

Agile + DevOps **WEST**

A TECHWELL EVENT

AD3

Product Ownership Practices

10:30 AM

AD3 - The Essential Product Owner: Partnering with Your Teams

Presented by:

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Bob Galen

Bob Galen is an agile practitioner, trainer & coach based in Cary, NC. In this role, he helps guide companies and teams in their pragmatic adoption and organizational shift towards Scrum and other agile methodologies and practices. He is a Principal Agile Coach at Vaco Agile, a leading business agility transformation company. He is also President and Head Coach at RGCG a boutique agile coaching firm. Bob regularly speaks at international conferences and professional groups on topics related to software development, project management, software testing, and team leadership. He is a Certified Enterprise Coach (CEC), CAL I trainer, and an active member of the Agile & Scrum Alliances. He's published three agile-centric books: Three Pillars of Agile Quality and Testing in 2012, Scrum Product Ownership, 3rd Edition in 2019, and Agile Reflections in 2012. He's also a prolific writer, blogger, and podcaster. Bob may be reached directly at atbob@rgalen.com or networking via LinkedIn

The Essential Product Owner

Partnering with your Teams



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Principle Agile Coach at [Vaco Agile](#) in Raleigh, NC

Agile Trainer & Coach at [RGalen CG](#)

- Somewhere “north” of 30 years experience
- Wide variety of technical stacks and business domains
- Roots of a software developer
- Senior/Executive software development leadership for 20+ years
- Agile “Coach of Coaches” and Leaders
- Deep XP, Lean, Scrum, and Kanban experience since late 1990’s
- From Cary, North Carolina; husband, father, grandfather, and dog lover



When I say Product Owner...?



Customer
Business Analyst
Stakeholder
Product Manager
Requirement Provider



Anyone tasked with describing and accepting business facing value produced by an agile team

Clearly the reference is Scrum-centric

Audience?

- Truly not Product Owner centric
- Agile methodology agnostic

- I'm trying to imply a whole-team view, where the entire team:
 - Collaborates on the work
 - Elaborates stories
 - Delivers on value
 - Delivers on quality



My focus:
Simple Patterns vs. Essential Patterns

Simple Patterns – Good!

Essential Patterns – Collaborative & Better!

A few Stories from the 'Trenches'
Some patterns, some anti-patterns

What is the Role?

Simple pattern: The Product Owner gives the Team User Stories

Essential pattern

Balance across all 4-Quadrants



4 Quadrants of Product Ownership



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They Key

- Nobody can fulfill all aspects of the role
 - Particularly at-Scale
- Get...Help
- Establish...Partnerships
- Trust...Your Team
- Empower...Yourself!



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Who owns the Backlog?

Simple pattern: The Product Owner 'Owns' the Product Backlog

Essential pattern

It Takes a Village to 'Own' the Backlog



It Takes a Village to 'Own' the Backlog

Product Organization – Product Owners

Stakeholders

Executives

Business Analysts

Testers

Software Programmers, Developers, Engineers

Scrum Masters

Project Managers

Influence Points

- ✓ Shared vision, goals, ownership, challenges, successes & failures
- ✓ 3-Amigos (Developer + Tester + PO)
- ✓ EVERYONE writes User Stories
- ✓ Active in Sprint Reviews (planning, readiness, and delivery)
- ✓ Sit with or visit the team; daily interactions!
- ✓ Working code...reviewed...accepted...deployed
- ✓ Giving the team space for innovation and creativity

But...

- But importantly a singular, decisive voice!
- Empowered AND Trusted by Leadership
- “Sticky” Decision-maker
- There can BE only ONE!



Goal Setting?

Simple pattern: Defining a Sprint Goal

Essential pattern Leading with your Goals



Leading with Goal Setting

- ✓ Release Goals
- ✓ Sprint Goals
- ✓ Feature Acceptance



- Over Features, Stories, and Tasks
- Value-driven
- Envisioning
- Chartering



Goal Setting Stories

- A Survival Goal (Michael)
 - Startup, first Scrum sprint, early financing, successful DEMO
- A Quality Goal (Jon)
 - Complex errors, \$\$\$, explore ATDD, correct business logic, 'Stretch' -- innovation
- Release Goals (Rob)
 - New message creation engine; intuitive for SMB customers,
 - Release #1 – MMF / Entry, Release #2 – Stabilization & Templates and Release #3 – Complex Editing

Backlog Management?

Simple pattern: Backlog Refinement

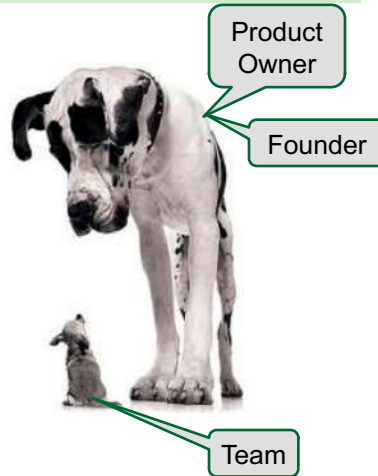
Essential pattern

Active & Congruent Backlog Refinement



Stories of Influencing Meeting Dynamics

- PO Influence (Max)
 - eCommerce company
 - PO was incredibly well-liked; influential
 - Team was there to please...to a fault
- Leadership Influence (Todd)
 - Start-up
 - CTO was founder, architect, developer
 - Planning poker with a 'twist'



Active Backlog Grooming

- Bring goals & stories to the table; but be open to change
- Listen actively
- Don't predetermine size nor complexity; trust your team
- Don't negotiate...collaborate
- Organic explorations of scope and options as you get closer to execution
- Explore execution dynamics – architecture & design, testing, non-functional, deployment, and risk
- Apply pressure on – value flow, quality & sustainable pace

Active Backlog Refinement

Remembering that the backlog is a shared construct that represents a workflow. It's not simply a set of features, but teams need to be able to see the "big picture" and flow from here-to-there as well.

