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# Mastering Professional Scrum

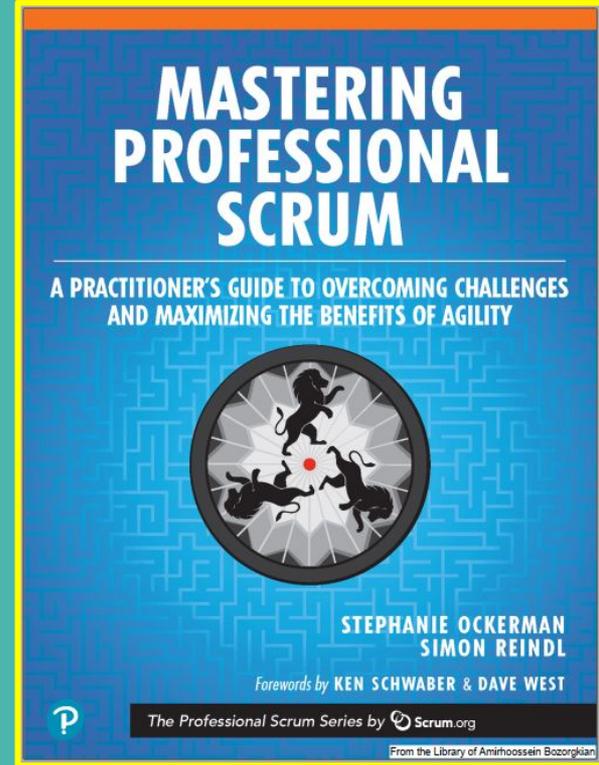
— A Practitioner's Guide to Overcoming  
Challenges and Maximizing the Benefits  
of Agility —

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# Mastering Professional Scrum

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Mastering Professional Scrum

# Leveraging the Organization to Improv

Chapter 7



# Organizations Need to Evolve to Succeed

Every organization needs structure and constraints on how it works so that it can successfully run its business.

1. The organization defines which products and services it offers to which customers, as well as the business models that make funding development and support activities possible.
2. This structure also defines how employees, partners, and service providers work together to deliver products and services.
3. The structure is often expressed in the processes and policies that the organization establishes and enforces.

# Organizations Need to Evolve to Succeed

Every organization also has a culture, a body of habits that bind people together and establish unwritten norms for behavior. This culture evolves from the sum of all human behavior within an organization and is influenced by the organizational structure and processes, including roles, goals, and incentives.

To help an organization get the most out of Scrum, you will typically need to evolve its culture, its processes, and possibly even its structure. To minimize harm to the organization and the Scrum Team, you need to do this intentionally; organizations and cultures have many inherent mechanisms, both explicit and implicit, to prevent accidental change. By introducing Scrum, you will inevitably introduce change, and the blow-back from unmanaged change is a frequent reason why Scrum Teams struggle, often without really understanding what is going on. Scrum Teams can sometimes work for a while without tackling the structural and cultural challenges of the organization, but eventually they will start running into impediments that are outside of their control. When those impediments cannot be resolved, the Scrum Team will reach a plateau, and they will struggle to maintain progress.

# Developing People and Teams

Organizations invest a lot of money in hiring and developing people, yet their actions can undermine their ability to retain and engage those same people over the course of their careers.

Actively disengaged employees cost U.S. companies approximately a half a trillion dollars a year in lost value, to say nothing of the cost of the merely “not-engaged” employees.

While it is no longer a reasonable expectation for people to stay at a company for their entire career, keeping employees purposefully engaged returns significant benefits.

# The Impacts of Performance Reviews and Compensation

Traditional organizations focus primarily on individual performance. More realistically, in the modern world in which we live and work, nearly everything we do requires collaboration between many people to achieve the results we desire. Rewarding individuals for work achieved by a team is a short-sighted and outdated practice, and one that sends the wrong message about what is important. Often, teamwork and team outcomes are not even considered or are only a minor part of evaluation. Furthermore, many compensation systems can seem arbitrary and based on titles and status rather than effort, growth, and outcomes achieved. And do annual performance reviews even make sense anymore? In today's fast-paced world, high-performance teams are the value-creation engines of the organization. Organizations that want to create and nurture high-performance teams need to reward teamwork, not individual performance.

# The Impacts of Performance Reviews and Compensation

**They can do this in a variety of ways, including the following:**

- Rewarding bonuses to teams, based on team results
- Letting teams decide how to distribute raises and bonuses among team members
- Heavily weighting contributions to the team when reviewing an individual's performance
- Providing people with frequent, meaningful, and actionable feedback
- Gathering feedback on an individual's performance from a wide range of people: team members, customers, and managers (sometimes called 360-degree feedback)
- Considering intrinsic rewards that increase a person's or a team's sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose

# Individual Career Paths

- Being transparent about which skills are needed in different parts of the organization, and where opportunities for developing those skills exist
- Helping them understand where they might need to grow their breadth of skills in addition to their depth of skills
- Connecting them with mentors who can provide career perspective and help them build a professional network
- Helping them grow their influence in the organization beyond their current team
- Supporting Communities of Practice to share and develop skills and experience
- Helping them to develop leadership skills in addition to technical or task-specific skills

# Sourcing Strategies and Team Impacts

If outsourcing is part of your strategy, consider these questions:

- Is this a transactional relationship or a longer-term partnership?
- How will the contractors get training and professional development? And will that be in alignment with that of the in-house employees they work with?
- Does the partner have an agile mindset and commitment to empiricism?
- How is the partnership assessed? What is the inspection and adaptation process for improvement?
- What risks does outsourcing pose to your business? What benefits does outsourcing provide to your business?

