

ULTIMATE GUIDE

"SCRUM MASTER" IN REAL-WORLD

The ultimate toolbox for
Scrum Masters who are
not Scrum Masters

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SCRUMMASTER  *ed*

TOPICS COVERED

- 1 Scrum Master as a Project Manager
- 2 Scrum Master vs Agile Coach
- 3 Must-have skills
- 4 Tools and practices you must use
- 5 Preventing self-management



OVERVIEW

This document is an essential guide for Scrum Masters and organizations hiring Scrum Masters who **play a completely different role but call it "Scrum Master"**.

This is not an instruction manual. Instead it is an **inspiration and a starting point** for you if you want to **adapt and cherry-pick Scrum** to fit your "real-world" situation.

This guide has been written with **professional Scrum in mind** in order to stay as far away from it as possible.

The chapters on tools and self-management will also provide you with practical advice on how to actively damage the agile transition in the long-term.

1


SCRUM MASTER AS A PROJECT MANAGER

First and foremost, it's important to note that **Scrum Master is just another name for Project Manager**.



If your organization is going through an Agile transformation, just assign all Project Managers to play a Scrum Master role. It's essential that you don't ask them whether they want to do it, and you don't evaluate their fit for the role, skills or knowledge.

~~Project Manager~~ Scrum Master Responsibilities

- Planning, executing and evaluating project activities and resources needed. 
- Managing the team's performance and motivating them to do their work.
- Monitoring progress and providing regular status reports.
- Writing requirements and user stories. Experience as a Business Analyst is a plus.
- Analyzing and managing project risks.
- Estimating costs and developing the budget.
- Managing the deployment deliverables and releases. Strong technical knowledge is a plus.

2 SCRUM MASTER VS AGILE COACH

For big organizations it may be essential to split the Scrum Master role by responsibilities and hierarchical level to prevent unnecessary changes that they might bring.

SCRUM MASTER IS A TEAM MANAGER

It's important to limit the Scrum Master role to their team only.

Make sure that they don't have access to stakeholders due to their low rank in the company, and that they work through Agile Coaches for anything outside of their team.

This will allow you to gain some benefits such as:

- Saving costs by lowering the Scrum Master salary
- Less stress for stakeholders as they won't need to deal with team problems
- Ability to keep the status quo for as long as possible

ADVICE FOR AGILE COACHES

It's best if Agile Coaches do not work with the Scrum Teams at all, nor that they consult with Scrum Masters about what is happening "in the field". It means that Agile Coaches don't even need to have any experience working with teams and they can save lots of time!

Their goal is to work with leadership to make sure that stakeholders are satisfied and can declare their teams Agile when required.

To assert their position and rank, Agile Coaches must look down on Scrum Masters as juniors and undermine their opinions.

3 MUST-HAVE SKILLS

Of course, hiring the right person on the position of a Scrum Master is extremely important. Otherwise you might end up with someone who **doesn't have essential management skills** and might even **disagree with you on what Agile means**.

Here below is the list of skills you **absolutely have to look for** when hiring a Scrum Master. This is not an exhaustive list. Remember, the experience asked for **doesn't impact the salary**.

Some items in the list might seem **redundant or even contradictory**. Please don't pay attention to that.

- Demonstrated ability to **utilize project management tools** to plan and manage projects
- **PMP** or CSM certification
- Typically requires **5+ experience** as part of an Agile delivery team
- **Computer Science**, Engineering or equivalent degree
- Experience with tools **JIRA, Confluence, reports**, and similar tools
- **5+ years of IT Project Management** (end to end project experience, start of development till post implementation)
- 2+ years of hands on experience **managing 5+ team members**
- 5-7 years' experience in a Scrum Master role **with some project management background**
- At least 5 years of experience as a dedicated Scrum Master and **8 years experience in agile product development**
- At least 5 years of experience in **the exact industry and domain** your product is in

These are taken from actual job descriptions

4 TOOLS AND PRACTICES YOU MUST USE

No Scrum Master can be successful without mastering **specific tools and practices that are not part of Scrum**. It doesn't matter if you follow the Scrum rules as long as you implement all of those practices in your company.

If something worked for one company and one team, **you can just copy-paste it to your own team**. The team setup, culture, and product specifics have no effect on what practices would work best.



Use complicated software like **JIRA** or **AzureDevops**.

