Agile Journey discussion series:
("Sharing is Learning"):

Scrum MASTER WHAT !?

By Yesper Olsen at April 2021
(Request PDF version at yesper@yescoaching.dk)
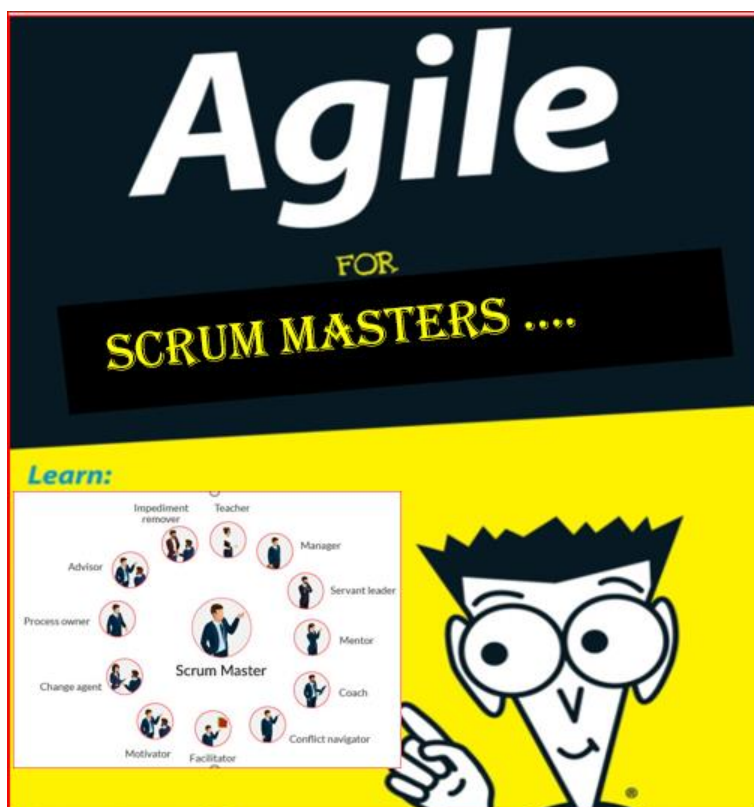
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01 Introduction:

Welcome Scrum MASTERS and non-MASTERS:

If you sometimes ask yourself this question:

"What does a Scrum master actually MASTER?

If you are as curious as me regarding this, continue reading and reflect on this.

Let's start with the picture above (LP Record label used for music awards etc.) and this not just for the record 😊

This dog is just passively listening to the Symphony and is not doing anything else – how can this be mastery?

Should a Scrum Master (SM) just listen to the team playing or should he/she be the conductor for roles like these?

Fig01: SM Roles

This article will not go into all these roles in details, but just give you an overview (Chap 02)

But if you are interested in the details, I recommend you read one of my other articles: "Real Agile Coach?" (Ref 10?)"

That describes most of them, and in my experience, there are more similarities then differences between Agile Coaches (AC) and Scrum Masters (SM). The SMs are more masters in the daily Agile Teams while ACs often cover more areas in the organisations and less in the daily execution. For your convenience I added the overall picture of roles in appendix01.

In this article, I will primarily reflect on the Mastery, roles/responsibilities in practices and according to new (2020) and old Scrum guides.

I've been in the IT Consulting business for 34 years, in all areas you can think of,

including waterfall development, and have spent the last 7-8 years in the agile world

(Ref01) and I have my own coaching company (Ref02)

This simple article is divided into 4 chapters and references/appendix:

- 01 Introduction – This chapter

- 02 Scrum Master roles: Overall reflection on the Scrum Master roles

- 03 Scrum Master responsibilities– A reflection on the SM as a

  leader/manager/master perspective etc.

- 04 Retrospectively – A retro wrap up of this article

02 Scrum Master Roles:

Since SMs role in its nature should be agile/flexible it shouldn't be fixed and should be adjusted for the situation and organisation.

But anyway, let's reflect on some roles that could be "colours" in the colourful picture of an SM.

