# How to find a true Product Owner

Robert Batůšek, LeSS conference Warszaw 2022

#### **Exercise - introduction**

Form a pair/triple, introduce yourselves, discuss

In your current assignment

- how many Products
- how many Product Owners
- how have POs been chosen



Why does Product Owner choice matter

### Why does Product Owner exist

Scrum Guide:

Developing and explicitly communicating the Product Goal

Creating and clearly communicating Product Backlog items

Ordering Product Backlog items

Ensuring that the Product Backlog is transparent, visible and understood.

Centralizing business decision

### LeSS Guide: Getting Started

Educate everyone

Define product

Define "done"

Have appropriately structured teams

Only **Product Owner** provides work for the teams

Keep project managers away

# Choosing a Product Owner



# Product Owner Choices in companies

## Analyst



#### Also:

- solution architect
- systems engineer

#### Benefits:

- knows the product
- knows the domain
- speaks customer language

### Programmer



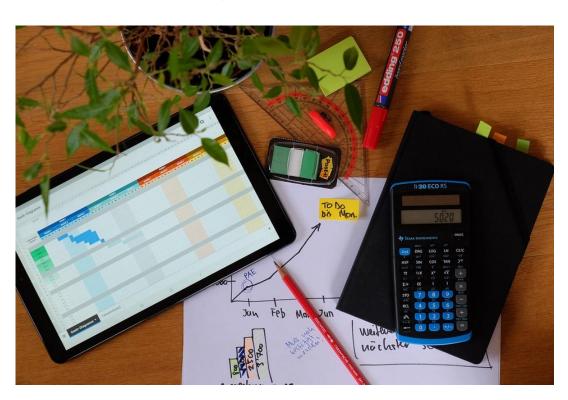
#### Also

- tester
- any other technical person

#### Benefits

- knows the product
- knows the technology
- speaks developer language

### **Project Manager**



#### Also:

- program manager
- project lead

#### Benefits:

- broad (but shallow) focus
- has people skills

## Manager



#### Also:

- director
- team lead

#### **Benefits**

- he knows the product
- a decision maker

### Leads to the following antipatterns

Team Output Owner

**Component Owner** 

Scribe

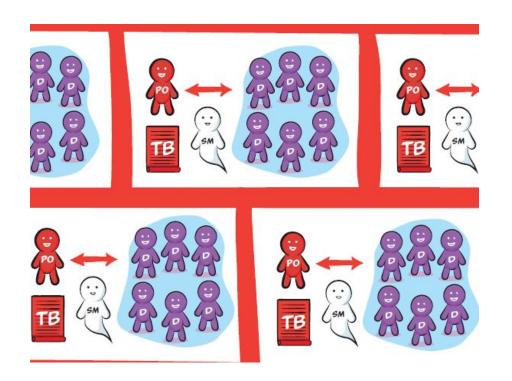
Beggar

Dictator

Hamster

Typically applies to: programmer analyst

### Team Output Owner\*



#### Also

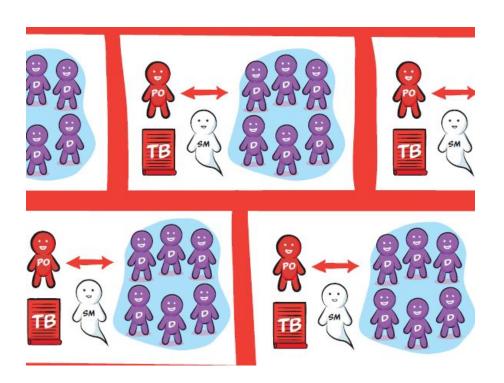
- proxy Product Owner
- technical Product Owner
- delivery manager
- ...

#### Consequences

- multiple Team backlogs instead of one Product Backlog
- multiple "Product Owners" per Product
- man in the middle needs business counterpart

<sup>\*</sup> term invented by Michael James

### Team Output Owner\*



- one or more layers between developers and customers
- need for status reporting
- need for coordination
- loss of information
- overproduction
- feedback delay

<sup>\*</sup> term invented by Michael James

Typically applies to: programmer

### **Component Owner**



- focus on technology → the "Product" is not sellable / marketable
- long feedback cycle from users
- need for multiple layers of "POs"
- dependencies

Typically applies to: analyst project manager

#### Scribe



- produces long an detailed documents
- verifying against the specification
- focus is on the tools
- the teams become less educated in the business domain

Typically applies to: project manager programmer analyst

### Beggar



- doesn't own the budget
- cannot do product-wide decisions

Typically applies to: manager

#### Dictator



- decisions accepted even if they oversteps PO role "holds an invisible gun"
- conflict of interests
   between the product and the system

#### Hamster



Typically applies to: manager project manager

- little availability (he has too much on the plate)
- easily distracted



#### Committee



#### Consequences

 teams prioritize work for the person with the highest impact on their careers

And BTW Scrum Guide: "The Product Owner is one person, not a committee."

