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To Scrum, Prepare

ARTICLE

By Steve Berczuk | November 14, 2010

SUMMARY

Agile methods have some sort of daily all-team checkpoint meeting as part of the process. The idea behind the Daily Scrum (Scrum) or Daily Standup (XP) is good: replace status meetings (or someone walking around asking about status) with one short daily meeting where everyone has a chance to communicate about what they are doing and what they need help with.

Agile methods have some sort of daily all-team checkpoint meeting as part of the process. The idea behind the Daily Scrum (Scrum) or Daily Standup (XP) is good: replace status meetings (or someone walking around asking about status) with one short daily meeting where everyone has a chance to communicate about what they are doing and what they need help with.

This ensures that there is at least one chance each day for everyone to understand the big picture of the project, and to discover unexpected dependencies.

But just having everyone in the room doesn't make for an effective, focused scrum. You need to be be prepared. Once I was on a team where the scrums started going off track. They took longer. People's updates were often "I don't remember what I did yesterday," or they became long unfocused rambles that didn't convey much information. I suggested that we all take a few minutes before Scrum to organize our thoughts. This got a lot of resistance. "It feels like a pre-meeting meeting, and with Scrum we're supposed to spend less time in meetings."

While Daily Scrum's are meant to be lightweight, it's respectful of everyone else's time to think about what 's worth sharing with the team. Most days you might just be working on one thing, in which case a quick glance at the Scrum board might be enough. But if you want to do what's best for your team, why not take 2 minutes before Scrum (either in the morning, or even the day before) jotting down what you want to share with the team that

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- What were my roadblocks?

Starting each day with a clear picture in your head of the answers those questions is probably not a bad thing from a professional development perspective anyway.

Sure, everyone will have off days where they don't get around to this, but if your Scrum's are losing focus frequently, consider:

- Posting a sign that reminds people of the agenda of the scrum (as Tabaka suggests in **Collaboration Explained: Facilitation Skills for Software Project Leaders**)
- Whether there are people participating who aren't needed.
- Whether your work isn't being structured in a way that moves the team towards the sprint goal.

The Daily Scrum (or standup) is a useful tool for being agile and responsive, but just being in the room does not mean that you are having a Scrum.

Topics: scrum,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Steve Berczuk is a Principal Software Engineer with experience as a manager, Scrum Master and technical lead in Boston, MA. The author of *Software Configuration Management Patterns: Effective Teamwork, Practical Integration*, he is a recognized expert in software configuration management and agile software development. Steve is passionate about helping teams work effectively to produce quality software. He has an M.S. in operations research from Stanford University and an S.B. in Electrical Engineering from MIT, and is a Certified ScrumMaster. Contact Steve at steve@berczuk.com or visit berczuk.com and follow his blog at blog.berczuk.com.

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