Advisor

> The SM is often considered a knowledgeable person and is asked for advises, but it's recommended to keep the advice at a general level for the Agile team and organisation to adjust for purpose and self-organise.

Impediment remover

> In the daily work and often at retrospectives the SM often has the role of facilitating the removal of impediment/blockers/problems etc. But here it's also recommended to keep this at facilitation level and to let the Agile team/organisation empower the muscles to do the actual removal ("Don't give them fish – teach them how to fish")

Teacher

> SM should be a sort of expert or SME (Subject Matter Expert) on the agile processes e.g. scrum. This should be part of the job – it is a recuring basis to make sure this knowledge is increased/passed on depending on the situation and the maturity of the organisation.

Manager

> In practice (not recommended) the SM also has a sort of management role for the Agile team (e.g. time registration, education plans etc.). In this case it is quite important to be transparent on when this role is in play, and

when the SM is "just" acting as facilitator etc. The Servant leader part of the SM role is often the most beneficial.

Servant Leader

Just like the comment on "Manager" part of the SM role – the Servant Leader is often the leading part of the SM role. In this case it's also important to highlight the Servant part – since the leader part is just to **serve/guide** the team's best for their agile journey.

Mentor

Depending of the different Agile member maturity and the situation, the SM is often also the mentor – simply in order to make the members grow by example in their actual situation (see also the "Situational based leadership in next chapter).

Coach

Often the border between SM and Agile Coach is not that fix, and the with the Agile mindset, the persons should be capable of switching between these roles. Read more in the Articles "Real Agile Coach?" (Ref. 10) and appendix 01)

Conflict navigator

Working with passioned people with important issues will give conflicts and this could actually be quite beneficial for the team dynamic. So as a SM you often should help the team/people navigate in conflicts an teach them both to manage and to solve. (Often part of the "Storming" phase – see Ref. 13 and appendix05)

Facilitator

This is commonly considered one of the primary roles of the SM – since facilitating fits quite well in the content of e.g. SCRUM ceremonies etc. So, being able to stay as much as possible at process level - and refrain from jumping too much in to the content - is a quite important skill of an SM (Meta and content level – See Ref.10)

Motivator

People only MOve if they - as the word indicates - are MOtivated. So to feel and understand the dynamic of motivation of people is also quite important in the role set of and SM.

Change agent

> Agile is about "embracing change" and inspect, adjust and adapt so the role and nature of change management and change agent is important and requires actual understanding of the concept of change in many dimensions (E.g. **P**assion, **P**eople, **P**roduct, **P**rocess)

Process Owner

> Often the SM is considered as Process owner of many agile processes for example SCRUM. The focus here is also to inspect, adjust and adapt the processes and improve, which is an important role.

And much more

> As mentioned, the nature of Agile roles incl. SM is actually agile and flexible and will in practice be a combination of many roles depending on the need and organisation. Generally, it is therefore quite important to be conscious and transparent of the role you have and the role you will play. (See ref. 10 and appendix01)

If you compare this with the picture of an AC, you will se much of the same "colours", but probably in another mix - and sometimes not at the same detail level as a daily SM has to cover:
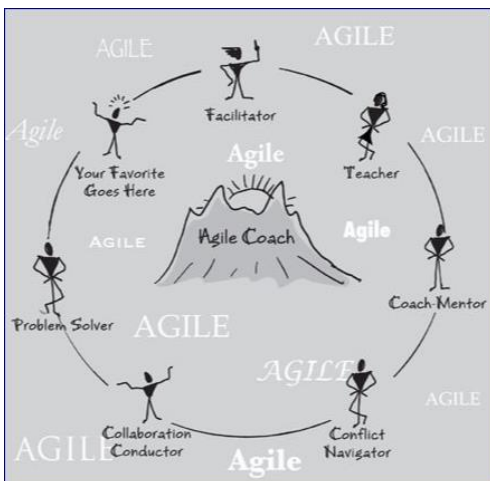

Fig02: Agile Coach Roles

And again, to understand the full picture a SM (and AC) they also cover other roles, depending on the circumstances. Roles like Product Owner, Project Managers, Developer, Architect etc.

