How Do We Adhere to Scrum Values in an Outsourcing, Offshore Model?

Rebecca Barrilleaux
Agile Program Manager, Imagine Communications

OPENNESS
COURAGE
RESPECT
FOCUS
COMMITMENT

“

Extending agile to a distributed model is
not for the faint of heart.

—Michael Vax and Stephen Michaud, 2008

“

Extending agile to distributed, outsourced teams is
not for the faint of heart , the disorganized,
the inflexible, or the humorless.

— Rebecca Barrilleaux, 2016

My Background

- Working in Scrum off and on since 2008
  - Developer or Developer–ScrumMaster for 6.5 years
  - Dedicated ScrumMaster and Agile Program Manager for past 2 years

- Served 11+ teams, all sizes (5-9) and experience levels
  - FTEs and contractors and mixed
  - Co-located and remote and mixed
  - Up to 5 at one time

- Worked with 4 different contracting vendors (Israel, Ukraine and 2 in India)
  - Responsible for recent transition from one primary outsourcing partner to another for my division

- Also studied psychology and literature
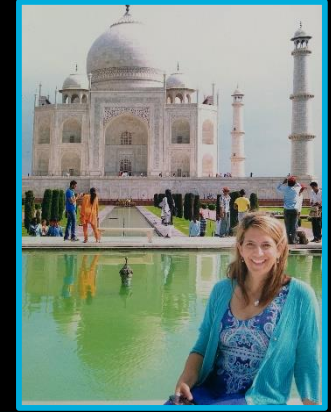
A Tale of Two Teams

Dream Team

Small (4), co-located, experienced team of full-time, motivated employees, license to code

"Occasionally stirred, but never shaken."

"Quite deadly in the right hands."

Redeem Team

Large (9), inexperienced team of 7 contractors and 2 employees distributed across three offices with 12.5 hours of time difference

Offshore Challenges to Scrum Values

- Difference in language, culture, geography and time zone
  - "Second Shift," core hours, care with language
- Connection issues
  - Use landline to dial in; if one person dials in, everyone dials in (play by the same rules)

Ukraine	
Individualism	25
Uncertainty Avoidance	95
Long Term Orientation	55

India	
Individualism	48
Uncertainty Avoidance	40
Long Term Orientation	51

United States	
Individualism	91
Uncertainty Avoidance	46
Long Term Orientation	26

Israel	
Individualism	54
Uncertainty Avoidance	81
Long Term Orientation	38

Outsourcing Challenges to Scrum Values

- Different objectives
  - Client wants to deliver the most business value to their customers (internal or external)
  - Contractor wants to make as much money off of the engagement as possible (more time/people = more money)
  - Contractors may feel it's more important to keep the client happy than to tell the truth.
 - Clients can be seen as "Chickens" in the project

If Scrum Is So Hard, Why Do We Do It?

- Better transparency

- Stronger engagement = improved commitment and accountability = enhanced code quality

- Ability to adjust priorities

- Identify development issues early

- Grow your team members rather than maintaining "assembly line" mentality
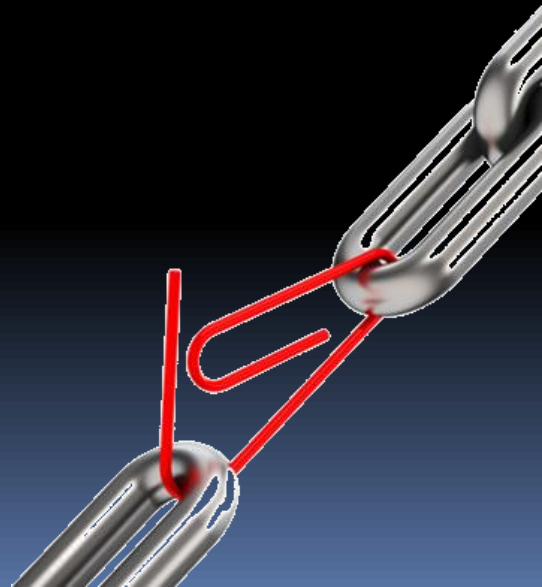
WHY**WE**DO
WHATWE**DO**

