

Addressing “Problems” with Scrum — #1

Lightning Webinar — February 2019

What Do We Mean By “Problems”?

- These are perceived problems with Scrum.
- Some people believe these problems mean that Scrum is no good.
- In our opinion, these “problems” are not really problems — at least not in a good situation.
- Some of these are classic myths about Scrum.
- Some are symptoms of “Scrum” done badly.



Quickly — Wow!

- So, we will address these problems very quickly.
- If you really have one of these problems and it is much believed by the people around you, you will probably need more help.
- At least we are giving you a start...



3 “Problems”

These are the 3 problems to address today:

- Scrum is a panacea or silver bullet.
- Too many meetings!
- Why so much transparency?



1 — Silver Bullet

- They think that Scrum will magically — despite all the impediments you may have — make things perfect.
- And they think that every project will win — simply and solely because we are doing Scrum.



The Truth

- Scrum has helped LOTS of teams achieve:
 - Hyper-productivity (5x - 10x)
 - More fun / happiness
 - Higher quality
 - Much more BV for the customers
 - Lower hours
 - Less stress
 - All at the same time!



AND....

- You need at least some basic conditions.
- Exactly what all these conditions are is debatable, but many are commonly agreed on.



Some Basic Conditions for Success

- A. An important set of work
- B. An ability to define that work well enough
- C. A team that wants to do that work — an inspired team would be great
- D. A team that is willing to try Scrum
- E. The courage to face the truth
- F. Someone who knows Scrum well enough to explain it accurately (not a beginning SM)
- G. A 100% allocated and stable Team



More Conditions

1. A team that is not dysfunctional
2. A team that is capable enough
3. A willingness to identify enough impediments
4. A willingness by the team and the organization to change things to fix impediments
5. The thoughtfulness to add to Scrum usefully
6. The ability to get decent feedback each Sprint



Minimal Conditions?

- Most experienced people agree on these 2:
 - The team is trained together for 2-3 days.
 - The team (and those around the team) have a good “Agile coach” for a good period of time.



A Capable Team

- Basics — best model under normal conditions
- 7 full-time people
- One PO
- One SM
- Five Implementers — probably 3 coders and 2 testers
- Fairly capable (not the “dream team,” probably)



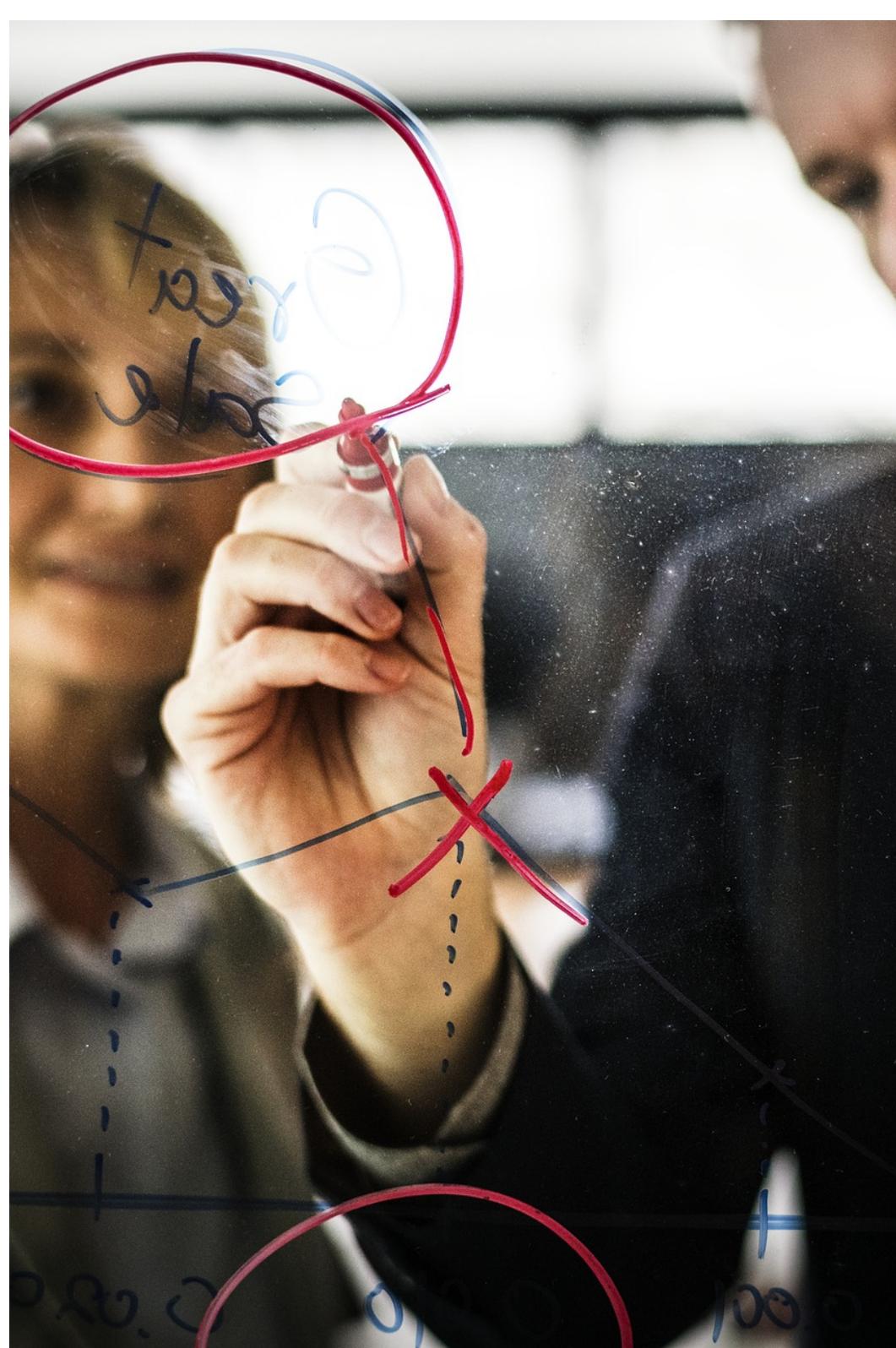
#2 — So Many Meetings!!!