So, the final quote for this chapter is that the SM role is a very interesting/important and critical role to staff - with the right person, with the right mindset.

Regarding the mindset and tips for the "softer" part of the SM role, it is also recommended to read some of my other articles. Like the 10 tips in this article:
"Real Agile Coach" (Ref 10 and appendix01)"

In the next chapter I'll reflect more on the leadership, mastery and responsibilities of the SM roles.

03 Scrum Master responsibilities:

It has always been key from the very first birth of Agile Manifesto/principle/SCRUM etc. that the power for the actual **<u>Doing</u>** should be in the hand of the most skilled/knowledgeable people at any level in the Business - and to embrace changes and any time.
So, the SM has been the critical change agent to focus on this basic agile mindset.

From history and tradition we have been used to always having a hierarchy, a clear rule of decision and leadership to stay in control (Read my articles: "Agile for control freaks" (Ref14) for more inspiration on that).

So, for obvious reasons the accountability/responsibility/management and leadership of a role like SM have had many flavors.

Scrum guides:

In the basic Scrum Guide (2017) the key responsibility of an SM is this:

The Scrum Master

The Scrum Master is responsible for promoting and supporting Scrum as defined in the Scrum Guide. Scrum Masters do this by helping everyone understand Scrum theory, practices, rules, and values.

The Scrum Master is a servant-leader for the Scrum Team. The Scrum Master helps those outside the Scrum Team understand which of their interactions with the Scrum Team are helpful and which aren't. The Scrum Master helps everyone change these interactions to maximize the value created by the Scrum Team.

Fig03: Scrum Guide (2017)

In the new Scrum Guide (2020) this has changed:

Scrum Master

The Scrum Master is accountable for establishing Scrum as defined in the Scrum Guide. They do this by helping everyone understand Scrum theory and practice, both within the Scrum Team and the organization.

The Scrum Master is accountable for the Scrum Team's effectiveness. They do this by enabling the Scrum Team to improve its practices, within the Scrum framework.

Scrum Masters are true leaders who serve the Scrum Team and the larger organization.

Fig04: Scrum Guide (2020)

So: the SM changed from being "just" responsible, helpful servant leader to becoming an accountable true leader and not just for the process, but also for effectiveness - and if you look more into the details - also on the actual result.

So, this really is a shift in mindset from the traditional SM's roles, and in my opinion a step up into the actual and real world.

Does this mean the that the SM should forget the modesty and servant skills and turn into a project manager in the agile team?

In my opinion this is just another role that the SM should add to the role list and should be aware when and how to use this considering the situation.

But taking the agile mindset into account I still think the empowerment of the knowledge workers should be the primary focus and done by roles like servant leader, motivator, coach and facilitator.

One part of the SM responsibilities that I practice could be quite beneficial to get more attention (together with the AC's) is the support of the organization and Product owners.

Since this is often the bottleneck and area for improvement and impediments. In the new Scrum guide this also gets more attention - for example:

The Scrum Master serves the Product Owner in several ways, including:

- Helping find techniques for effective Product Goal definition and Product Backlog management;

- Helping the Scrum Team understand the need for clear and concise Product Backlog items;

- Helping establish empirical product planning for a complex environment; and,

- Facilitating stakeholder collaboration as requested or needed.

The Scrum Master serves the organization in several ways, including:

- Leading, training, and coaching the organization in its Scrum adoption;

- Planning and advising Scrum implementations within the organization;

- Helping employees and stakeholders understand and enact an empirical approach for complex work; and,

- Removing barriers between stakeholders and Scrum Teams.

Fig05: SM roles for Product Owner and organisation (Scrum Guide (2020))

Especially the product backlog grooming, management, planning and actual business value prioritization should be a primary focus.
Just like actual and daily involvement of product owners as active part of the agile team should be a focus area of the SM.

If you are more interested in SCRUM I've added some inspirational appendix for that (Appendix03 and Appendix06)

Generally, since it seems like the roles of an SM is changing, the toolbox should be adjusted too.

