Product Ownership is a Team Sport!

Bill Bourne
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This chart package will be available on-line, along with reference resources.
Who Am I?

Bill Bourne, CSM, CSPO
Development Leader – Retired!
(but open to contracts!)

@abbourne
ca.linkedin.com/in/williambourne/
bill@sourceform.ca
www.sourceform.ca
Product Requirements

In product development, you are addressing the needs of a *market*, not an individual customer.

These needs are often hidden, even the customers may not be conscious of them.

“*Give the customer what they need and want, not necessarily what they ask for.*”

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Product Requirements

Requirements are:

- Hidden, complex, subtle, messy.
- Easy to miss or get wrong
- Hard to elicit
S/W Development Waste (failure)

The single largest cause of waste in S/W Development comes from missing or wrong requirements and specifications

(Not design & build issues)
Examples

Warning! War Stories

- Nortel High Capacity Optical – “We will never need a 10 Gig/s Optical System.. We will never need that kind of capacity”
- Nortel High Capacity Optical- “MCI Worldcom’s written specifications provided to vendors were just plain wrong”
- Nortel – Whole product releases completed, and never shipped to the market
- What’s your favorite war story of a really bad miss due to screwed up requirements/specifications?
Requirements and Scrum

Warning! Controversy and Soapboxing Ahead!

While most of Agile Scrum emphasizes teamwork, requirements management is largely left to “a single accountable” Product Owner.

Why?

“Traditional” Agile/Scrum’s view of Product Ownership is unrealistic. It sweeps the hardest problem in product development under the carpet.

Why?
The Dream
From Jeff Sutherland – At PatientKeeper

“A product owner] must be a domain expert, preferably a practicing physician a couple of days a week in one of the leading hospitals in Boston ... an engineering expert, preferably [having] written some apps themselves.... an expert in user stories, use cases, and software specifications in general and healthcare in particular ... really good with customers and sales people to elicit requirements and recruit physician experts to test-drive prototypes of new functionality ... [and] own the business, the revenue, the customer and sales relationship with respect to features, the physical creation of user stories and any additional specification of the product including all analysis that is related to what the customer wants. [Our product owners] have no help other than developers and other members of the product owner team.”

- Jeff Sutherland, on Product Owners at PatientKeeper – From his posting on the Yahoo! scrumtrainers list on October 2, 2008, and personal communication on December 16, 2008.

- Polymath: A doctor, S/W engineer, and customer-facing business expert, who is willing to be a Product Owner

- Works “8 days a week”: 2 days a week as a physician, 2 days a week doing S/W Engineering work, 2 days a week with customers & looking at the market, 2 days a week doing business analysis and working on the product backlog, plus they meet with the scrum team daily and are always available to the scrum team...
The Painful Reality
From corporate life

- For most corporations, finding these super humans - experts in multiple domains, willing to work long hours is not realistic.
- Putting this much responsibility on a single person creates a bottleneck. The Scrum Team becomes dependent on a single person for the most important and difficult activity in product development.
- In large product development the market and environment can be so complex that no one person can be an expert and able to “see” all the nuances and unravel the complexity.
- Product Owners are frequently Product Line Managers (PLM). PLM have a number of other significant responsibilities other than Product Ownership, which limits their time to be able to elicit and detail requirements

- What are your experiences with the “Single Product Owner Model”, and getting requirements for a product that delights the market and customers?

For typical corporations, doing “blue collar programming”, the reality is that having a single Product Owner to own the requirements and get them right is a recipe for trouble.
Product Ownership is a Team Sport!

- The Product Owner has very difficult shoes to fill, especially in a product development environment. The solution is to allow multiple people to participate in the definition and elicitation of user stories and the management of the product backlog.
- Being the product owner is no solo act. The product owner is part of the Scrum team and closely collaborates with its other members, as well as experts outside the scrum team.
- Product development organizations typically have people with deep understanding of markets, customers, domain knowledge & technology:
  - Architects
  - Business Analysts
  - Solutions Architects, Systems Engineers
  - Technical leads
  - User Experience (UX) design
  - Quality Assurance leads
  - Development managers/leads
- While the Product Owner is the “chief” of the Product Backlog, the Scrum team is jointly responsible for “building the right thing”

“Traditional Scrum’s” view of Product Ownership, while not wrong, is incomplete.

Create a Product Ownership team, with a “Chief Product Owner”
Assembling PO Teams

- Skills, Experience, Ability are the criteria for membership on a Product Owner Team *not* title or position!
- The scrum team must have representation, besides the Product Owner
- Selection of Product Owner is critical... Its based on ability and availability... it may *not* be the Product Manager.
- Product Owner = “Product Quarterback”

Think of your own environment and previous experiences... who would you like to have on a Product Owner Team? Stories?
Leverage Your “Neighbours”

- Your project community is always bigger than you think, many have special insight and knowledge of your market and customers. Befriend them!
- Learn from them! Review user Stories with them
- Is there anyone that would make a great Product Owner Team member?

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Leverage Your Neighbours

- The Greater Community:
  - Governance (SOX)
  - Security audit
  - Production readiness
  - Business transformation
  - Change management
  - Database administrators
  - Corporate architecture
  - Training group
  - Technical writers
  - Legal
  - Help desk
  - Networking/infrastructure
  - Practice leadership team
  - Risk and compliance
  - Branch supervisors

Put your core team members here ...

People to start building relationships with

Core team

and everyone else out here.
A Diligent Scrum Team

- Developers must care, and not leave requirements to the “business staff”!
- If requirements are unclear or incomplete, or “weak”, you won’t know when you are finished, or how to test, or what you are trying to accomplish.
- Nothing is more de-motivating, than throwing your work into the trash can because it did not meet the market/customer need.
- Well maybe its worse to see a product go to market and get negative feedback or fail to perform because key requirements were missed!
- A proper requirement:
  1. Has been worked out cross-functionally
  2. Has had multi-way communications and discussions about it
  3. Has been repeatedly deconstructed and examined
  4. Has evidence behind it
  5. Has been defended (not just reviewed)

Nothing is more important than a well investigated, discussed, deconstructed, and defended requirement, with evidence behind it.
Examples

Warning! War Stories

- I sent S/W Developers on railway safety training and it saved a $250M Contract!
- Programmers Road to Productivity – Deconstruction of Requirements – How hard can a simple user login be? 😊
- What’s you favorite war story of scrum teams eliciting requirements?
Parting Thoughts

- You probably need a Product Owner Team!
- Look across functions for the people with the skills and abilities... positions & title don’t matter
- Make you Product Owner a Product Quarterback for the Product Owner Team
- Scrum Teams must be empowered to assist in the definition of requirements, and to not accept User Stories until they are truly deconstructed and defended.
Discussion!

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