Hi guys,

Welcome to this week’s issue of The Lean Pig! In the spirit of the 2012 Olympics we will be doing a Scrum marathon over the next few weeks in the newsletter. For the next few weeks, each week’s newsletter will focus on a different aspect of Scrum and its process. The focus of this week’s newsletter, however, will be a high level overview of Scrum to ensure a solid foundation is set before continuing with more in depth topics over the following weeks.

Read on to find out more!

**Scrum Marathon!**

When making the decision to adopt agile, there are several different methodologies available to choose from. Each of these methodologies offer different ways of delivering high quality business value and each one can be customized to suit individual environments. Some examples of these methodologies are Extreme Programming (XP), Feature-driven development (FDD), Crystal methods and (to some degree) Scrum.

Some people think of Scrum as an agile methodology, while others rather see Scrum as a management framework, something to manage a “chaotic agile environment”. The reason for this is that Scrum does not suggest any programming practices, but provides a framework with management principles to guide teams to “early delivery of business value” (Cockburn). Due to this it is thus possible to combine Scrum with other agile methodologies to have a full set of management as well as programming principles. Currently in industry Scrum combined with XP is the most used agile methodology.

There are numerous sources out there explaining the Scrum process and all the roles involved, each only differing in the level of detail covered. There are three main roles involved in Scrum, namely the Product Owner, the Scrum Master and Development Team. The Product Owner is the link between the Development Team and business and assists the team in delivering the best business value to the customer. The Scrum Master can be seen as the coach of the team, and is responsible for removing any impediments preventing the Development Team from doing their work. The Development Team’s responsibility is to actually complete the tasks identified.

During the process of Scrum, the Product Owner identifies a wish list of all the requirements needed and sorts them by priority which is then called the product backlog. The team then holds a sprint planning meeting during which the team selects a subset of tasks from the product backlog, which is then called the sprint backlog. The team then decide on how to implement the tasks selected. Completion of tasks needs to happen within two to four week cycles (sprints) while the team meets everyday for the daily scrum. The daily scrum is a simple and straightforward process of discovering and discussing the issues and problems and prioritizing the tasks during a sprint. After the cycle is complete a potentially shippable product should be ready for the customer’s review and start to be used.

According to the Scrum Alliance, there are several benefits that teams will experience if Scrum is implemented properly. Firstly they will deliver high priority items first, in this way unnecessary features will never be built. A well-functioning Scrum team will be four times more productive and deliver twelve times better quality than the industry average. Scrum supports the agile concept of self-organizing teams and in turn improves team morale. Scrum also facilitates continuous learning, leading to delivery of a high quality product as well as assisting the organization to reach their financial goals. Additionally Scrum will assist in improving communication and help solving that traditional organizational silos are keeping down to bridge the gap between business and IT. The benefits listed here only form the tip of the iceberg of the positive influences that Scrum can possibly have on an organization.

Despite the fact that Scrum has shown positive results and several benefits in countless projects, there are several potential challenges that project teams can face when implementing Scrum. According to *Rumas and Gravendee* there are nine challenges to adopting Scrum that they have experienced. They have divided these nine challenges into the two categories of the Agile Aspiration and the Agile Learning. These nine challenges include poor organizational feedback cycles inhibiting learning and growth, 50% turnover rate, lack of trust, just implementing Scrum without a clear goal, product owners with a lack of Scrum knowledge, following Scrum strictly and only by textbook without considering your unique environment, teams and organizations lack a “meta-ScrumMaster” to handle organizational challenges out of the team’s control, just implementing agile methodologies without considering their environment and the bigger picture. From these challenges it can clearly be seen that lack of knowledge with regards to Scrum can cause numerous challenges within an organization.

It is important to make sure that all roles involved fully understand the bigger picture of implementing Scrum. This will enable transparency and improve communication throughout the organization and in this way assist in truly becoming agile! In next week’s newsletter we will be taking a closer look at the first step of the Scrum process and its components, namely the product backlog and requirements prioritization.

**Last issue’s quiz**

The correct answers were 1) Any three challenges mentioned in the article could be used for the answer here. 2) True, based on the article test cases can definitely be used for specifications in a project. 3) True, Scrum allows you to combine Scrum with other agile methodologies. True/False.

**This week’s new quiz**

The deadline for this week’s quiz is COB Monday, 6 August. Answers can be emailed to me.

The answer to the question will be revealed in the newsletter of next week.

Thanks for reading this week’s newsletter! Enjoy you reading.