So as the final quote in this chapter I would like to inspire for two candidates:

SM Toolbox:

Two tools that could be of great benefit in the SM (and generally in agile) toolbox (stolen from non-agile history) could be:

Situational based leadership (Ref 13, Fig06)
- o This could help the SM navigate between the many SM roles - depending on the situation.
- o This could also help empowerment at agile team and individual level - and self-organize and know when and how to achieve this and at which level.
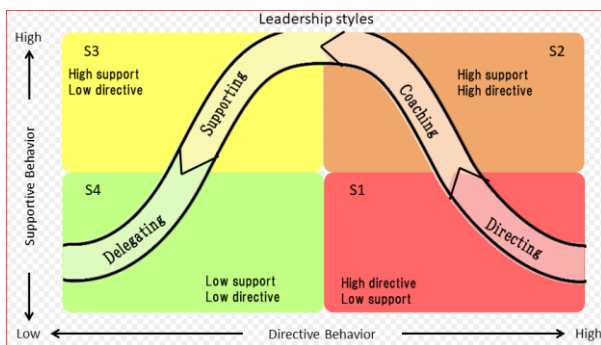- o The curve (Fig: 06) can be used both at team and individual level.

Fig06: Situational based leadership (Ref 13)

RACI (Ref14, Fig07, Fig08 and appendix 02)
- o Even if this is quite a deterministic and nonflexible/agile role and responsibility matrix, my experience is that this is a good and structured approach in the discussions/decisions of responsibilities on activities, ceremonies, and management of artifacts. As long as this is not used as excuses to be non-agile 😊
- o Often this could be quite beneficial around product backlog management and generally on product ownership

o With the changing SM role according to the Scrum guide 2020 this could also be a helpful tool to move in that direction.

| RACI Matrix	Functional Manager(s)	Scrum Master	Product Owner	Scrum Team	Project Manager
Ensure consistency of Scrum practices across teams	I	C	C	I	R/A
Provide vision and goal for the product	I	I	R/A	I	I
Provide resources with the right skills and mind-set	R/A	I	I	C/I	C
Prioritize and manage the product backlog	I	F	R/A	C	F
Remove impediments	R	R	R/A	R	R
Manage the release train	I	I	C	C	R/A
Make sure Scrum practices are used and improved within the team	R	R/A	C	R	F
Create, apply, and continuously improve the definition of done	C	F	R	R/A	F
Report on time to management	I	F	R/A	I	F
Define acceptance criteria	I	F	R/A	C	F
Write acceptance tests	I	F	C	R/A	F
Ensure quality of the product	R	R	R/A	R	R
Manage risks	C	C	R/A	C	R
Approve user stories (user stories meet the acceptance criteria)	I	F	R/A	C	F
Decide on release date and goal	I	I	R/A	I	I

Fig07: RACI example01
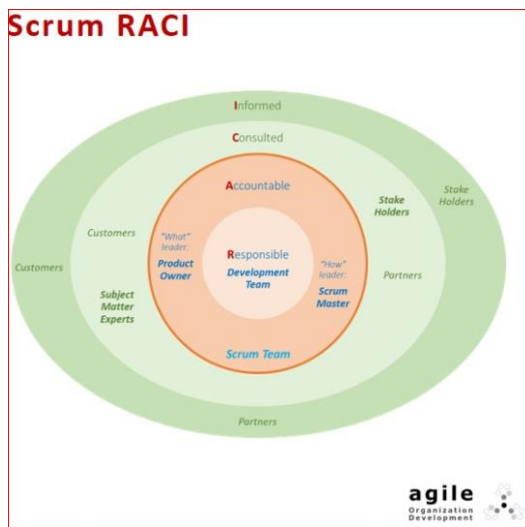
Fig08: RACI example02

04 Retrospectively:

Congratulations, you've reached this sweet spot (Cheating is also a journey :-))

Hope you've got some inspiration and would like to join me on other agile journeys (See References and appendix 04)

Maybe you also got some ideas and inspiration of the SM roles and responsibilities that will fit you or your organisation.

Now you may also be able to answer this question:

"What does a Scrum master really MASTER?

And how "The MASTERS Voice" by SM could now, besides servantly listen, also be the voice of Agile and not less NOICE 😊

With this I thank you for joining me so far on my journey – to be continued....