- There are 4 defined meetings. Yep.
- They are all professionals at having meetings that suck — with years of experience doing that.
- Some by nature (personality) also dislike meetings.
- Some people will never be team players.
- The Scrum idea is that the team must communicate a lot (more) with each other to be more effective.



You Must Convince Them

- One of the root causes is that we do not try enough to explain to them.
- *Note:* Scrum calls them events and not meetings. A small help.
- We must explain again and again.
- Beginning SMs do not have enough experience to explain well, typically.



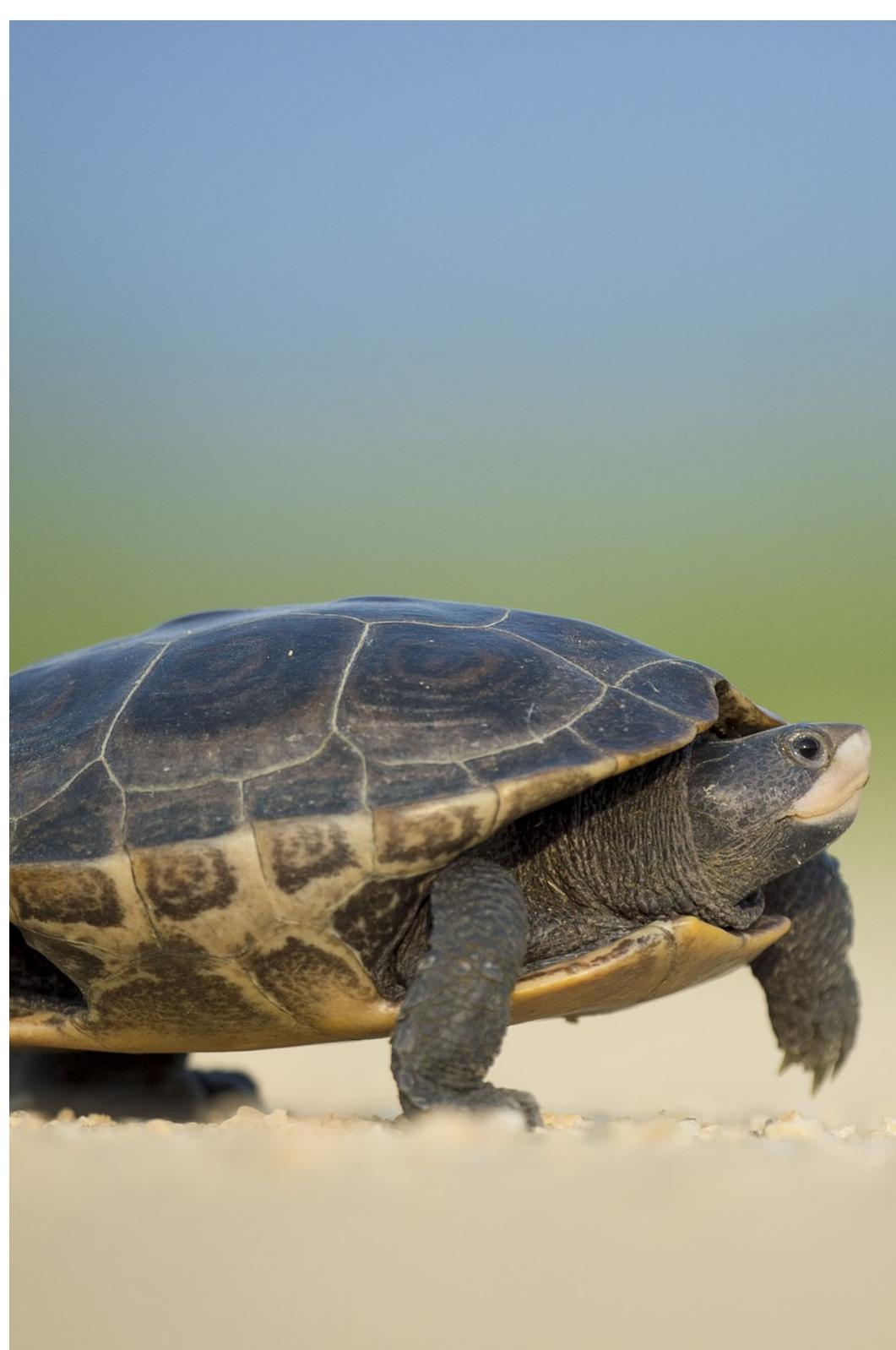
The Truth?

- We will talk about it more in the next section, but...
- The 4 Scrum events make things much more transparent.
- So long as it is good things, most people are fine with that (although someone will say, “Why are we wasting time talking about good things?”)
- In general people are not comfortable talking about “bad things,” failures, problems or mistakes. They think it will hurt.



Slow Is Fast

- These “events” enable us to be smarter.
- By becoming smarter — if we use it well — we become more productive.
- “By going **slow**, we go **faster**.”



Other Key Points

- Well-run meetings
- Everyone talks well
- Everyone listens well
- Everyone uses the information
- Everyone sees the usefulness of the meeting to himself or herself — and especially for the team
- The meetings are about the team, not the individual



No Team? Not Good

