

Our Favorite Scrum Mistakes

See *comments* at the bottom.

BASIC

- 1 Not everybody on board understands they are on the same ship
- 2 Lack of courage
- 3 Lack of persistence
- 4 Having a project manager
- 5 Failure to work as a team. [!!!!!!]
- 6 Failure to use the necessary technical practices.
- 7 Failure to be anywhere near Done at Sprint end [and with no decent explanation]
- 8 No impediment list
- 9 Best impediments not aggressively identified
- 10 All impediments found in only a few categories
- 11 Inability to make a business case for an impediment fix to a manager.
- 12 No investment to fix impediments
- 13 Changing Sprint length
- 14 Changing team members during a Sprint
- 15 ScrumMaster who is PO too
- 16 No shared definition of done; No Def of Done at all
- 17 The work is done in 5 phases. It is made agile by doing the phases in iterations called Sprints.
- 18 Unfixed bugs on (so-called) done stories

PRODUCT OWNER

- 19 A product backlog that shows an illusion of understanding business value
- 20 A PO with zero understanding of technology
- 21 A PO who has never met a customer
- 22 A PO with no support from 'the business' (depends on context what 'business' means)
- 23 A PO who does not understand the 80-20 rule

- 24 A PO with no nose for business value
- 25 Product Owner not empowered.
- 26 PO who is the boss of the SM
- 27 Lack of a PO...
- 28 PO not collaborating with the team, not available to the team.
- 29 A product owner not invited to the retrospective :)
- 30 More than one product owner

SCRUMMASTER

- 31 No SM
- 32 No SM worth a dang
- 33 SM who has not been to a CSM class
- 34 SM allocated too low
- 35 SM not allocated 100%
- 36 SM with zero people skills
- 37 ScrumMaster is the technical leader and has the final word on technical decisions;
- 38 ScrumMasters doing coordination work in a Scrum of Scrums meeting (actually recommended by the black book, then unrecommended by everyone I know, but still persists for some reason)
- 39 ScrumMaster delegating and sometimes imposing stuff to the Team.
- 40 Scrum Master spread across 4 teams...
- 41 SM spread across 2 teams

IMPLEMENTERS / TEAM ROLE

- 42 No Backlog Refinement done with the Dev Team, so Sprint Planning gets long, boring and risky;
- 43 Dev Team committing to the Sprint Backlog items during Sprint Planning, instead of committing to a Sprint Goal...
- 44 ...therefore, Sprint gets labeled as "failure" because Dev Team didn't complete all the items (they didn't work towards a Sprint Goal);
- 45 The Team members working over night and weekends trying to complete all Sprint Backlog items (or even trying to reach the Sprint Goal), so no sustainable pace nor room for learning from mistakes;

- 46 Every Dev Team member working on a different item, in any order (not from the most important one);
- 47 High specialization on the Dev Team, so some people only work on some determined kinds of tasks or items;
- 48 Development Team members spread across 4 teams...
- 49 Dev Team members not 100% dedicated to one Team
- 50 Checking in code and immediately going home without checking that the build worked, leaving the build broken for others to fix. Even worse, done 3 times by the same person :(
- 51 No testing in the sprint
- 52 No professional testers in the Team

MEETINGS

- 53 Technical or business discussions during Daily Scrum, so meeting could take longer than expected and not create the desired visibility;
- 54 Dev Team members reporting to the ScrumMaster on Daily Scrum;
- 55 No stakeholders at Sprint Review, so Dev Team is presenting to the Product Owner;
- 56 No action plans from Retrospectives, so almost no improvements are made;
- 57 Stressful, finger pointing Retrospectives;
- 58 Deciding which team member will do which work during the Sprint Planning Meeting (an early mistake we made, led to team members working by themselves, not sharing when getting behind, etc.)
- 59 Managers talking and interrogating team during the daily
- 60 Daily Scrum in the team room with screens turned on [unclear, I guess screens are distracting]
- 61 A daily scrum only twice a week

OTHER

- 62 Focus on "get all this done" rather than true Agile project.
- 63 Asking team to "meet their commitments", meaning make their estimates come true.

- 64 Estimates, period. [Most CSTs do not agree on this one]
- 65 Stretch goals.
- 66 Items [PBIs] left on a Sprint automatically going to the next Sprint;
- 67 Tasks in the Product Backlog
- 68 "To Work With" people and forget "To Work FOR" people
- 69 Deciding what will happen in Sprint 2, Sprint 3, Sprint 4, and Sprint 5 before Sprint 1 has been completed
- 70 Team reporting during daily [unclear]
- 71 A Prod Bklog that shows no understanding of BV
- 72 A PITA manager pushing the Team
- 73 Lack of an initial PBL.
- 74 A Development Manager.
- 75 A Development Manager insisting that all teams document their Retrospectives using the same document template
- 76 A Development Manager sending all teams their Definition of Done
- 77 A pause between sprints
- 78 Managers expecting the burndown chart to be linear
- 79 Scrum inside an incompatible framework (waterfall, 'Prince2', etc)

Comments:

This list of mistakes came from some great Scrum Trainers and Coaches, including myself. People with significant experience. There are some inconsistencies or contradictions. Or there will seem to be, as with life. Some good Scrum people would argue that some of these are NOT mistakes. Some might argue about the real root cause.