**Commented [JO1]:** Hvad mener du her??

05 Source/References:

Ref. 01: My Linkedin profile: https://www.linkedin.com/in/jesperbergerolsen/
Ref. 02: Link for my Own coaching company www.yescoaching.dk
Ref. 03: Linkedin Doku: "Agile introduction made simple":
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-introduction-made-simple-version-02-activity-6695996989156454400-pZL9
Ref. 04: Linkedin Doku: "Does Agile Framework actual work":
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_does-agile-frame-actual-work-activity-6680542323400564736-ilpc
Ref. 05: Linkedin Post: "Agile Hangover and Back to the Basic":
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-scrum-safe-activity-6670335483358277632-dEGH
Ref. 06: Linkedin Post: "Be on Track with DevOps":
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-scrummaster-safe-activity-6618435085634977792-gWoG
Ref. 07: Linkedin Post: "Defintion of Well Done":
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-scrummaster-safe-activity-6612745994717147136-Wjl6
Ref. 08: Linkedin Post: "Product Owner – more than just the owner" :
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-scrum-productowner-activity-6610869358396751872-DdH6
Ref. 10: Linkedin Post: "Real Agile Coach ?":
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_real-agile-coach-activity-6744575035144495104-tHJQ
Ref. 11: Situational based leadership
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Situational_leadership_theory
Ref. 12: RACI
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsibility_assignment_matrix
Ref. 13: Tuckman's model for team dynamic
https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckman%27s_stages_of_group_development
Ref. 14: Linkedin Post: "Agile – Out of Control?"
https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-out-of-control-new-version-20200108-activity-6753309571168686080-LrWj

06 Appendix:

(Request pdf versions at yesper@yescoaching.dk)

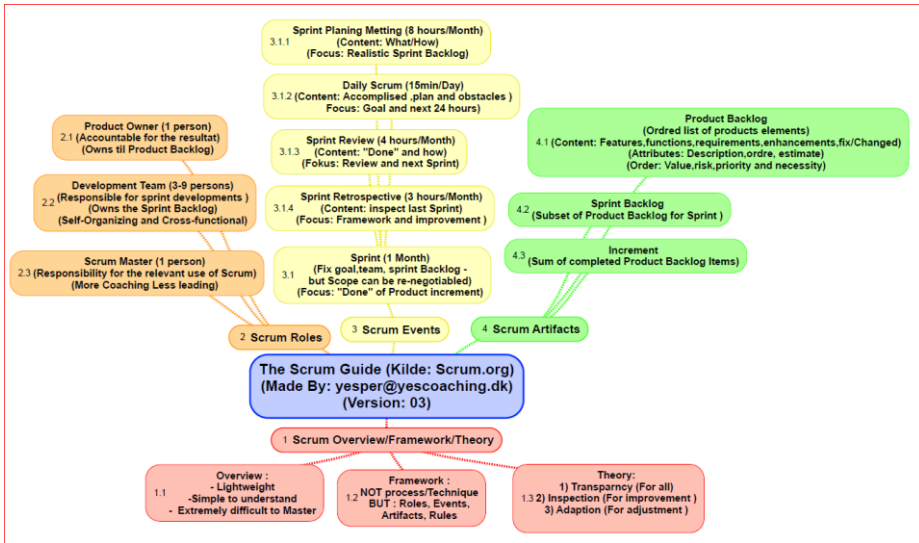**Appendix01**: One-page overview of "Agile Roles"
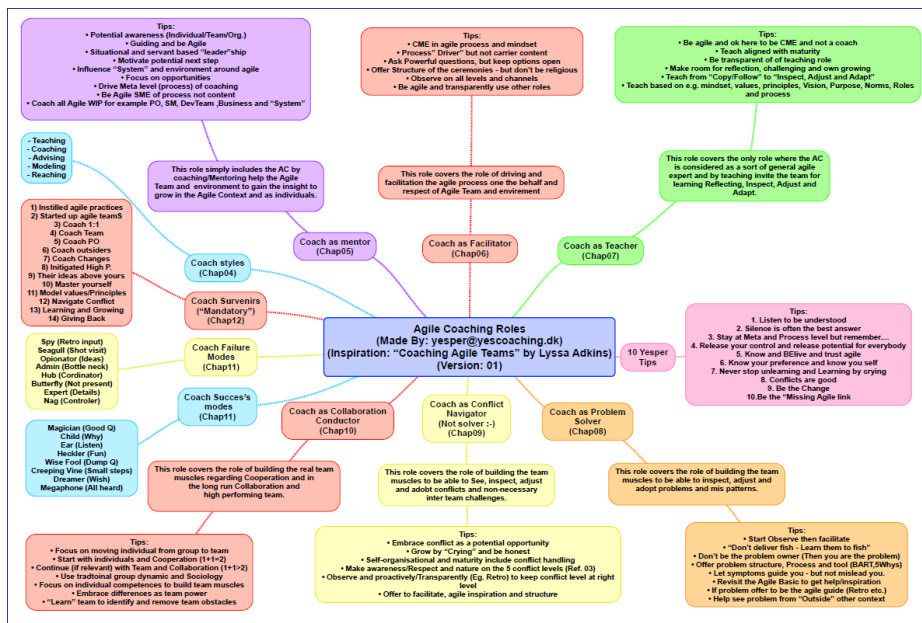
Appendix02: Example of RACI for Agile roles