Choose Wisely

- Vendor

- Type of Service

- ScrumMasters and Coordinators

- Team Members
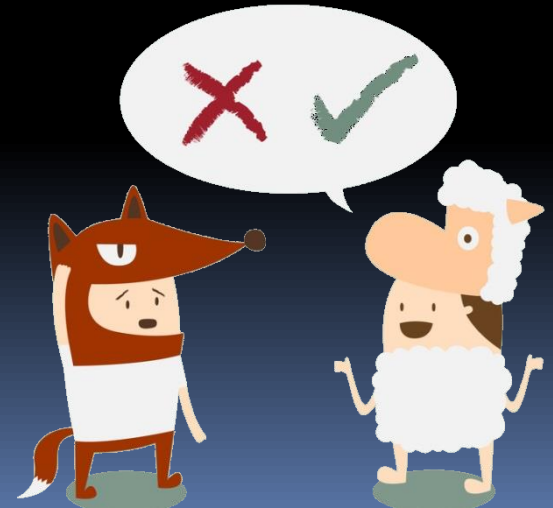
Avoid the Numbers Game

- People are not resources
- Adding team members does not improve velocity
- Extended hours and overtime does not improve productivity long-term
- "Buffer" resources

How to Distribute the Team

Collaborating Co-located Teams

Cross-functional and self-contained by location

Deliberately Distributed Teams

Team spread across locations

Engaging the Team

- Share Product Vision

- Define your Team Culture

- Spend time on relationship building

Running the Sprints

- Backlog Grooming
  - Concept and Delivery Teams
- Sprint Planning
- Daily Scrums
- Reviews, Demos, Retrospectives

One of my teams increased their velocity 400% within three sprints of incorporating the Concept Team model

Contact Me

Love to talk with you,
I would. Yes, hmmm.

Have questions or feedback?
I would love to talk with you!

rebecca.barrilleaux@imaginecommunications.com

https://www.linkedin.com/in/scrumgoddess

Appendix

OPENNESS
COURAGE
RESPECT
FOCUS
COMMITMENT

Imagine
COMMUNICATIONS.

Delivering the Moment

A Tale of Two Teams

Features of the Dream Team

- Self-organize weekly, daily, hourly
- Constant collaboration
- Use TDD approach, extensive automated testing within the sprint
- Potentially shippable delivery every sprint
- Frequent demos to internal and external clients
- Minimal process
- Acceptance criteria does not contain implementation details
- High-performing, strong definition of done

Features of the Redeem Team

- Need direction and push to self-organize
- Need structure to facilitate collaboration
- Test one sprint behind development
- Potentially shippable increment delivered every milestone
- Demo only at milestones to internal and external clients
- More process than "Scrum by the Book"
- Acceptance criteria contains implementation details
- On the journey to high-performing

Picking the Right Vendor

- Ability to recruit

- Office and company culture

  - Be on the lookout for "assembly line" mentalities

- Agile competency/centers of excellence

- Did I mention ability to recruit?

The market knows a lot! Marketplace perception is an important factor in selecting a vendor.

Understand Vendor Logistics

- Pay attention to equipment

  - Know your tools and use them well

- Disparities between team members:

  - Network or VPN access

  - Work from home capabilities

  - Quality of PCs, desktops or laptops, webcams

  - Number of monitors
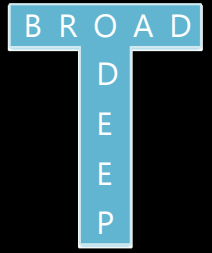
  - Licensing of development tools

  - Safety

Make sure to budget for visits between sites.

Picking the Right Type of Service

- Fixed Bid

- Time & Materials
  - Results-based
    - Governance around code quality (defect leakage, adherence to best practices), attrition, process adherence
  - Stable Teams
    - Maintain average velocity or higher throughout project

Picking the Right Team

- Look for self-sufficiency and maturity

- T-shaped individuals

- Self-driven, have career goals that align with the project

- Teamwork

- Strong communication

- Open-minded, open to our outsourcing development model

Expect more churn. Consider making the team larger by 1-2 to mitigate – but make sure to keep the team small enough to comfortably collaborate

Do not bring in team members who are hostile to contracting. You will likely not change their minds and it will bring down your team.

Picking the Right Coordinators/ScrumMasters

- Has experience with the team

- Flexible with hours and attitude

- Driven to make the project succeed

- Buys into Scrum and lives it values

- Proactive, focused on solutions rather than problems

Pick someone with a technical background if possible. This gives them an extra layer of understanding when communicating between groups and can also help them "call shenanigans" on underperforming team members.

