

Stay on Track with Scrum Meetings

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Is team performance letting you down? Are members disorganized or not getting the ball rolling? A daily scrum may be just what everyone needs to get on track.

In rugby a scrum is when the forwards come together in a compact formation to move the ball forward. So what does rugby have to do with meetings? The purpose of a scrum meeting is to keep teams focused "on their objectives and to help them avoid being thrown off track by less important concerns."

The scrum meeting method consists of short, daily meetings designed to keep teams on track and help members get their work done. Scrums are focused on the people doing the work, not management. Managers can attend scrum meetings to see and hear first-hand how things are progressing; however, they're not allowed to speak. Any advice or questions they have must be addressed after the meeting. Daily scrums create openness, honesty and teamwork.

Scrums can work for any team or group. It allows groups to keep projects on track, catch problems early and increase productivity. Because team members must tell their peers what they've accomplished since the last meeting and what they plan to do that day, all members are held accountable for their share of the work.

Before You Scrum

Before holding your first scrum, your team – with the help of management – must decide what projects should be completed in the next 15 to 30 days (at a sprint). At the end of the sprint, your team is expected to have completed all assigned work.

Managers role is to coach and help team succeed, not to tell the team members how to do their work.

Rules for scrum meetings:

1. Choose a scrum leader to enforce the rules during the sprint;
2. Hold scrums every day in the same location and at the same time - preferably first thing in the morning;
3. Each scrum should last only 15 to 30 minutes;
4. Ask all participants the same three questions:
 - a. What did you do since the last scrum?
 - b. What are you going to do between now and the next scrum?
 - c. Is anything in the way of you doing your work?
5. Address other issues outside the scrum (including suggestions for a team member who's hit a roadblock);
6. Managers are not allowed to speak;
7. If a manager or colleague assigns unplanned work to a team member that will throw the team's schedule off track, the scrum leader has the power to excuse the person of the additional work. The work must either be fit into the next sprint or be assigned to someone who's not on the team;
8. Your team must have a concrete deliverable for management after the sprint; and
9. Start the process again after each sprint.