
**Creating Sprint Reviews that
*Attract, Engage, and
Enlighten* your 'Customers'**



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Introduction

Bob Galen



- Somewhere 'north' of 30 years experience ☺
- Various lifecycles – Waterfall variants, RUP, Agile, Chaos...
- Various domains – SaaS, Medical, Financial Services, Computer & Storage Systems, eCommerce, and Telecommunications
- Developer first, then Project Management / Leadership, then Testing
- Leveraged 'pieces' of Scrum in late 90's; before 'agile' was 'Agile'
- Agility @ Lucent in 2000 – 2001 using Extreme Programming
- Formally using Scrum since 2000
- Currently independent Agile Coach at RGCG, LLC and Director of Agile Solutions at Zenergy Technologies
- From Cary, North Carolina
- Connect w/ me via LinkedIn and Twitter if you wish...

Bias Disclaimer:

**Agile is THE BEST Methodology for Software Development...
However, NOT a Silver Bullet!**

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The End State...



- The entire company would engage in our sprint & release reviews
 - C-level engagement; the leadership team regularly came
 - We had a room that would handle 60+ folks
 - We started to record them on video; and hang TV's
 - Consistent meeting overflow!
- Engagement, questions, feedback, & understanding
- Reduced the need for serial handling of Customer Support training
- After the meeting demos; excitement & team feedback

iContact Context



- eMail Marketing SaaS company serving SMB customers
- 70k active paying customers; 100k + active customers
- ~275 employees, ~100 in technology
- ~ 10 Scrum teams working on various aspects of the product
- Development & Operations teams

- Applying Scrum since 2008
- Scrum of Scrums
- Dedicated PO / team, Chief Product Owner

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A Journey...2009



- My first Sprint Review –
 - Weakly attended
 - PowerPoint's per team; No working software
 - Creative entertainment—photo's, jokes, etc.
 - Ill conceived in most cases; poorly prepared
 - Audience politely laughed at appropriate moments
- Overwhelming feeling of...what just happened?

Back to Basics



- Ownership
- Execution & Demonstration
- Format
- Wrap-up
- Sprint Goals
- Release-level
- Whole Team View
- Preparation

Ownership



- Establish a view that the Product Owner ‘owned’ the review
 - Meeting dynamics – scheduling, invitations, content reminders
 - Establish marketing or demo themes
 - Handling pre-review expectation setting
 - Guiding team preparation; M/C for the review
- If attendance was inconsistent or poor, their job to sort out and improve it
- Capture & resolve feedback

Format



- Friday mornings, after 2-week sprints
- Every team would get a 20-30 minute ‘stage’ for their review
 - Would take most of the morning; 8:30 – 11am
 - Break
- Would couple related teams together
 - Development vs. Operations
 - 2-3 teams demonstrating shared GUI components
 - Thought about overall Review flow
- Team transitions were key
 - Including remote teams

Sprint Goals



- We set the stage in Sprint Planning for the review
- Aligning our sprint goal to the sprint review
- Ensuring we allocated time for team-based preparation
- Aligning user stories to what the customer(s) would see in the review
- “Begin with the End in Mind”

Whole Team View



- Everyone would participate in the review
 - Story developers
 - Testers
 - Scrum Master would normally speak to the ‘process’ and “team dynamics”
- Not uncommon for a new hire to be “on stage” after their first sprint
 - Exposure

Preparation



- Started in Sprint Planning
- Team would conduct a review planning session – discussing
 - Which stories to expose
 - Which work to filter
 - Who would demo the story? Specific preparation needs?
- Do a dry-run of the demo on Thursday afternoon
- Product Owners would discuss x-team orchestration
 - Flow, ordering changes

Execution & Demonstration



- Demonstrated all sorts of work
 - Stories & Features; Spikes
 - Tests; run results
 - Scripts, Environments & CI/CD
 - Diagrams showing our “planned path forward”
- End-to-end feature mantra visualized
- Always tried to connect-the-dots for the audience into
 - What we just did
 - Why they should care...value!
 - Coming attractions; building towards what end?

Wrap-up



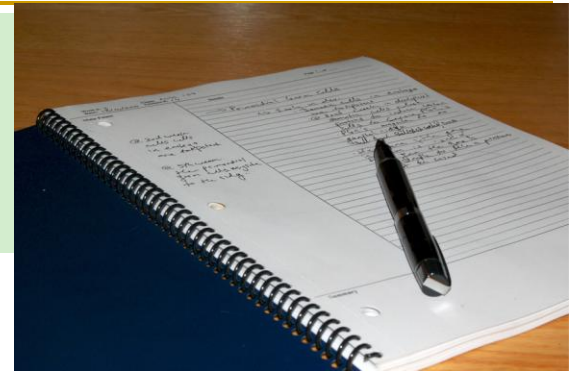
- Product Owners took ownership of all feedback and action logs
 - It was a rare event if we didn't maintain continuity from sprint to sprint review
 - Very common for groups to join teams in off-line demos
- Scrum Masters
 - would drive informal retrospectives with the teams on their readiness & performance
- Chief Product Owner
 - would reflect on attendance, engagement, and format improvement