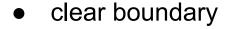
Why do fake Product Owners exist?

#### Definition of the Product in the Scrum Guide

A product is a vehicle to deliver value. It has a clear boundary, known stakeholders, well-defined users or customers. A product could be a service, a physical product, or something more abstract.



#### Test framework





known stakeholders



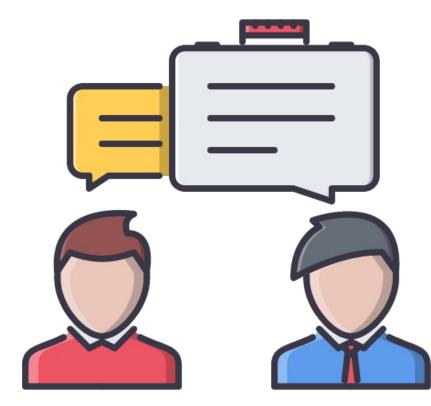
well-defined users



### Exercise - fake products

Find other fake products from your life that fit Scrum Guide definition.

A product is a vehicle to deliver value. It has a clear boundary, known stakeholders, well-defined users or customers. A product could be a service, a physical product, or something more abstract.



### Copy-paste Scrum



By misunderstanding of Scrum Guide

Scrum Guide: "Scrum teams ... should share the same Product Goal, Product Backlog, and Product Owner"

Scrum Guide 2020 change: "There is now just one Scrum Team ... with three different sets of accountabilities: PO, SM, and Developers."

Copying the whole Development Team - Scrum Master - Product Owner structure

### Communication myth

flamme f (a. fig)

Spärlichkeit f

Krampf m

m (f)

gang m speaker ['spirker] (-n; - od -r) Ass-

sparris ['sparis] (-en) BOT Spargel m

sparsam ['spotsam] sparsam; spir-

spartan [spa'[q:n] (-en; -er) Sparts

ner m; spartansk spartanisch

sparv [sparv] (-en; -ar) Spatz m

Sperling m; stekta .ar fig gebruar

Tauben fiPl: ...hok Sperber m

spasm [spasm] (-en; -er) Spasmus

spastisk ['spastisk] spasmisch

spatel ["spattel] (-n; -ar) Spatchild

spatiös [spatsi'ors] weitläufie, een

spatseria [spat'serra] spazieres di

och ~ spazieren gehen; "tur Spain

speceriaffär [speso nitafætt] (x 4

lich; sparsamhet Sparsamkeit f.



n, Korn n

spansk [spansk] spanisch; ~a sjukan

best die (spanische) Grippe; span-

spara ['spo:ra] (Präs Sg a. spar) spa-

ren; aufsparen, aufheben; schonen

(sig sich): IT abspeichern, sichern: ~

(till) IT speichern; Inte ~ någon

möda keine Mühe scheuen; w på

ska ['spanska] Spanierin f; Spanisch

MED a. ialität / parka Fuß sto si'ell speziell, besonders meera (spesifi'serra) spezifiziestrampel naher bezeichnen; einzeln aufngn I ändar mbren; specifik spezifisch; specifiten; ~ 'av ab ka llon Aufstellung f sig (täcket) om'kull mit dem Fuß tumstofe spedition [spedi'fuin] (-en; -er) Ver-'Illi ngn jdm einen Fußtritt seter

sind m. Spedition f; speditionsfir-'undan wegstoßen; ~ 'ut ngn jda is nauswerfen, umg hinausschmeißer ma Speditionsfirma f. Speditionsgeschäft n; spedi'tor Spediteur(in f) m sparkapital [\*spairkapi'tail] (-a) spegel ['spe:gal] (-n; -ar) Spiegel m; bild Spiegelbild n; -blank spiegelspark|byxor [\*sparkbyksur] P blank; ~vand spiegelbildlich Strampelhöschen n(PI); "cykni (er spegla ['speigla] spiegeln (sig sich);

