

# People Management Issues in Scrum from COBIT Perspective

Necmettin Ozkan  
IT Governance Division  
Turkiye Finans Participation Bank  
Istanbul, Turkey  
necmettin.ozkan@turkiyefinans.com.tr

While Scrum aims to maximize the business value of information technology (IT), COBIT (Control Objectives for Information and Related Technology) is to assure the business value of IT throughout the international set of generally accepted IT control objectives [1]. However, from the point of people management, Scrum and COBIT present different approaches in their essence:

- While COBIT is to standardize people to the processes, SCRUM relies on people and their creativity rather than processes [7].
- Instead of a command and control style of management in COBIT, Scrum encourages teams with the resources they need and then trust them to do their jobs well [6].

Albeit Scrum teams have a freedom inside the team, they one way or another still have an interaction with the remaining parts of organizations which have authorities over the same subject which is maximizing the value. Scrum should gain recognition throughout the organization, and be applied appropriately. Otherwise, conserving and protecting the natural structure and mechanism of the teams becomes a challenge.

The focus migrates from people centric management to product centric management by Scrum methods and the structure of Scrum shapes around the product concept. Line managers, who have primary responsibilities over people, disappear. However, still someone should watch over people who are prone to be forgotten somewhere in the product lines, aggressively designed for continuous and unremitting delivery.

Accountabilities and responsibilities of people management functions of teams should be addressed in Scrum. As a part of it, responsibilities of workload and resource capacity management among and inside the Scrum teams should be defined. Performance measurement and reward systems must be suitably designed [4] team based, where collective goals supersede individual accomplishments [8]. Moreover, career path development is a field to study for Scrum which provides a flat structure of organization rather than a hierarchy including steps to managerial positions.

For the teams that are expected to trust each other, the concept of codes of ethics plays a critical role for the success of agile methodologies. And, organizations should be aware of

that it may take enormous effort, time, and patience to build a culture of trust and respect among the employees [4].

Documentation as useful artifacts for the backup of information is discouraged in Scrum [5]. Thus, much of the knowledge in agile development resides in the heads of the development team members [4].

Using an agile approach entails formidable responsibility on the client's part [8]. The success of agile development relies on finding customers who are expected to be collaborative, representative, authorized, committed, and knowledgeable [3]. Great Scrum also needs great product owners [11].

Consequently, Scrum brings the advantages of flexibility and human initiative, yet opens gates to the diversity and unpredictability of people which at the end may inhibit to achieve a level of assurance and control [2], [6]. Thus, organizations within COBIT environments need to strike a balance between the two conflicting interests: agility and control.

## References

- [1] ISACA, "Cobit 4.1", Rolling Meadows, ISACA, 2007.
- [2] Z. Zhiying, 'CMM in uncertain environments', *Commun. ACM*, vol. 46, no. 8, pp. 115-119, 2003.
- [3] B. Boehm and R. Turner, *Balancing agility and discipline*. Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2004
- [4] S. Nerur, R. Mahapatra and G. Mangalaraj, 'Challenges of migrating to agile methodologies', *Commun. ACM*, vol. 48, no. 5, pp. 72-78, 2005.
- [5] K. Beck et al., "Agile manifesto" <http://agilemanifesto.org/>, 2001
- [6] A. I. Khan, M. R. J. Qureshi, and U. A. Khan, "A Comprehensive Study of Commonly Practiced Heavy & Light Weight Software Methodologies," *International Journal of Computer Science and Issues*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 441-450, June 2011
- [7] A. Cockburn and J. Highsmith "Agile Software Development, The People Factor", *Computer*, vol. 34, no. 11, pp. 131 -133, 2001
- [8] V. Vinekar, C. Slinkman and S. Nerur, 'Can Agile and Traditional Systems Development Approaches Coexist? An Ambidextrous View', *Information Systems Management*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 31-42, 2006.
- [9] K. Judy, 'Great Scrums Need Great Product Owners: Unbounded Collaboration and Collective Product Ownership ', in the 41st Hawaii International Conference on system sciences, 2008.