(Inspired from SAFe 5.0)

Agile RACI for SAFe 5.1 (Draft Example)   **R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, **C**onsulted, **I**nformed

Id	Level	Activity	Enterprise Architect	Epic owner	Lean Portfolio Manager	Solution Manager	Solution Architect	Solution Train Engineer	System Architect/Eng	Product Manager	Release train engineer	Business owners	Agile Team	Product owner	Scrum Master
1	PORTFOLIO	Primary defined by : Lean Portfolio Manag	C	A	R										
2	LARGE SOLUTION:	Solution demo				A	C	R		R					
3	LARGE SOLUTION:	Pre PI				R	R	A		A					
4	LARGE SOLUTION:	Post PI				R	R	A		A					
5	LARGE SOLUTION:	Solution train sync				R	C	A							
6	LARGE SOLUTION:	Arhitect Sync				C	A	C							
7	LARGE SOLUTION:	Inspect and Adapt workshop				R	C	A							
8	LARGE SOLUTION:	Prepare for PI Planing				R	C	A							
9	PROGRAM	PI Planning							C	R	R	A			
10	PROGRAM	System Demo							C	A	R	R			
11	PROGRAM	Inspect and Adapt workshop							C	R	A	R			
12	PROGRAM	Art Sync (SoS & PO Sync)							R	R	A	R			
13	PROGRAM	Scrum-of-Scrums								C	A				R
14	PROGRAM	PO Sync								R	A			R	I
15	PROGRAM	ART Sync							C	C	A	R			C
16	PROGRAM	Prepare for PI Planing							R	R	A	R		C	C
17	TEAM	Iteration planning											R	A	R
18	TEAM	Iteration review											R	A	R
19	TEAM	Iteration retrospective											R	C	A
20	TEAM	Daily Standup											A	I	R
21	TEAM	Backlog refinement											R	A	R
XX	<Room for you input>	<Room for you input>													
XX	<Room for you input>	<Room for you input>													
XX	<Room for you input>	<Room for you input>													
XX	<Room for you input>	<Room for you input>													

Appendix03: One-page of "SCRUM (2017)

The Scrum Guide (Kilde: Scrum.org)
(Made By: yesper@yescoaching.dk)
(Version: 03)

2 Scrum Roles

2.1 Product Owner (1 person)
(Accountable for the resultat)
(Owns til Product Backlog)

2.2 Development Team (3-9 persons)
(Responsible for sprint developments)
(Owns the Sprint Backlog)
(Self-Organizing and Cross-functional)

