

# **When Should a ScrumMaster Be Full-Time?**

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Webinar, January 2020, Joe Little

# Agenda

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- When I think we should have a FT ScrumMaster (usually, with Scrum done professionally)
- Situations where it seems we can't. And some brief thoughts about them
- NEXT Webinar: How to convince managers to give us a Full-time ScrumMaster
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# When? Normally!

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- **Normal includes:**
  - Team of 7 (about)
  - Relatively stable team
  - Playing professionally
  - You want to get better, and your company is willing to change
  - You want to **win**
  - You can find a decent SM (normally you can)



# Other Conditions

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- You (normally) intend to increase Velocity significantly
- **AND the team will be:**
  - happier, have more fun
  - produce higher quality
  - work fewer hours (~40/wk)
  - deliver more BV per SP



# If so, is the SM Valuable?

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- **ABSOLUTELY!!**
- In a year, a pretty good SM can fix impediments so that Velocity increases by 100%.
- With some basic reasonable assumptions, that produces an additional \$3 million in value on a go-forward basis, which is like having a second team for free.
- VERY valuable. And fun!



# Conditions

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- The SM is decent at working on impediments.
- The company gives the Scrum Team some money, people and approval to fix impediments.
- The company is willing to change.
- The team identifies decent impediments.
- We work on impediments one at a time in priority order.
- “Impediment” is defined broadly.



# What does the ScrumMaster DO?

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- We won't review the litany of things...
- BUT, the main thing is **“he/she works on impediments.”**
- They either fix them or get others to fix them.
- That is, with his/her bare hands or on getting others to fix that impediment quicker (better)
- And, therefore, the Velocity goes up significantly
- The SM is BUSY all day!



# The SM is Not alone

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- We already mentioned that the **managers** support: money, people, approval
- The **Scrum Team** must identify good impediments
- The SM can fix some
- The Scrum Team can fix some
- **People outside the team** can fix some (ex: managers)
- **People outside the company** can fix some





# What is an Impediment?

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- Any opportunity for improvement
- **Types (expressed w smile):**
  - I suck.
  - We suck.
  - They suck.



# Examples

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- Company culture
- Better automated testing
- People issues
- Improved basic skill sets
- The flow of details per story is not working well enough
- Etc., etc.



# Impediments must be Prioritized

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- By ROI.
- Usually benefit (increased velocity) over cost (effort)



# So, what is the SM Doing?

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- Mostly:
  - Fixing impediments
  - Getting others to fix an impediment more quickly (or correctly)
  - **Putting it all together**, so the Scrum Team is more successful



# When should the SM not be FT?

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- Let's discuss 7 cases.
- Too quickly...



# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 1)

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- When the Scrum Team is only 4 people (total) — then the ratio is too high (SM time to Scrum Team time).
- BUT... usually you should get a bigger team.



# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 2)

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- We have 10 teams, but only 5 SMs (teams are ~7).
- OK.
- BUT get 5 more SMs or train them.
- Leave 5 teams without a SM until you hire new ones. The difference should be very clear.
- It is usually unhelpful to be **half-baked**.



# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 3)

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- We are not playing professionally, so we decided to break the rules.
- OK... The game is not so important. And the results will be less good, but it's "just for fun" in some sense.
- **DO NOT** be unprofessional at work. Not recommended.
- **TELL everyone:** "We are not playing by all the rules because...."





# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 4)

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- You do not have a stable team (but it is still ~7 people).
- OK. That's a big impediment. Try hard to fix it. (Many possible root causes.)
- How is having a PT SM supposed to be justified by this?



# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 5)

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- We have a senior SM, so she gets split across 2 teams.
- NO! Context switching destroys productivity.
- There may be a role (now or soon) for an Agile Coach across multiple teams. Working with the teams (and each as a FT SM)...to help make them better.



# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 6)

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- There was so much mayhem, we thought we'd make the SM part-time too, to be "consistent."
- Not stable
- Weak team
- Demotivated team
- Many impediments with no obvious progress
- Pig-chens
- Part-time PO
- Etc., etc., etc.



# When should the SM not be FT? (Ex. 7)

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- We are so good already, we only need a PT SM.
- **NO!**
- Are you a hyper-productive team? (No.)
- Is it easy to win the Super Bowl two years in a row? (No.)
- Can your team get better?  
**YES!!!** Is it worth it? **YES!!!**



# Problems - 1

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- **Note:** *Problems are really just impediments.*
- “I never heard this idea before.”
- “Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.”
- The SM is not very good.
- The Scrum Team does not identify good impediments.
- We do not track Velocity at all.
- We do not track Velocity across multiple Sprints.



# Problems - 2

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- The Dept is unwilling to admit to the truth.
- The Org is really unwilling to change.
- Unstable team
- Demotivated team
- No one follows any rules



# Your Questions

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- As time permits...
- Please type them in the chat window.
- I hope that each person can ALSO talk and explain a bit...



# Next Time (webinar)

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- How we got here
- How you can fix it
- re.... Not full-time SM





# My Question #1

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- Was this helpful?
- Please answer in 1 sentence via chat.



# My Question #2

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- Which slide (thought, idea) was most useful?
- Answer in chat with the number or the title. Or some comment...



# Thank you!

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**Time up!**

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