- The meetings will never be good if the team does not want to be a real Scrum Team.
- Example: If they do not care about team success, no one wants to listen.
- This is often a silent problem.
- How many non-team players before it's not a team?



Often the “Rules” Are Not Well Known

- There are many rules or recommendations for each meeting.
- Many are not in the Scrum Guide, but are strongly recommended in most situations.
- If the team does not know these rules, the quality of the meeting goes down.



4 Example “Rules”

- The user stories should be estimated before the start of the Sprint Planning Meeting.
- The team has voted on the details of the stories before the Sprint Planning Meeting.
- The team members have updated their hours on the tasks before the Daily Scrum.
- We will mainly work on one impediment together in the Retrospective.



Well-Run

- There are lots of ideas about running a meeting well.
- The ScrumMaster must become good at this.
- Time-boxes are one part.
- Getting the talkative people to talk less, and the quiet to talk more, is another part.
- It's an important, complex skill set for the ScrumMaster.
- Note: the SM is *not* a dictator.



#3 — Too Much Transparency!

- Scrum tries to force more of the truth out on the table, as we say.
- The organization must see its own impediments.
- The team members must admit to being imperfect, daily.
- We must avoid the blame game.
- Mostly: “That’s not a bug, it’s a feature.”
- But this is often a difficult adjustment.



