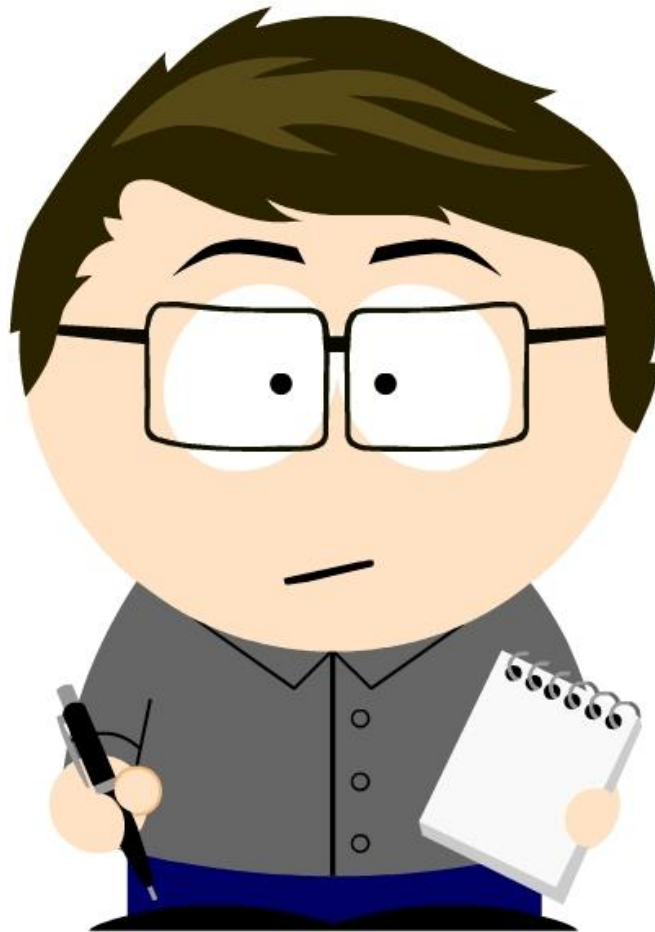# The Scribe

As a first attempt of implementing the Product Owner role, organizations often start with someone who has strong analytic skills. This is often a member of the Development Team that was used to writing requirement specs or someone who used to be the 'Business Analyst'. Since this person typically comes from the IT department, it is an easy to take first step towards implementing Scrum and we can get started with the creation of a Product Backlog.

However, **a Scribe** has limited benefits, since he often needs others (marketing, sales, product/project managers, steering committees, etc) to answer difficult questions. This delegated decision making often leads to a disruption of the Flow, Bottlenecks, large piles of stocked work and a slow generation of Business Value.

The Proxy

In order to solve the communication problems of a Scribe, organizations update the Product Owner role with a senior analyst that has strong communication skills. This person is like an account manager that is still coming from the IT department. The focus of a **Proxy** shifts from creating Product Backlog items towards creating Product Increments.

The expected benefits of a Proxy are slightly better, since he is more connected to the business than the Scribe. Although the delays, waiting time and hick-ups will decrease, many of those remain.

The Business Representative

A problem that is often heard with the Proxy (and also the Scribe) is that the business (often marketing & sales) is disconnected from the IT department. Once organizations understand that they need to break down the inter-departmental barriers, they send in someone from marketing/sales/product management to fill in the Product Owner role. This upgrade to **business representative** is the next step in the evolution. From this moment on the Scrum team consists of people from all parts of the organization, and not only from the IT department.

The expected benefits increase again, since there is a broader collaboration. Now there is direct availability of functional knowledge & stakeholder expectations. Yet, the business representative still has limited autonomy, since marketing\sales\product management department are still the real authorities.

The Sponsor

Once a Business Representative has felt the pain of continuously asking the business departments to make decisions, he will probably fight to get some mandate. Once the business departments dare to give control to and trust the Business Representative, the next step in the evolution is made and the Business Representative is upgraded to a **Sponsor**.

It works better if the person is not only from business, but also has the trust and the mandate to take decisions (on the spot). A mandate is a signal that the role is taken more seriously. The sponsor is often allowed to spend more time as a Product Owner, leading to less hick-ups, context\task switching & largely improved flow. The Development Team can focus more, and get things done.

The issues of a Sponsor mostly come down to a need for lobbying for budget. A sponsor still needs to negotiate to free up money from the different business departments. Maybe he can already decide on how to spend the money for his own department, but there are still other departments that need to be convinced.

The Entrepreneur

The last step in the evolution of the Product Owner is to make him fully responsible for functionality and budgets. This makes him a real Entrepreneur, whose job is to create as much Business Value for his customers as possible. He's like a mini-CEO, a real owner over the product.

The Entrepreneur is responsible for all aspects, like marketing, competition, users, legal, finance within the scope of his product. His professional life is dedicated to the well-being of the product.

Unfortunately, these kind of Product Owners are still a rare species, since organizations are often not ready to delegate this kind of control.

Yes, We Do Scrum. And our Product Owner is a …

Expected benefits

Not Scrum · **Yes, And...**

scribe · proxy · business representative · sponsor · entrepreneur

Product Owner role