Locate a SM or coordinator fluent in Scrum process in as many of your sites as possible to reinforce Commitment, Openness and Focus. It is hard to deal with interpersonal issues or understand what's really going on when you are not onsite.

Distribute the Team

- Collaborating Co-located Teams
  - Team cross-functional and self-contained by location
  - Communication and collaboration are much better <u>within</u> the team

- Simplifies daily collaboration and communication
- Higher productivity on individual components
- No logistics, cultural, or geographic barriers to sprint meetings

- Us vs. Them mentality
- Communication breakdown across teams can lead to
  - integration problems, issues with code consistency and quality, etc.
- Need SMEs at every location

Distribute the Team

- Deliberately Distributed Teams (team spread across locations)
  - Communication and collaboration are much better <u>between</u> the teams

• Better transparency leads to less integration issues and higher productivity	• Logistical, cultural, and geographic obstacles to communication and collaboration
• Less rework and refactoring	• Slower component productivity
• Better understanding of customer needs and focus, leading to better morale	

Have "buddies" pair up across locations, to desktop share (code reviews or demos), relay info to other locations and build goodwill

Avoid distributing by function (e.g. all testers in one location, all dev in another) as this can hinder the cross-location communication

Building the Team

- Have "chat time" for a few minutes before meetings

  - Can start with a "seeding" question like favorite movie, favorite food, etc.

  - Explain current cultural events

- Share photos and videos whenever possible

  - Bulletin board in team areas with pics of team members at other locations
  - Lollipop stick puppets
  - Team member profiles
  - Video introductions (using phones)

- Celebrate your wins

  - If you can't celebrate together, have "separate but equal" celebrations and share stories/pics

Engaging the Team

- There is no substitute for an onsite visit
- Observe team environment, interactions, progress
  - Set team up for success by witnessing and addressing their issues
- Build relationships
  - Increases trust and openness exponentially
  - Increases accountability and investment exponentially
  - Understand lifestyles to reinforce empathy and teamwork
- Knowledge transfer
  - Very important to have functional and technical SMEs at the offshore locations

Engaging the Team

- Emphasize face-to-face communication with your tools

- Share the vision of the product and make sprint goals that enforce that vision
  - Be very clear with your goals

- Spend time on team agreements (office hours, types of communication, values, etc.)
  - Make sure everyone is included when determining Definition of Done

Backlog Grooming

Concept Team – responsible for story production and design

Delivery Team – responsible for implementation and testing

- Concept Team
  - Product Owner, technical leads, subject matter experts, UX designers
  - Team members can belong to both "concept" and "delivery" teams
  - Output: functional design, requirements checklist, wireframes, technical approaches and dependencies, POCs
  - Also responsible for clarifications during implementation

Backlog Grooming

- **Concept Team**
  - Work at least one sprint ahead of "delivery" team(s)
  - Product owner leads discussion on requirement
  - Team takes on tasks related to the work needed to provide all of the implementation details
  - Team demos the story with all of its components to Delivery Team(s) at which time the delivery team gives an estimate in story points
  - Delivery teams ready to commit at Sprint Planning

One of my teams increased their velocity 400% within three sprints of incorporating the Concept Team model

Running the Sprint – Sprint Planning

- "Share the Pain"
  - Change times for meetings so no site has to always accommodate the others
- Team assigns tasks to themselves during planning rather than pulling during sprint
- Verify plan for delivering during sprint
  - Team explains how they intend to accomplish the sprint goal
  - Target Date field

Trust…but Verify

Record all meetings and post on the portal for everyone to reference or catch up.

Running the Sprint – Daily Scrums

- Call on people specifically, or have each call out next person

- 3 Questions, then "Parking Lot"

- By email on Fridays to avoid Friday night drop-off

- Pay attention to Task Board
  - Screen shot of board each day
  - Tasks less than 8 hours (preferably 4 hours or less), make sure they move through the board

- Review burndown daily

- List and follow-up on action items raised

- Use email (or other documentation) to reiterate and record decisions made (but NOT as a substitute for oral communication)

Trust…but Verify

- Code Reviews
  - Early and often
  - Demo to tester team members and/or PO early and often
- Demos
  - Team runs the demo
- Retrospectives
  - Prime Directive
  - Anonymous

Trust…but Verify