2.3 Scrum Master (1 person)
(Responsibility for the relevant use of Scrum)
(More Coaching Less leading)

3 Scrum Events

3.1.1 Sprint Planing Metting (8 hours/Month)
(Content: What/How)
(Focus: Realistic Sprint Backlog)

3.1.2 Daily Scrum (15min/Day)
(Content: Accomplised ,plan and obstacles)
Focus: Goal and next 24 hours)

3.1.3 Sprint Review (4 hours/Month)
(Content: "Done" and how)
(Fokus: Review and next Sprint)

3.1.4 Sprint Retrospective (3 hours/Month)
(Content: inspect last Sprint)
(Focus: Framework and improvement)

3.1 Sprint (1 Month)
(Fix goal,team, sprint Backlog -
but Scope can be re-negotiabled)
(Focus: "Done" of Product increment)

4 Scrum Artifacts

4.1 Product Backlog
(Ordred list of products elements)
(Content: Features,functions,requirements,enhancements,fix/Changed)
(Attributes: Description,ordre, estimate)
(Order: Value,risk,priority and necessity)

4.2 Sprint Backlog
(Subset of Product Backlog for Sprint)

4.3 Increment
(Sum of completed Product Backlog Items)

1 Scrum Overview/Framework/Theory

1.1 Overview :
- Lightweight
-Simple to understand
- Extremely difficult to Master

1.2 Framework :
NOT process/Technique
BUT : Roles, Events,
Artifacts, Rules

1.3 Theory:
1) Transparncy (For all)
2) Inspection (For improvement)
3) Adaption (For adjustment)

Appendix04: Inspiration of other Agile Articles

1. **"Are you a real Agile coach?"**
   1. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_real-agile-coach-activity-6744575035144495104-tHJQ
2. **"Agile – Out of Control?"**
   1. **https://www.**linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-out-of-control-new-version-20200108-activity-6753309571168686080-LrWj
3. **"Agile introduction made simple":**
   1. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_agile-introduction-made-simple-version-02-activity-6695996989156454400-pZL9
4. **"Does Agile Framework actual work ?":**
   1. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen_does-agile-frame-actual-work-activity-6680542323400564736-ilpc
5. **"Product Owner – What do you Own ?"**
   1. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/jesperbergerolsen **agile-product-owner-own-what-activity-6764517389682950144-0bOr**
6. **"Agile Party for NewCommers"**
   1. https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6747087224568901632/?commentUrn=urn%3Ali%3Acomment%3A(ugcPost%3A6747087223474200576%2C6750021231346536449)

Appendix05: Tuckman's model for team development
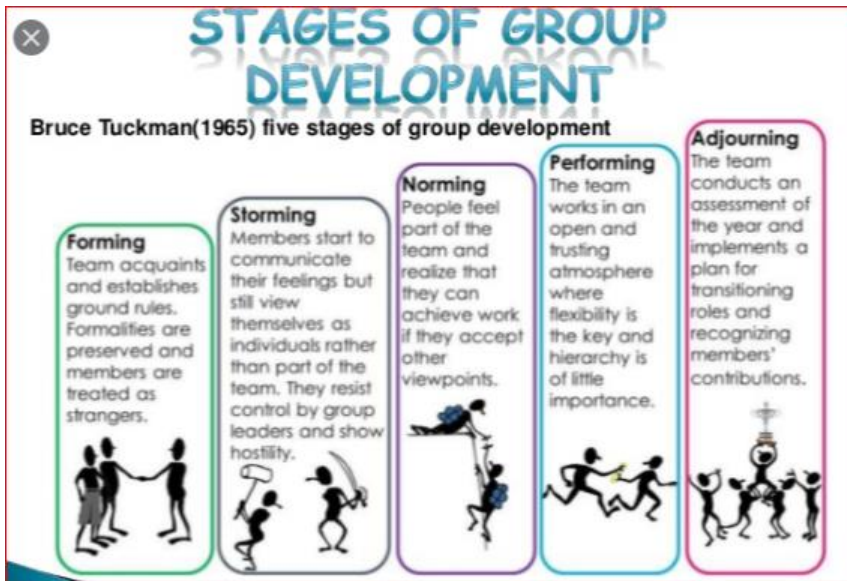
Appendix06: Simple Check for SCRUM (Made by Henrik Kniberg)