# Distributed Teams

- Help the team to self-organize, rather than try to solve problems for them.
- Invest in the team's growth with on-site collaboration sessions (at least once a year; quarterly is more desirable). Include activities focused on getting to know each other, establishing clear working agreements, aligning around product vision and understanding customers, and accomplishing shared goals together.
- Invest in communication and collaboration tools (e.g., video communication, interactive whiteboards).

# Getting Comfortable with Transparency

- Have open and honest discussions.
- Share and explore dissenting opinions.
- Believe that everyone is doing their best with what they know at the time.

# A Culture of Accountability, Not a Culture of Blame

When leaders say, “I need people to be more accountable,” they sometimes really mean they want someone to blame when things go wrong. This creates a culture of fear that prevents people from trying new things, gathering feedback, and adapting. Agility cannot survive in an organization with a fear-based, blame-oriented culture. Accountability is different from blame. Yes, it does mean owning your decisions and the results of those decisions, but the ultimate goal is not to have someone to blame. Instead, accountability means being focused on the purpose and having the right intentions. It’s about being transparent to how decisions were made, which enables learning and adaptation. It’s about accepting complexity and unpredictability and about creating shorter feedback loops to reduce risk and learn sooner.

An organization with a culture of accountability lets people own the decisions they should own (i.e., no one trumps the Product Owner’s decisions about what to build), demanding that they be empirical in their approach and supporting that with access to the people and information they need, and accepting that mistakes and surprising successes will happen along the way.

When organizations get comfortable with transparency and move from a culture of blame toward one of accountability, it requires leaders to let go of control—or rather, the illusion of control.

# Letting Go of (the Illusion of) Control

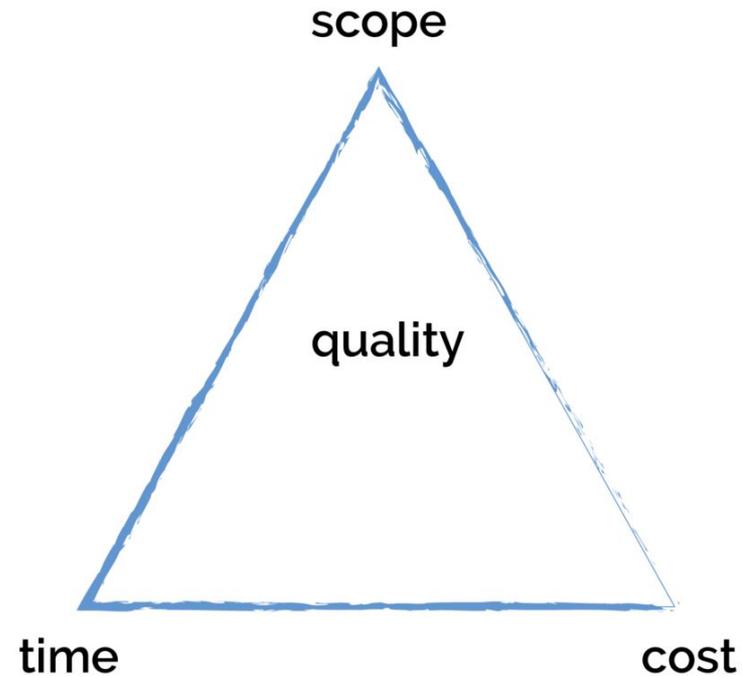
Managers in traditional organizations live in a cultivated illusion that they are “in charge.” Anyone who has filled a management role has come to realize how little control managers actually have, especially in cases where their organizations deliver complex products. There is simply no way for a manager to have all the knowledge and expertise needed to deliver great products. It really does take a cross-functional team that is capable of, and empowered to, make their own decisions. With accountability.

# Letting Go of (the Illusion of) Control

Until managers help teams to self-organize and take on that accountability, the team will never develop the skills, trust, transparency, commitment, focus, openness, courage, and respect that they need to deliver great results.<sup>7</sup> When a manager doesn't let go of the illusion of control to become a servant-leader, her teams will be mired in ineffectiveness and confusion.

# The Real Power of the Iron Triangle

the Iron Triangle often leads people to ignore outcomes as a measure of success. Something else that is important to understand about the triangle is that the three constraints of cost, schedule, and scope cannot all be fixed because we are dealing with complex work. Somewhere along the way, this point gets lost in many organizations, which demand that scope, schedule, and cost all be estimated and guaranteed.



# The Real Power of the Iron Triangle

**The real power of the Iron Triangle emerges when organizations recognize they cannot fix all of these variables, and they instead have the right conversations, openly and honestly, about the constraints impacting the decision to pursue (or continue pursuing) a given opportunity.**

- Can you deliver something of sufficient value quickly enough and for a cost that justifies the investment?
- Do you have familiarity with the work to be done? How are you factoring that uncertainty into the decision to pursue the opportunity?
- How frequently can you validate that your answers to the preceding questions are still valid?