ScrumMasters Considered Harmful

Where Did It Go Wrong?

Paul Hodgetts, Agile Logic, www.AgileLogic.com

"In computer science and related disciplines, 'considered harmful' is a phrase popularly used in the titles of diatribes and other critical essays."
— Wikipedia

"Go To Statement Considered Harmful" — Edgar Dijkstra, ACM, 3/68

"Are Iterations Hazardous to Your Project?" — Alistair Cockburn, article, 6/08

"A dead ScrumMaster is a useless ScrumMaster."

– Ken Schwaber
(Agile Project Management with Scrum)

Do we set our ScrumMasters up to fail?

Do we set our Scrum projects up to fail?

What's In A Name?
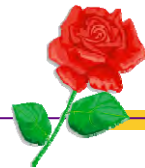
ScrumMaster
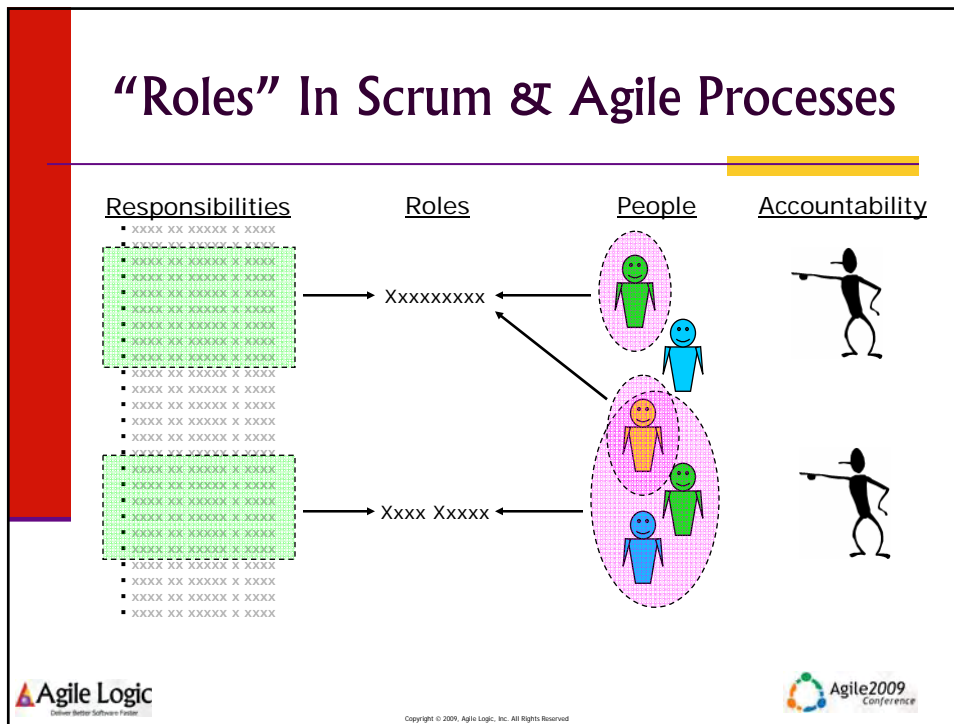
Master of the Scrum

Master of Scrum

Master of (Scrum) Ceremonies

Quartermaster (to the Scrum Team)

"Roles" In Scrum & Agile Processes

Responsibilities	Roles	People	Accountability

Xxxxxxxxx

Xxxx Xxxxx
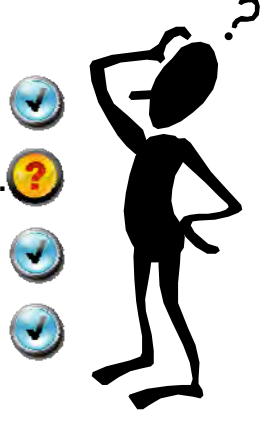
In Scrum,

"ScrumMaster" is a <u>role</u>…

…with a <u>set of responsibilities</u>…

…handled by a <u>single person</u>…

…who is <u>accountable</u>.