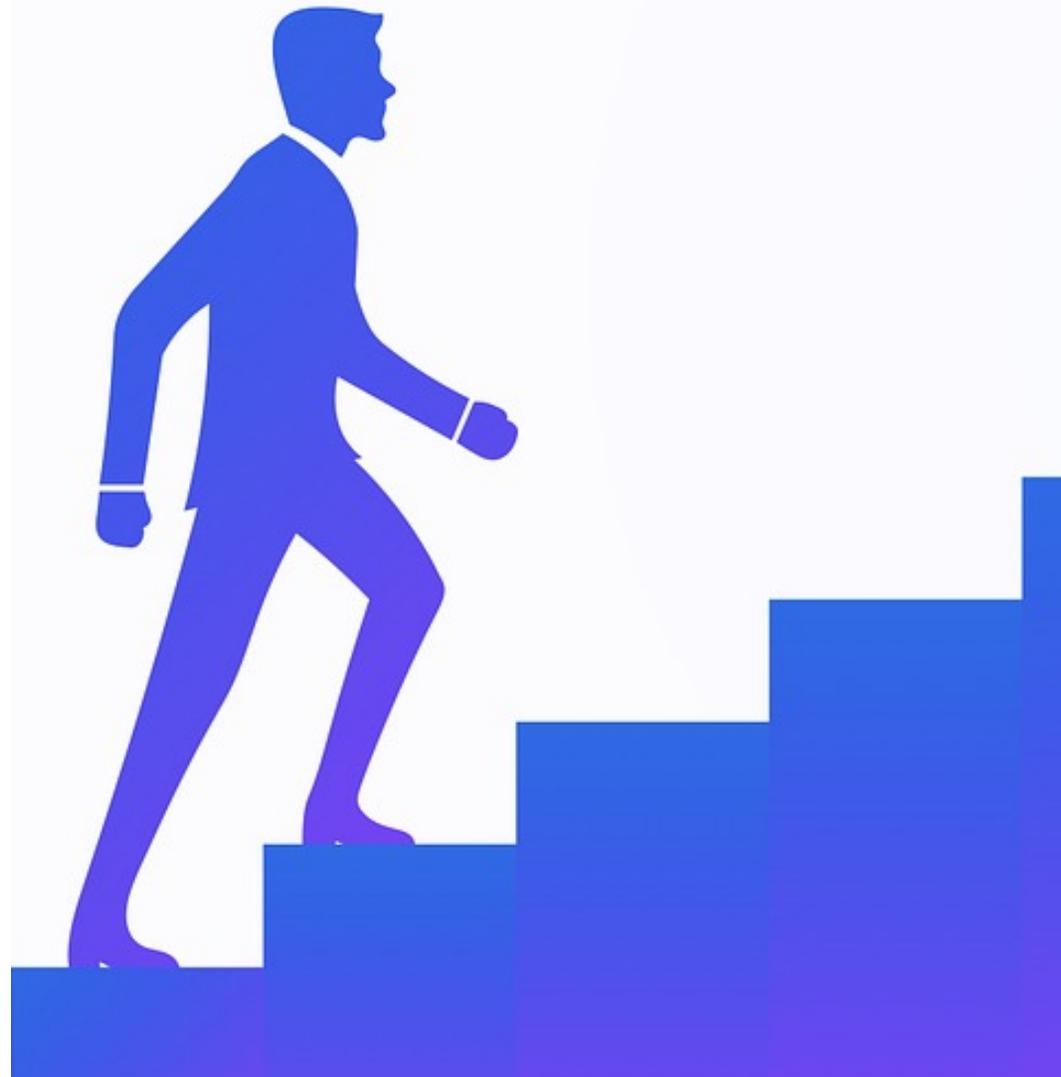
One Root Cause

- In the past: “Transparency often led to the manager punishing me.”
- Often wrongly, unfairly or uselessly.
- Hence: “They can’t handle the truth.”
- They remember as if today.



It Hurts

- I mean: We often have had this fantasy of being “perfect” or at least really good.
- Scrum shows us all these imperfections and makes clear that we suck.
- For the ego, it is tough to take.
- So, have sympathy that it is hard for them (if you were in their shoes, it would be hard for you, too).



