

# The Sprint Review

by Richard “Dick” Carlson



### Introduction

At the end of each sprint, a *Sprint Review* is held. During this meeting, the Scrum Team demonstrates all functionality implemented and holds a brief review of associated documentation completed during the sprint. The purpose of the Sprint Review meeting is to demonstrate completed functionality that the team implemented during the sprint to all key stakeholders. Participants in the Sprint Review are limited to the Product Owner and the Scrum Team, while the Scrum Master facilitates. Although the Sprint Review is typically open to anyone interested in observing sprint accomplishments, an overly crowded room may not be beneficial. It is recommended that all key stakeholders be invited, and depending on available room space, the Product Owner should limit invitations to individuals with a vested interest in the product.

### Pre-Sprint Review Activities

The Scrum Master plays an important role in assuring that an appropriate environment is prepared and ready for the Sprint Review. Among the most important activities are giving adequate advanced notice of the meeting to invitees. The Product Owner is likely the most knowledgeable person to identify persons that should attend. The Scrum Master coordinates with the Product Owner on all matters regarding the meeting including all logistical support, location, start and end times, maximum number of attendees allowed, and the preparation of an agenda and meeting notice.

### Sprint Review Activities

The Sprint Review is time-boxed at 4 hours, and it is imperative that the Team is allowed enough time to demonstrate all completed functionality without interruptions from endless questioning. To ensure the meeting focuses on demonstrating completed functionality, the use of showy presentation materials is discouraged. The Sprint Review meeting is intentionally kept very informal. However, in my experience, I have found that a few introductory slides that identify the product vision, information about the sprint, how the results of the sprint ties into the product roadmap, some meeting ground rules, and a brief introduction of the Team to be very helpful to attendees.

During the Sprint Review, the project is assessed against the sprint goals determined during the Sprint Planning meeting. Ideally, each product backlog item selected by the Team for the sprint should be completed, but it is more important that they achieve the sprint goals. It is prudent to inform attendees that although the goal of every sprint is to finish with completed functionality, some sprints may focus on building portions of complex capability, therefore, the results of the sprint may be limited to demonstrating completed or partially-completed functionality. Continuation of building the remaining functionality may require several sprints in order to meet project goals. Many large Agile projects set up their release strategies in this manner in order to meet release schedules and align with their product roadmaps.

The following recommended guidance is provided for the conduct of a Sprint Review:

- The Sprint Review is always conducted with the actual product as it is—not through the use of slides, artificial demonstration-ware, or other means.

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- The Sprint Review is most importantly a conversation between the Team, the Product Owner, and the project's key stakeholders.
- Functionality and user stories that are not "Done" cannot be presented (because they aren't done).
- Non-functional artifacts should not be presented except when they are used in support of understanding the demonstrated functionality.
- Functionality should be presented on Team member's workstations or laptops and executed from the server closest to production—usually on a configuration-controlled server or repository.
- Team presentations to the Product Owner is limited to what was built—questions about the work by Team members should be asked prior to the review, but not during the review.
- The majority of the Sprint Review is spent with the Team Members demonstrating functionality, answering stakeholder questions regarding the demonstration, and noting desired changes to the product.
- At the end of each demonstration by a Team Member, stakeholders are asked for their impressions, any desired changes, and the priority of these changes.
- The Product Owner discusses with the stakeholders and the Team potential rearrangement of the product backlog based on their feedback.
- Stakeholders may freely express any comments, observations, or criticisms pertaining to each demonstration of product functionality.
- Stakeholders can identify functionality that was not delivered, or was not delivered as expected and request that such functionality be placed in the product backlog for prioritization.
- Stakeholders may identify any new functionality that occurs to them as they view the demonstration and request that the functionality be added to the product backlog for prioritization.
- While the Scrum Master typically takes copious notes during the Sprint Review, it is wise to vigorously collect feedback from attendees. It may seem somewhat ingenuous to ask stakeholders to write down feedback comments, but doing so increases the accuracy of their feedback and identifies each comment originator.
- The Sprint Review is always conducted in a blame-free environment. This means the Team has finished what it was capable of doing during the sprint. It is not a time to lay blame, but to express factual details about what was actually completed and implemented.

## Post-Sprint Review Activities

The Sprint Review is always followed by the Sprint Retrospective, which is a structured practice for the Team to learn and improve based on what has been done. The purpose of the Retrospective is to build Team commitment and to transfer knowledge to the next sprint and to other teams. Although the Sprint Retrospective is held at the end of every sprint, they can be conducted at the end of any event. That is, any time the Scrum Master or Product Owner feels the needs or value for the Team to stop and learn based on what has been done, will yield significant improvements over time.

For more detailed information on retrospectives, please read my paper on the ALEA website at [http://www.a2zalea.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Retrospectives-are-Healthy\\_20140317.pdf](http://www.a2zalea.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Retrospectives-are-Healthy_20140317.pdf).

## **References**

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*Exploring Scrum: The Fundamentals*, Dan Rawsthorne and Doug Shimp, 2011

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## **About the Author**

Dick Carlson has an extensive engineering background that includes many years of practical knowledge and hands-on experience in the implementation and deployment of Agile, Lean, and Scrum values and principles in communications-electronics engineering, software engineering, and systems engineering within the aerospace, DoD, IT, and industry domains. He has developed and actively conducted comprehensive training courses for Scrum Teams, Scrum Masters, Product Owners, project/program managers, customers, executives, organizational leaders, and others interested in learning how to implement and deploy Agile, Lean, and Scrum.

Recently retired from Boeing, Dick has been an active transformational leader for many small and large Agile projects, and frequently shares his experiences of successful Agile implementation at conferences, workshops and symposia. He regularly counsels executives and leaders on the benefits of using Agile, actively coach's teams on Scrum and Lean-Agile Project Management fundamentals, and then follows up with mentoring activities to ensure successful project implementation.

Mr. Carlson has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland, and is a Certified Scrum Professional, Certified Scrum Master, and Certified Scrum Product Owner, and holds a Lean-Agile Project Management certification. Mr. Carlson has presented Agile topics at Software Technology Conferences every year since 2010.