- My ScrumMaster has never been on a Scrum team (but he took a class).
- My ScrumMaster has never heard of Extreme Programming.
- My ScrumMaster proposed that we separate out the test team so they'd be more efficient.
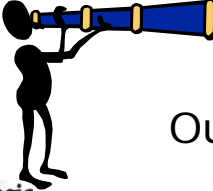
ScrumMaster as
an Agile & Scrum Expert

- My ScrumMaster can't explain why or how we're rolling out Scrum in our company.
- My ScrumMaster tells me we don't have the resources to get training in Scrum.
- My ScrumMaster showed up on the first day with a "hybrid" Scrum process for us to follow.

ScrumMaster as
a Scrum Change Agent

- My ScrumMaster lets us finish sprint after sprint without getting the testing completed.
- My ScrumMaster lets the VP of Marketing interrupt me during the sprint to work on something "really important" for him.
- My ScrumMaster let Paul skip the Daily Scrum so he could get some work done.
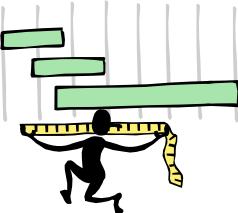
ScrumMaster as
Our Process Conscience

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- My ScrumMaster works with our Product Manager to develop our Sprint plan.
- My ScrumMaster runs our Daily Scrum, gets our status and assigns our next task to us.
- My ScrumMaster calculates our capacity and makes sure we're all working at or above 82%.

ScrumMaster as
a Project Manager
(a Taskmaster)

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- My ScrumMaster won't say anything when no stakeholders show up for our sprint review.
- My ScrumMaster won't bug our manager to get the sign off for the new build server.
- My ScrumMaster says we just have to muddle through not having a UI Designer available.

ScrumMaster as
a Remover of Impediments

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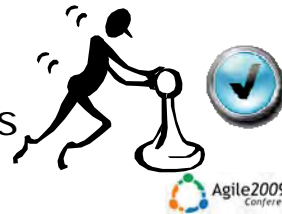
- My ScrumMaster never goes to lunch with us.
- My ScrumMaster lets us argue for hours and walk out of meetings blaming each other for not making a decision.
- My ScrumMaster told us we should use JUnit, and installed it without telling us.

ScrumMaster as
Coach and Team Builder

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- My ScrumMaster is usually in company meetings with the CTO.
- My ScrumMaster does my performance review, and she fired Suzy last week.
- My ScrumMaster is concerned about head count, so he's outsourcing our testing.

ScrumMaster as a Manager
(Organizational Manager)

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- My ScrumMaster isn't here right now, she's working on another project.
- My ScrumMaster doesn't really know or understand what I'm working on.
- My ScrumMaster missed our sprint planning meeting to attend a "Dress for Success" seminar.

ScrumMaster as Committed to the Team

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- My ScrumMaster seems to argue a lot with our VP and senior managers.
- My ScrumMaster is afraid to tell our CEO that we can't hit our due date.
- My ScrumMaster said it's OK for us to ignore our corporate documentation standards because we're a Scrum team.

ScrumMaster as
an Ambassador
to the Organization
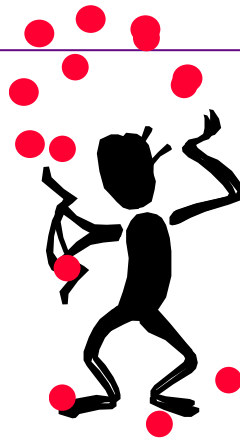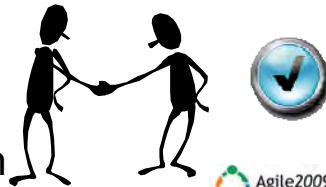
Are those too many responsibilities to juggle?
How often do ScrumMasters drop the ball?