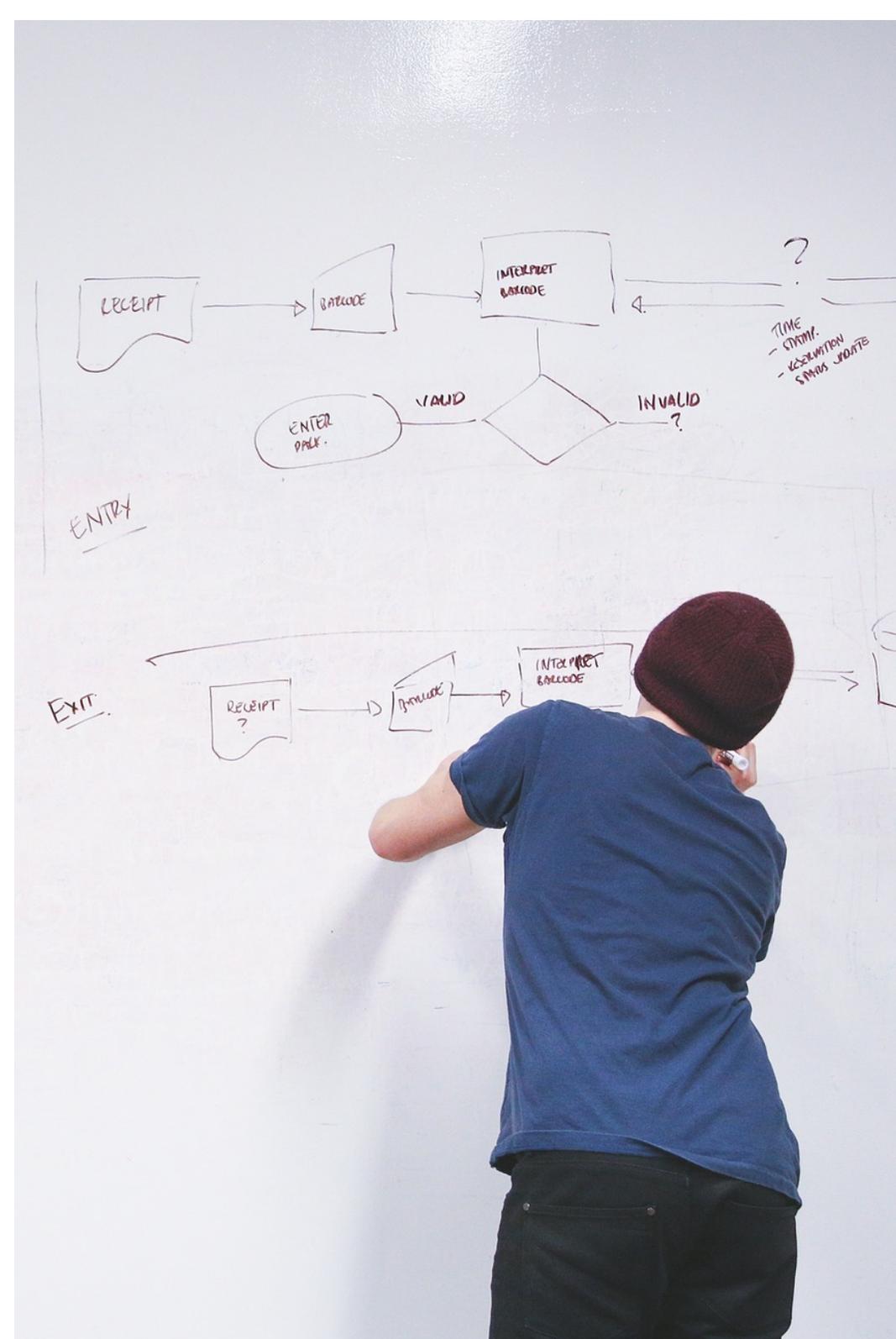
But, Courage!

- Here's where the Scrum value of courage comes in.
- We must learn to tell the truth.
- We must experience telling the truth — and it helps!
- At least enough truth so that the team and the organization can become *better*.



