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SCRUM

A Smart Travel Companion

A Pocket Guide - 3rd edition

Gunther Verheyen

Scrum - A Pocket Guide
3rd edition

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Colophon

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Foreword by Ken Schwaber

An outstanding accomplishment that simmers with intelligence.

Scrum – A Pocket Guide is an extraordinarily competent book. Gunther has described everything about Scrum in well-formed, clearly written descriptions that flow with insight, understanding, and perception. Yet, you are never struck by these attributes. You simply benefit from them, later thinking, “That was really, really helpful. I found what I needed to know, readily understood what I wanted, and wasn’t bothered by irrelevancies.”

I have struggled to write this foreword. I feel the foreword should be as well-written as the book it describes. In this case, that is hard. Read Gunther’s book. Read it in part, or read it in whole. You will be satisfied.

Scrum is simple, but complete and competent in addressing complex problems. Gunther’s pocket guide is complete and competent in addressing understanding a simple framework for addressing complex problems, Scrum.

Ken, 22 August 2013

Preface

The use of Agile methods continues to gain traction with Scrum being the most widely adopted definition of Agile. The general level of interest in Scrum is already huge and still its use keeps expanding, in and beyond software development.

Transforming an organization's way of working to Scrum represents quite a challenge. Scrum is not a cookbook 'process' with detailed and exhaustive prescriptions for every imaginable situation. Scrum is a lightweight *framework* of principles, rules and values that thrives on the *people* employing Scrum. A major potential of Scrum lies in the discovery and *emergence* of practices, tools and techniques and in optimizing them for a specific context.

The benefits realized through Scrum depend on the will to remove barriers, think across walls and separations and embark on a journey of discovery.

That journey starts by understanding the rules of Scrum to start playing Scrum. This book aspires to be your companion along the way, all the way. This book shows how Scrum implements the Agile mindset, what the rules of the game of Scrum are and how these rules leave room for a variety of tactics to play the game. The ambition of introducing all these aspects is to make this book a worthwhile read for people, teams, managers and change

agents regardless whether they are already doing Scrum or want to embark on their journey of Scrum.

My journey took off in 2003. My path of agility started with eXtreme Programming and Scrum and has inevitably been a cobblestone path. I have used Scrum with many teams, in various projects and initiatives, at different scales and at different organizations. I have worked with large and small enterprises and have coached individual practitioners and teams as well as executive management. I have partnered with Ken Schwaber, co-creator of Scrum, while shepherding the ‘Professional Scrum’ series of trainings, courseware and assessments of Scrum.org. I am gratified for being able to continue my journey of Scrum as an independent Scrum Caretaker.

I created the first edition of this book, ‘*Scrum - A Pocket Guide*’, in 2013. I consider how I described the Scrum Values in that first edition. In July 2016 they were added to the Scrum Guide. I also described the traditional three questions as a good, but optional tactic to use at the Daily Scrum. That optionality was added to the Scrum Guide, in November 2017, and the description was even removed from the 2020 edition, taking away all doubt that they are actually optional.

However, more and bigger challenges keep surfacing. The balance of society keeps drastically and rapidly shifting from industrial (often physical) labor to digital (often virtual) work. In many domains of society, the unpredictability of work increases incessantly. The industrial paradigm is rendered useless, definitely. The need for the Agile paradigm is bigger than ever, and thus the need for the tangible framework of Scrum to help people and organizations increase their agility in performing complex work in complex circumstances.

Scrum is increasingly being discovered as ‘*a simple framework that enables people to derive value from complex challenges*’, more than as only a way to deliver complex (software) products. More and different people ask

for guidance and insights on their journey of Scrum in domains beyond software and new product development. It required a more generic description of the rules of Scrum, different words, other angles to the known set of rules, which explains the changes of the previous, second edition of this book. Organizations look for clear insights in the simple rules of Scrum as they envision re-emerging their structures and their way of working around Scrum.

I believe that this third edition offers the more than ever needed, foundational insights for people and their organizations to properly shape their Scrum, regardless of their domain or business. The focus is still more on the intent and purpose of the rules and roles in the framework, while introducing some changes in terminology.

I thank Ken Schwaber for the foreword and his review for the original (2013) edition as well as the other reviewers Dave Starr, Patricia Kong and Ralph Jocham for their feedback on that first edition. I thank Blake McMillan and Dominik Maximini for their review of the second edition (2018). I thank Bhuvan Misra for his much-appreciated, critical feedback on this third edition. I thank all translators for their past and on-going efforts to spread my words in different languages. I thank all at Van Haren Publishing, and especially Ivo van Haren, for giving me the chance to express my views on Scrum.

