

*The Addison-Wesley Signature Series*



A MIKE COHN SIGNATURE  
BOOK  
*Mike Cohn*

# THE GREAT SCRUMMASTER

#SCRUMMASTERWAY



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Foreword by *Linda Rising*

# **The Great ScrumMaster**

### EXERCISE: STATE OF MIND—NOW

Go through all the approaches of the ScrumMaster State of Mind model and think about situations where taking this approach could be useful and also where it would be inappropriate.

Teaching, mentoring:

Removing impediments:

Facilitation:

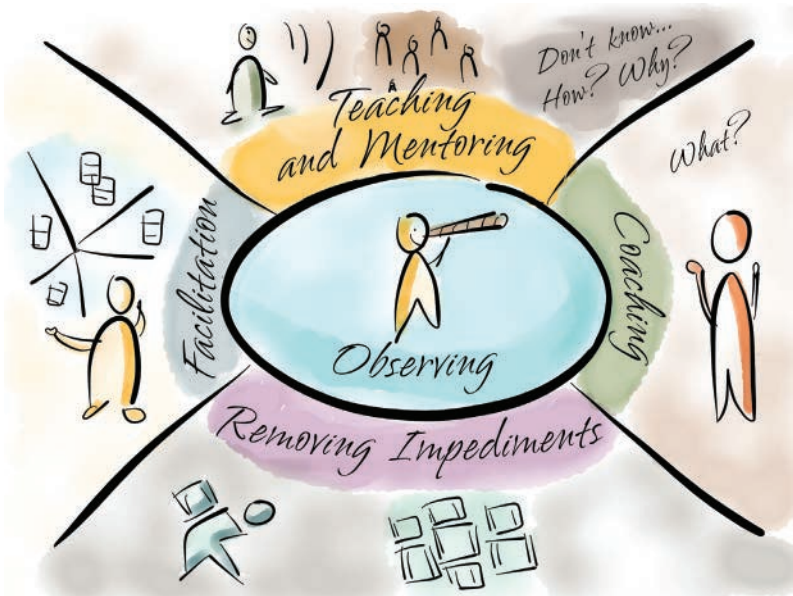
Coaching:

Which approach is the most comfortable for you as a ScrumMaster and why?

- ☐ Teaching, mentoring, sharing experience, giving advice
- ☐ Removing impediments
- ☐ Facilitation
- ☐ Coaching

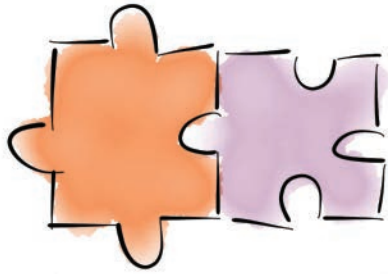
## THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

Although all the approaches of the ScrumMaster State of Mind model are important during your journey to becoming a great ScrumMaster, one very important item is still missing—*observation*. If you take the opportunity to be quiet and let the team take over an activity, you can continue to observe them for another minute before you teach them or explain how they should do something, facilitate their conversation, coach them to decide themselves, or try to fix the problem yourself by removing impediments. If you resist the urge to solve every issue as quickly as possible so the team can get back to work again, you will be much closer to the goal of having a self-organized team.



Therefore, the ScrumMaster State of Mind model is very important, because it forces you to step back to the role of observer and decide which approach you are going to take and why. There is truth to the adage that listening is one of the most important aspects of communication and decision making.

When you imagine how listening could have improved the outcome while you were teaching, facilitating, coaching, and removing impediments, you will find some situations where you would have decided things differently if you had practiced this model.



### Remember

- Observing, listening, and not interfering are the most important aspects of a great ScrumMaster's job.
- Any action, such as coaching, facilitation, teaching, or removing impediments, can wait until it's clear which approach is the best choice.

### EXERCISE: STATE OF MIND—THE FUTURE

Is there any approach you would like to use more often? Why?

- ☐ Teaching, mentoring, sharing experiences, giving advice
- ☐ Removing impediments
- ☐ Facilitation
- ☐ Coaching
- ☐ Observation

Why?

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## #SCRUMMASTERWAY

Scrum defines three roles only—ScrumMaster, Product Owner, and development team. The usefulness of the latter two is usually easy to understand, because companies can link them to existing roles, but the ScrumMaster role puzzles them.

To make the ScrumMaster role more understandable, I have designed a new concept describing three levels of a great ScrumMaster: #ScrumMasterWay. It helps ScrumMasters to focus



on the right level of the organization at any given time and pull them out of the development team perspective into that of the product and the overall organization.

Every level is individually described in the following sections, but before you go on, try this simple exercise.

### **EXERCISE: #SCRUMMASTERWAY**

Complete the following statements from the ScrumMaster's point of view (select the option you like the most):

#### **It is most important to me**

- a. to have an efficient, happy development team that follows Scrum.
- b. to have a good relationship among members of the product group: Product Owner, development team(s), manager, and other stakeholders.
- c. to help the whole organization embrace the Agile mindset.

#### **The Product Owner should be**

- a. not part of any team; he should not attend Retrospectives.
- b. my partner; I'm here to help.
- c. a member of the self-organized team of Product Owners taking care of the product portfolio.

#### **Other teams that need our input or support**

- a. are spoken of as "them" and we don't care about their needs.
- b. have to ask the Product Owner to plan items into the Backlog.
- c. are part of our company and we help each other.

#### **I expect the manager**

- a. not to attend any team meetings.

- b. to help me create a suitable environment and remove some roadblocks.
- c. to support my learning and encourage me to come up with innovations and changes at the organizational level.

#### **I expect to get**

- a. clear and measurable expectations of what I am supposed to achieve.
- b. an opportunity to aim for long-term team success.
- c. the freedom to come up with innovative and creative ideas, even outside our group.

#### **A group of ScrumMasters is**

- a. useless, because I don't need other ScrumMasters to do my job.
- b. useful, because we can help each other and share experiences.
- c. the most important group because I can't "change the world"/my organization alone.

If you chose "a," you're at Level 1; "b," Level 2; "c," Level 3 (the levels will be explained in the following sections).

## **LEVEL 1—MY TEAM**

At this level the ScrumMaster feels responsible for the development team only. It's not uncommon; it happens to most new ScrumMasters who have passed some training course and started to apply Scrum theory. During the class they are already struggling with questions such as "How can I make myself useful every day?"

The answer goes back to the goal of the ScrumMaster: to build a self-organized development team, and let them embrace Scrum values and the Agile mindset, which is a long-term activity, not a