Visit it often; take your time to gather understanding and determine your path

Big Picture?

Simple pattern: Release Planning

Essential pattern

Multi-threaded Look Ahead



A Tapestry that Includes Threads for...

Things to do...

- Features
- Value increments
- Architecture
- Design
- Process
- Quality
- Testing



- Deployment
- Regulatory
- Dependency
- Risk
- Feedback
- Customer timing
- Tempo

In a Context-Based fashion...

...Guiding us towards customer value

Unhealthy Backlogs Anti-patterns

- PO drops off a list
- Overloaded priority: 1a, 1b, 1c...
- Too short-sighted (small) or too robust (long)
- Dependencies not considered
- No consideration for technical debt
 - Development, testing, legacy code, defect backlogs, etc.
- Ignore value
- Trivialize deployment
- Miss the opportunity for exploration

Healthy Postures in Creating the Backlog

- Allow the solution to emerge; just-in-time; KISS
- Look-ahead, but not too far; iterate
- Quality / Debt recovery should result in stories
- Thoughtful workflow matters; so trust your teams' input
- Think in terms of 'Delivery' to your customer and 'Done'

Big Picture? Innovation?

Simple pattern: Work With The Team

Essential pattern
Cementing a “Creative Partnership”
Between PO and Team



Partnership Story

- Link was a Product Owner in an eCommerce company
 - Conversations around the competitive landscape
 - Technology innovation that might be useful
 - Quarterly presentation on long term strategy; inclusive of teams' ideas
 - Team included in corporate strategy sessions
- What do you think it drove?
 - Shared 'Ownership'
 - True, Wisdom of Crowds innovation & creativity from the team
 - Teams' understanding of value and problem domain
 - KISS solutions

Round-trip Exposure

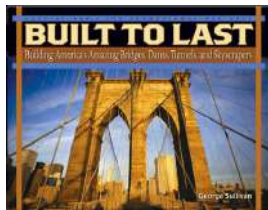
- Allow the team time to Explore
- Allow the team to Experiment, Stretch, and Fail
 - Proudly share failures; stretch points; innovative efforts
- Always draw learning from Retrospectives
- Know when to 'Push' and when to 'Pull'
- Share your 'Pressures'

Built to Last?

Simple pattern: Of Course, Quality

Essential pattern

**Build it Right & Keep it Clean—
No Matter the Cost**



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Who Decides on Quality?

- Of Course, Quality isn't a simple pattern, it's a façade
- Jim Coplien responding to a point on Scrum Alliance leadership (paraphrased)...
 - *Value doesn't matter when examining technical debt. Rather, that cleaning up after yourself transcended the normal determination of business value and was simply an inherent part of delivering software. That it is our responsibility and is non-negotiable. The decision-making wasn't FOR the business-side, but instead resides within the team.*
- Listen to your team!
- Ask the 'Right' questions!

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Technical Debt

- Intentional vs.
 - We don't have the time, you're simply gold-plating, I don't trust you or your overreacting
- Unintentional
 - Mistakes, M&A activity, poor design choices, skill gaps, etc.
- Warning signs & terms
 - Hacking, Crufty Code, Over complexity
 - Fear Factor (FUD), Estimate Inflation
- Annual pilgrimage for debt relief (Mark)



It's your responsibility!

- Healthy backlogs consider
- Long term vs. Short term investments
- Features vs. Refactoring
- Bugs
- Technical investments (updates, new plumbing)
- Often an 80/20 rules or similar is used

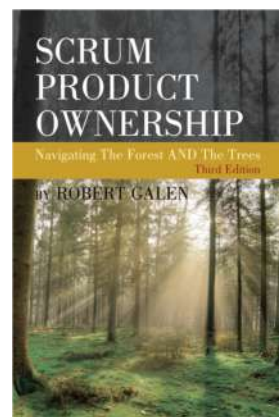


Wrapping up Essential Patterns Review

1. Balance Across All 4-Quadrants
2. It Takes a Village to 'Own' the Backlog
3. Leading with your Goals
4. Active & Congruent Backlog Grooming
5. Multi-threaded Look Ahead
6. Cementing a "Creative Partnership" Between PO and Team
7. Build it Right & Keep it Clean—No Matter the Cost

Agile Journey Index Product Owner Maturity

- I've developed a AJI-based maturity assessment tool. You can find it here: <https://leanpub.com/scrumproductownership-ajimaturitymodel>
- With an e-copy of the 3'rd Edition of SPO: <https://leanpub.com/scrumproductownership-balancingvaluefromtheinsideout3rdedition>



Wrapping up



- What were the most compelling ideas, stories, or lessons?
- What adjustments will you make in your Product Ownership?
- What ideas did I miss?
- Final questions or discussion?



Thank you!

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Podcast on all things 'agile' -

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