Enjoy reading.

Keep learning,

Keep improving,

Keep . . . Scrumming.

Gunther

independent Scrum Caretaker

June 2013, August 2018, November 2020

Reviews

This Scrum Pocket Guide is outstanding. It is well organized, well written, and the content is excellent. This should be the de facto standard handout for all looking for a complete, yet clear overview of Scrum.

(Ken Schwaber, Scrum co-creator, August 2013)

Gunther has expertly packaged the right no-nonsense guidance for teams seeking agility, without a drop of hyperbole. This is the book about agility with Scrum I wish I had written.

(David Starr, Agile Craftsman, June 2013)

During my many Scrum training activities I often get asked: “For Scrum, what is the one book to read?” In the past the answer wasn’t straightforward, but now it is! The Scrum Pocket Guide is the one book to read when starting with Scrum. It is a concise, yet complete and passionate reference about Scrum.

(Ralph Jocham, Agile Professional, June 2013)

“The house of Scrum is a warm house. It’s a house where people are WELCOME.” Gunther’s passion for Scrum and its players is evident in his work and in each chapter of this book. He explains the Agile paradigm, lays out the Scrum framework and then discusses the ‘future state of Scrum.’ Intimately, in about 100 pages.

(Patricia M. Kong, Business Agility Enterprise Solutions, June 2013)

I recommend reading *Scrum – A Pocket Guide* early in your Scrum journey to help you gain a deeper understanding of why Scrum works and how the values and principles can positively impact the lives of your team as well as the health of an organization. Reading it later in your journey is great too. . . except for the feeling of regret wishing you had read it earlier.

(Blake McMillan, Principal Consultant, August 2018)

It is hard to find concise, to the point literature about Scrum. Most authors circle around the core topics instead of naming them. Gunther chose to break this pattern, enlightening us with the knowledge of the truly important parts of Scrum. When starting on your Scrum journey, make sure to take a copy of this guide along with you.

(Dominik Maximini, Agile Leadership Coach, August 2018)

“Small in size, big on value.” Gunther’s pocket guide to Scrum is one of the few books that I possess in both hardcopy and e-book format so that I have it with me all the time. It is a good read and a great companion to the Scrum Guide. Highly recommended for ambitious travelers!

(Bhuvan Misra, Agile Mason, November 2020)

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1

The Agile Paradigm

1.1 TO SHIFT OR NOT TO SHIFT

The software industry was for a long time dominated by a paradigm of *industrial* views and beliefs, based on and consisting of old manufacturing routines and theories. An essential element in this landscape of knowledge, views and practices was the Taylorist¹ conviction that ‘workers’ can’t be trusted to intelligently, autonomously and creatively perform their work. They are expected to only carry out pre-defined, executable tasks. Their work must be prepared, designed and planned by more senior staff. And then still, hierarchical supervisors must vigilantly oversee the execution of these carefully prepared tasks. Quality is assured by admitting the good

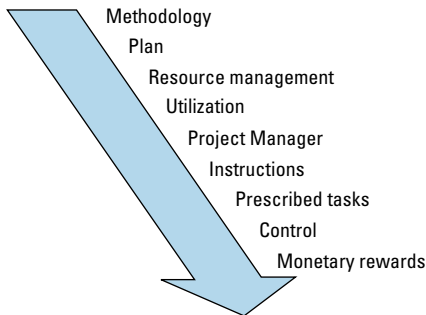


Figure 1.1 The industrial paradigm

and rejecting the bad batches of outputs. Monetary rewards are used to stimulate desired behavior. Unwanted behavior is punished. *The old 'carrots and sticks' strategies.*

The serious flaws of the old paradigm in software development are known and well documented. In particular, the Chaos reports of the Standish Group [Standish, 2011; Standish, 2013] have over and over revealed the low success rates of a traditional approach in software development. Many shortcomings and errors resulting from the application of the industrial paradigm in software development are well beyond reasonable levels of tolerance. The unfortunate response seems to have been to lower expectations. The definition of 'success' in the industrial paradigm is made up of the combination of on time, within budget and including all scope. It became accepted that only 10-20% of software projects were successful. *Although these criteria for success can be disputed, it is the paradigm's promise.* It became accepted that quality is low, and that over 50% of features of traditionally developed software applications are never used [Standish, 2002; Standish, 2013].

Although it is not widely and consciously admitted, the industrial paradigm did put the software industry in a serious crisis. Many tried to overcome this crisis by fortifying the industrial approach. The exhaustiveness of the upfront work was increased. More plans were created, more phases scheduled, more designs made, more work was done upfront, hoping that the actual work would be executed more effectively. *As the success rates did not increase, in the industrial paradigm it is assumed that the instructions are not clear and detailed enough.* But the core idea remained that the 'workers' needed to be directed. Supervision was increased and intensified. Even more detailed instructions were given.