Release Level



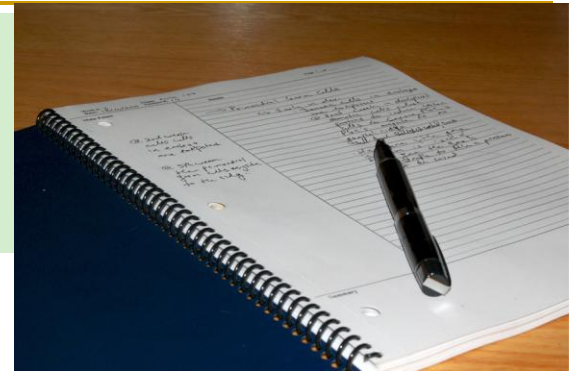
- Following a series of Sprint Reviews, we would conduct a Release Review immediately prior to release
 - End-to-end flows
 - Reminders of finalized features
 - Tell a more holistic story
 - Prepare the company for the release
 - Generate understanding & excitement
- Teams would fully prepare
 - A final “quality check” of sorts

Misc. points



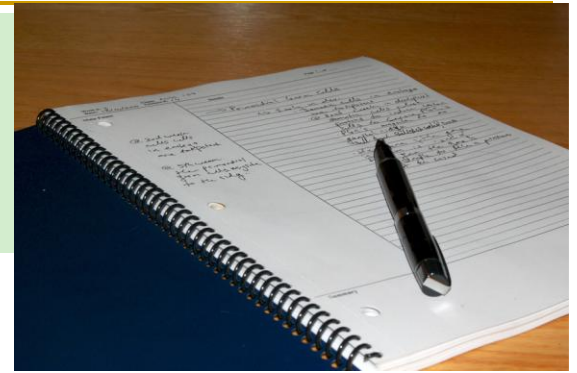
- Could a team “skip” a review? Yes
 - Depending on nature of the sprint
 - Depending on the results
 - We would ALWAYS communicate a transparent Why?
 - Rarely would happen twice in a row
- Must a team show ALL their work? No
 - Filter based on PO feedback
 - Theme of the Review; most relevant work
 - Expose all work via conversation

Misc. points



- Everything was from the perspective of “The Customer” or “The Stakeholder”
 - Honored their time; stayed “on schedule”
 - Informed of scheduling
 - Asked them to attend specific team demos as appropriate
 - Followed up with them if they missed a relevant demo
 - Checked their “pulse” frequently; ultimately...excitement?
- Transparent & Inform
 - Look for information sharing moments whenever possible
 - Direct & indirect

Misc. points



- Organized Flow
 - Introduction
 - Team Chart
 - Acknowledgements - Appreciations
 - Sprint Goal
 - Strategy? Success? Efforts? Discoveries? Results?
 - Demo's; Q&A
 - Coming Attractions
 - Fist-of-Five Towards Improvement
 - Close

Learning's Scheduling



- A demo-centric morning
- Varying scheduling
- Connecting related themes – across teams
- Early email notice
- Clear agenda's and precise timing
- Varied days, timing, length over time – based on customer feedback (and attendance)
- Regular tempo

Learning's None-features



- Refactoring efforts
- Showing a game-plan for development
 - Filling in the “blanks” as we progressed
- Showing automation growing in coverage
- Showing defect backlogs
- Informing of “Coming Attractions”
- Showing testing activity -- Risk-Based strategy
- All work was fair game

Learning's Failure



- “Calling” our Sprints seemed to matter
 - Successful or Failed
 - Notion of “Failing Forward” reinforced throughout organization
- Remote member support
 - First remote team Review – recovery
 - Continued to refine the “technology”
- Missed Reviews
- Lack of preparation

Learning's Quality Step



- Moving code nearer to Production
- Dry-run found many issues
- Simply planning for the review helped us focus on “working software”
- Alignment with the Sprint Goal
- Focus

Learning's Taking Feedback



- Not being defensive
 - Setting a company-wide example
 - Coached
- Embracing the feedback – before, during & after
- Doing something with it
 - Listening, acting, showing forward results
 - Aggregating
 - Discussion & passionate debate

Learning's Attendance



- Attendance was the ultimate measure
 - Did the right stakeholders & customers attend? Did they engage?
 - A Fist of Five to gather fast feedback
 - Remember: this is the Highest Priority work “on the Planet”!
- If we had “low” attendance
 - Why? Immediately move to get the “right folks on the bus” – PO strategy(s)
 - Raise it as an impediment
 - Never had to cancel “due to lack of interest”, but came close...

Summary



- More Subtle Lessons
 - Laser focus on your customer
 - Have a unique demo strategy; Prepare
 - Show everything – not just “features”
 - Constantly explain the impact/import to the business (even for technical items)
 - Fail Forward
 - Be honest & transparent
 - Every demo is important
 - Have the vision & expectation of Powerful Reviews

Wrap-up

- What were the most compelling ideas or lessons?
- What adjustments will you make to your Sprint Reviews?
- What ideas did we miss?
- Final questions or discussion?



Thank you!

Contact Info

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Blogs

Project Times -

<http://www.projecttimes.com/robert-galen/>

Business Analyst – BA Times -

<http://www.batimes.com/robert-galen/>

My Podcast on all things 'agile' -

<http://www.meta-cast.com/>

*Scrum Product Ownership – Balancing Value
From the Inside Out* published by RGCG in
2009.

