





ONE PRODUCT OWNER AND ONE PRODUCT BACKLOG DESCRIBE THE **WHAT**.



CUSTOMER CAN BE DIRECTLY CONSULTED BY DEVELOPERS, AVOIDING HANDOFFS.



CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DIRECTION, PRIORITIES, BUSINESS STRATEGY, AND VISION.



CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DETAILS OF USER NEEDS.



DEVELOPMENT TEAM MEMBER COULD ALSO BE A BUSINESS DOMAIN EXPERT, UI/UX DESIGNER, FORMER TOO, ETC.



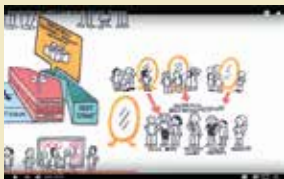
FLUID, ROLE-FREE COORDINATION SPANS TEAMS. TEAMS OWN THE **HOW**.



SCRUM MASTER AND MANAGEMENT ON A DIFFERENT PLANE, NO LONGER COORDINATING OTHERS' WORK. NOW THEY ABOLISH HARMFUL POLICIES AND TEACH SYSTEMS THINKING.

**IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO DEAL
WITH THE PROBLEMS DESCRIBED IN THIS STORY,**

WATCH



https://youtu.be/1BZf_Oa7W94.
(That's the letter O, not a zero.)

VISIT



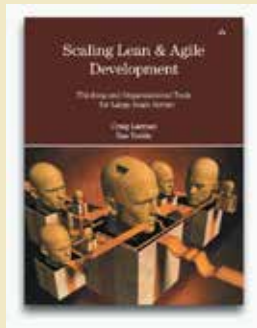
<https://less.works>.

FIRST READ



**Large Scale Scrum:
More With LeSS,
Larman/Vodde
(2016).**

THEN READ



**Scaling Lean & Agile
Development,
Larman/Vodde
(2008).**

THEN READ

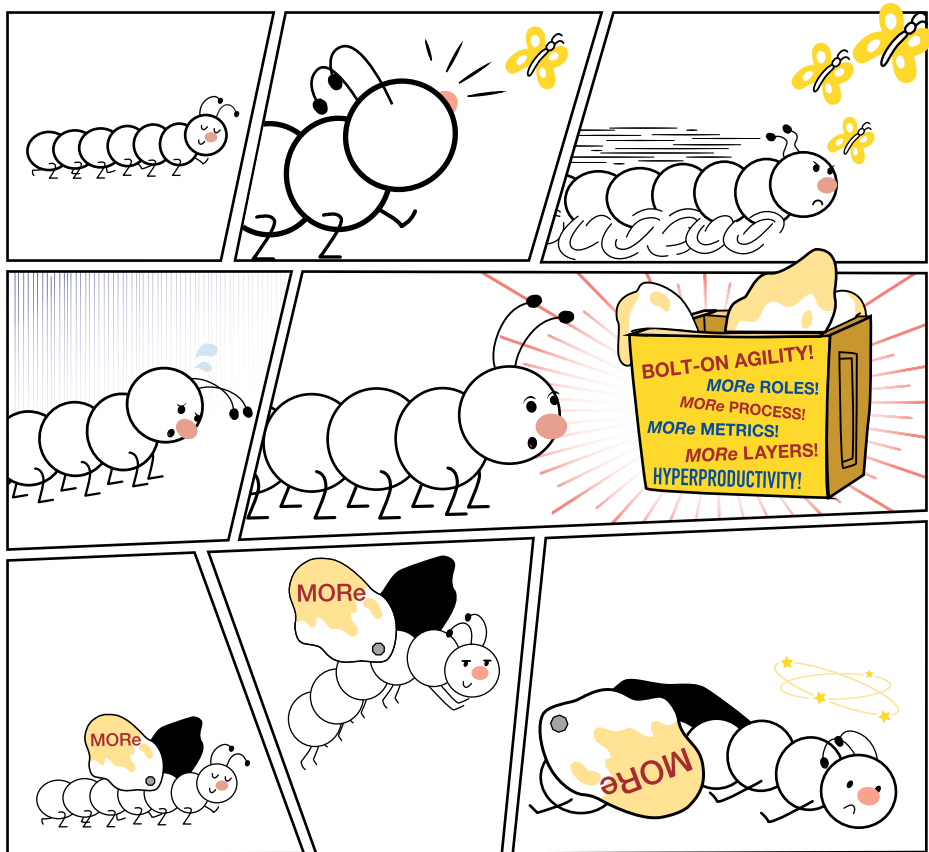


**Practices for Scaling
Lean & Agile
Development,
Larman/Vodde
(2010).**



MJ (MICHAEL JAMES)

has written many things,
including the Scrum Master Checklist at
<http://ScrumMasterChecklist.org>.
Email him at mj@seattle scrum.com
or tweet him at [@michaeldotjames](https://twitter.com/michaeldotjames).



When you get tired of MORE, try LeSS.