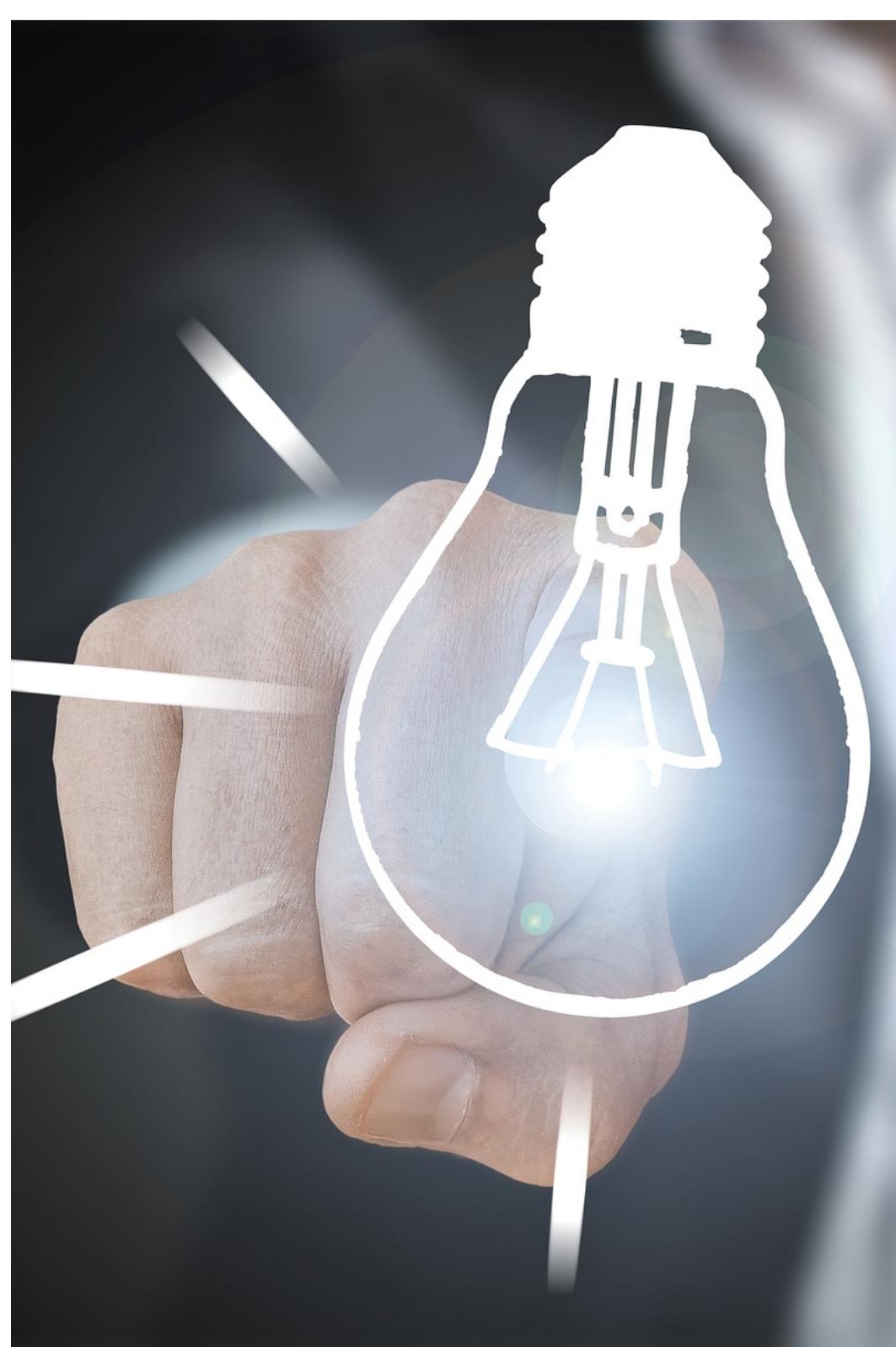
Explain: Again and Again

- The SM and others must explain the value of transparency.
- And, when we fall back into negative patterns, help us stop that.
- For example: If we start to do the blame game again, stop it, and remind us not to do it.
- But it is only human to fall back into old patterns.



How the Truth Could Help (examples)

- We see what we are committing to in the Sprint Planning Meeting.
- The Daily Scrum information is more useful. We can help each other better.
- We see the flaws in the product better and can fix them sooner (cheaper).
- We can identify the “best” impediment and then fix it.
- We don't have to waste energy pretending. People are appreciated for who they really are.



Two Keys

- Minimize the negative effects of the truth.
 - Ex: Stop the blame game.
- Maximize the (perceived) benefits of the truth.
 - Ex: We can swarm and help any user story that is stuck.



Summary

- A lot is just explaining, again and again.
- Some is doing the right thing and then showing the benefits of having done the right thing.
- All cases: Often we have “people problems” ... much of it is the lack of understanding in the right people.
- These are hard and worthy of being worked on.
- Good luck! ***You can do it!***



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Addendum

- We made some statements very quickly. If you think what we suggested will not work at your place, perhaps we should talk more.