Yet, little improved. Many flaws, defects and low quality remained and had to be tolerated.

It took some time, but inevitably new ideas and insights started forming upon observing the significant anomalies of the industrial paradigm.

The seeds of a new world view were already sown in the 1990s. But it was in 2001 that these resulted in the formal naming of 'Agile', a turning-point in the history of software development. A new paradigm was born, in the realm of the software industry. It is a paradigm that thrives upon heuristics and creativity, upon the (restored) respect for the creative nature of the work and the intelligence of the 'workers'. In the meantime, it is also expanding to many other domains of society.

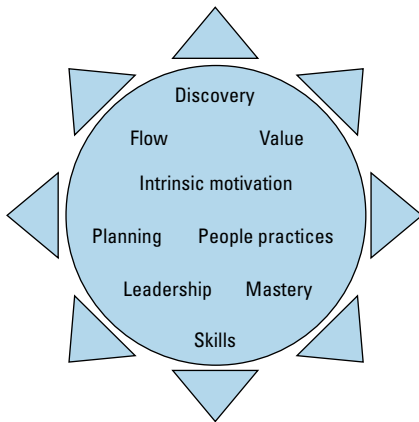


Figure 1.2 The Agile paradigm

The software industry has good reasons to keep moving to the new paradigm. The existing flaws are significant and widely known while the presence of software in society grows exponentially, making it a critical aspect of our modern world. However, by definition, a shift to a new paradigm takes time. And the old paradigm seems to have deep roots and a considerable half-life time. An industrial approach to software development continues to be taught and promoted as the most appropriate one.

Many say that Agile is too radical and they, therefore, propagate a gradual introduction of Agile practices within the existing, traditional frames. However, there is reason to be very skeptical about such gradual evolution, a slow progression from the old to the new paradigm, from waterfall to Agile.

The chances are high that a gradual evolution will never go beyond the surface, will not do more than just scratch that surface. New names will be installed, new terms and new practices will be imposed, but the fundamental thinking and behavior remain the same. Essential flaws remain untouched; especially the disrespect for people that leads to the continued treatment of creative, intelligent people as mindless ‘workers’, as ‘resources’.

The preservation of the traditional foundations keeps existing data, metrics and standards in place, and the new paradigm will be measured against those old standards. Different paradigms by their nature however consist of fundamentally different concepts and ideas, generally mutually exclusive. No meaningful comparison between the industrial and the Agile paradigm is possible. It requires honesty to accept the serious flaws of the old ways. It requires leadership, vision, entrepreneurship and persistence to embrace the new ways, thereby abandoning the old thinking.

A gradual shift is factually a status-quo situation that keeps the industrial paradigm intact.

There is overwhelming evidence that the old paradigm doesn't work. Much of the evidence on the better results of Agile used to be anecdotal, personal or relatively minor. The Chaos report of 2011 by the Standish Group [Standish, 2011] marked a turning point, holding clear research results for the first time that were confirmed in all later Chaos reports. Extensive research was done in comparing traditional projects with projects that used Agile methods. The report shows that an Agile approach results in a much higher yield, even against the old expectations of delivery on time,

on budget and with all the promised scope. The report shows that Agile projects were three times as successful, and there were three times fewer failed Agile projects compared to traditional projects. For large projects the changes in success rates were less outspoken, which is likely more due to starting with the wrong expectations in the large, i.e. the combination of time+budget+scope. Against the right expectations, with a focus on active customer collaboration and frequent delivery of value, the new paradigm would be performing even better, with frequent delivery of vertical slices of value to overcome the volume problem.

Yet, Agile is a choice, not a must. It is one way to improve the software industry. Research shows it is more successful.



Scrum helps.

Scrum is a tangible way to adopt and ingrain the Agile paradigm. The distinct rules of Scrum help in getting a grip on the new paradigm. The small set of prescriptions allows immediate action and results in a more fruitful, long-term absorption of the new paradigm. Using Scrum, people do develop new ways of working; through discovery, experimentation-based learning and collaboration. They enter a new state of being, a state of *agility*. This process helps their organizations transform towards such a *state* of agility too; a state of constant change, flux, evolution and adaptation. It allows freeing up time, people and energy for being innovative (again).

Nevertheless, despite its minimalism, experience shows that adopting Scrum often represents a giant leap. This may be because of the uncertainty induced by letting go of old certainties, even if those old certainties have proven not to be very reliable or...certain. It may be the time that it takes to