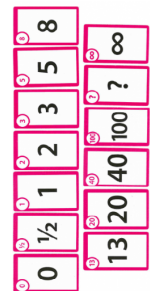


Helps you **add complexity** to an already challenging change for the team.

Use **velocity to measure performance** of the team and compare teams' velocity to see which one is better.



Helps you create some **competitive spirit** in the organization and will motivate employees to **work overtime**.

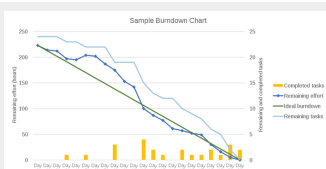


Apply **user story format to every work item** in the Product Backlog, including bugs and non-functional requirements.

Use **Definition of Ready as a gate to unwanted requests** from customers and stakeholders



Allows the team to **save time by not even reviewing the items** that don't meet the DoR.



Use **burndown chart to report progress** to management on a daily basis.

5 PREVENTING SELF-MANAGEMENT

The last piece of advice I have to give you is about **self-management - we don't want it**. Otherwise, people will just do whatever they want and will not do the work.

A Scrum Master must act as a manager of the team and **show their authority**. **Reporting status and performance** to management will help to create the right environment.

Assigning work

Make sure that everyone on the team has something to do at every point in time. You need to check on their tasks daily and assign them to people yourself.

Making all decisions

You will have to work hard to come up with solutions and ideas for everything. Don't waste your team's time to figure out what they think - you can implement new processes and practices as you see fit. You can announce those changes during Daily Scrum.

Reporting

Reporting is a very important way to increase transparency into internal issues you see. Share all of the team information, especially, what was said during retrospective to your management teams.

Estimating and setting deadlines

The best way to motivate people is by giving them a clear deadline for when deliverables are to be done. You should work directly with stakeholders and customers to promise delivery dates. DON'T consult the team because they will always say your deadlines are unrealistic.

...ON A SERIOUS NOTE...

I hope you enjoyed reading [my ultimate guide to how not to do Scrum](#) and how not to manage people in an Agile environment.

As you might have guessed it by now, this is [satire for the 1st of April](#).

My goal was [not to alienate you](#), but instead share some real-life examples of [what might be preventing you from getting benefits](#) from Agile and Scrum.

I know [you want your team and your company to succeed](#). So if you recognize anything from what I've written, it means you know [what you can improve!](#)

LET'S WORK TOGETHER

Hi, my name is Daria Bagina. I'm a [Professional Scrum Trainer](#) and a [practicing Scrum Master](#).

My mission is to enable professionals and businesses to stay competitive by [leveraging the benefits of agility](#).

I share my experiences and [transform them into practical tools](#) that can be used by anyone with ease.

Find me at

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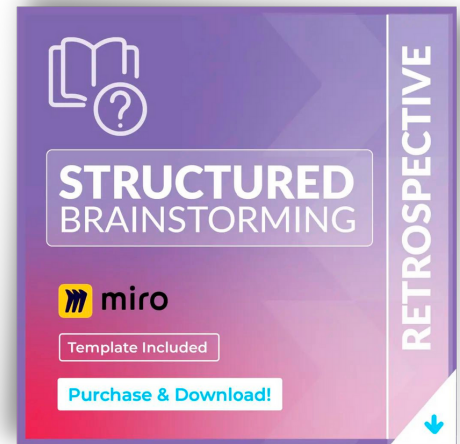
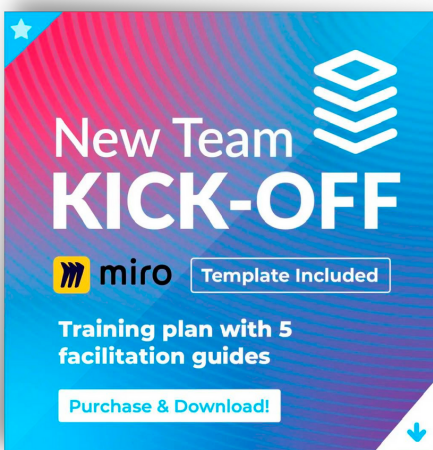
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Here's how else I can help you



Mastering Scrum Pro is a community for Scrum Masters and Agile professionals who want to invest in their continuous career development.

We come together to build new skills and to create long-lasting professional connections. We help each other solve real-life challenges in a safe and fun environment.

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