Sidebar: ScrumMaster Certification

- **Many misunderstand what a "ScrumMaster" is…**
  - Is this a class to become a "master of Scrum?"
  - Is this a class for any team member?
- **Many misunderstand what "certification" means…**
  - Does it prove I know Scrum?
  - Does it prove I know how to implement Scrum?
  - Does it prove I can be a ScrumMaster?
  - Do you know how many levels of CSM there are?
- **Does this help or hurt? You decide…**

Who Do We Choose as ScrumMasters?

Project Manager
Program Manager

Team Lead / Tech Lead
Team Member

Organizational Manager
"Big Boss"

Outside Coach
"Hired Gun"

Why Does That Make it Hard?

Why Must We Appoint One?

Kids are pretty good at picking teams and leaders.

Are We Asking Too Much?

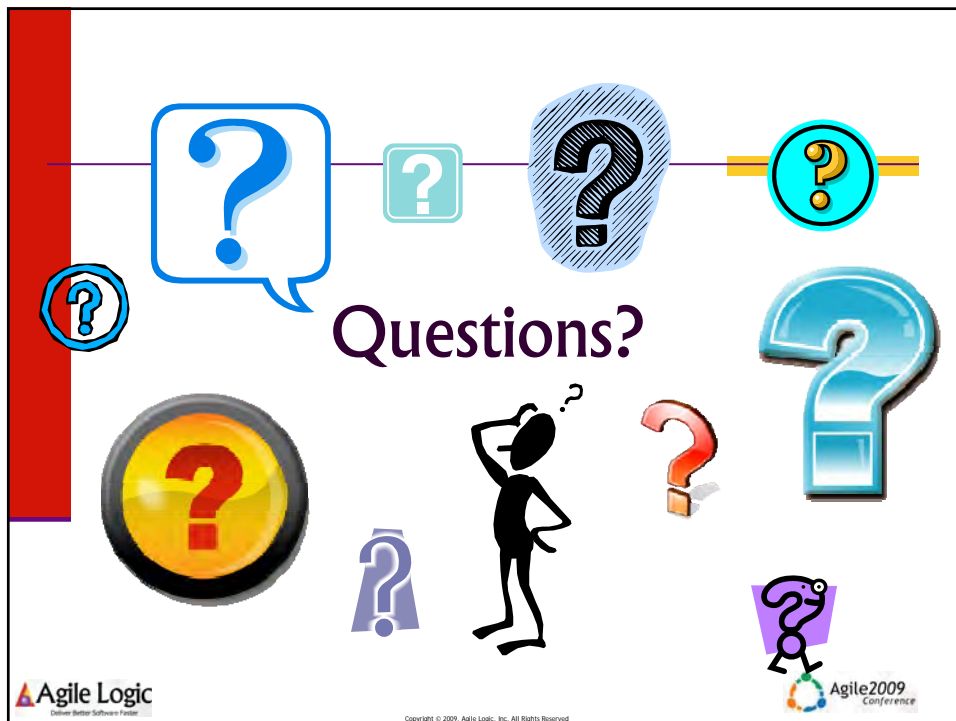# What's the Alternative?

- **Conventional Roles**
  - Tend to create conflicts of interest
- **Situational Leadership**
  - Ad hoc, may not drive any change
- **Extreme Programming Roles**
  - Collective responsibility, partly situational
  - "Coach" and "Manager" roles
- **"Chief Engineer" (Entrepreneurial Leader) Role**
  - From lean and Toyota Product Dev System
  - Product + Solution + Process

What To Do?

- **Get to the bosses first:**
  - Try to delay the choice of ScrumMasters
  - Or at least head off obviously wrong choices
- **Get everyone familiar with Scrum first:**
  - Engage the team in helping fill roles
- **Plan to "inspect and adapt" with ScrumMasters:**
  - Learn what the role needs in your context
  - Carefully coach and support ScrumMasters
  - Make it OK to try different people

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Questions?

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Thank You For Attending!

Enjoy the rest of the Conference!

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Materials will be posted at http://www.agilelogic.com

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