-ar) (Tret-)Roller m spegling Spiegelung sparkonto ["spairkonto] (-r; -n) Sspeja ['speja] spähen; kundschaften; " på ngn jdn belauern; spejare Späsparlåga [\*spa:rlo:ga] (-n; -or) \$pe. her m; Kundschafter m

spektakel [spek'ta:kəl] (-et; -) Spektakel m. Lärm m. umg Radau m: ume Popanz m; ställa till ~ Spektakel machen; bll till ett ~ fig zum Gespött der Leute werden

spektakulär [spektaku'læ:r] spekta-

spekulant [speku'lant] (-en; -er) Spekulant(in f) m; Reflektant(in f) m, Interessent(in f) m; Bewerber(in f) m; Kauflustige(r); spekula'tion Spekulation f: spekul'era spekulieren (på auf Akk; på börsen an der Börse); crwägen

spel [spe:1] (-et; -) Spiel n; (Vogel-) Balz f; SCHIFF Spill n, Winde f; halla god min I elakt .. gute Miene zum bösen Spiel machen: dra sig ur at sich zurückziehen; sich aus dem Staub machen: sätta på a aufs Spiel

spela ['spe:la] spielen; Vogel; balzen; ~ sjuk sich krank stellen: ~ teater Komödie spielen; " ngt för ngn jdm

etw vorspielen; ~ for ngn bei Klavierstunde nehmen; ~ 'bort spielen; ~ l'genom 'durchspiel in CD; bespielen, aufnehmen drehen; ~ 'med mitspielen; ~ 's noch einmal spielen; ~ 'upp au len, vorspielen; ~ 'ut ausspieler 'over übertreiben; spelare Spir

spellautomat (-en; -er) Spiclaut m; \_bank Spielbank f; \_bord / Spieltisch m; "dosa Spieldose -e'vink umg (-en; -ar) Luftiku Windbeutel m (fig): \_film Spic m; "hála Spielhölle f; "kort n karte f; Jektlon Musikstunde -man Spielmann m, Musikant -mark Spielmarke f

spelning (-en; -ar) Spielen n spellregel (-n; -er) Spielregel (n fig Spielraum m; lämna ngr jdm freies Spiel lassen; alld S dauer f: Ar n THEAT Spielzeit spenat [spe'nost] (-en) Spinat / spendera [spen'de:ra] spendie (på Dar)

spene ['speino] (-n; -ar) Zitze spenslig ['spensli(g)] schmlich feinglied(e)rig

sperma ['spærma] (-n od -n) S n; spermle (-n; -r) Spermium spets |spets| (-en: -ar) Spitze fig); zoot Spitz m; I an for Spitze (Gen); drive ngt till sir auf die Spitze treiben: spetsa ['spetsa] (an)spitzen; (auf)spi öronen die Ohren spitzen; ~ sich zuspitzen: spetsfundighe findigkeit f: spetsla spitz (a. a. anzüglich; spetskrage Spit

spett (spet) (-et; -) Spieß m; I stange f; -(e)kaka etwa Baun

spetälsk ['spettelsk] MED aus Aussätzige(r); spetälska (-n) satz m. Lepra f spex ume [speks] (-et; -) eine Studententheater n; spaxa J

spigg [spig] (-en; -ar) zool S

splk [spirk] (-en; -ar) Nagel (od träffa) huvudet på ~en Myth: "Teams and customers speak different languages"

we establish a translator from a business language to a technical language

so that they can focus on coding and deliver features faster



### Efficiency myth



With multiple Product Owners ...

we can have each team focus on one feature and deliver features faster

### Change resistance



Larman's law #1: "Organizations are implicitly optimized to avoid changing the status quo middle- and first-level manager and "specialist" positions & power structures."

Renaming business analyst or program manager to "Product Owner" is the way of least resistance

### Power games



The more people I have at my command, the more important manager I am

Therefore, Product Owner will report to me and I will have many of them.

#### Incentives



I have been made responsible\* for this feature and I have other things on my plate so I need someone to execute it for me

<sup>\*</sup> my bonuses depend on it

How to find a better fit for a PO

### LeSS Guide: Getting Started

Educate everyone

#### **Define product**

Define "done"

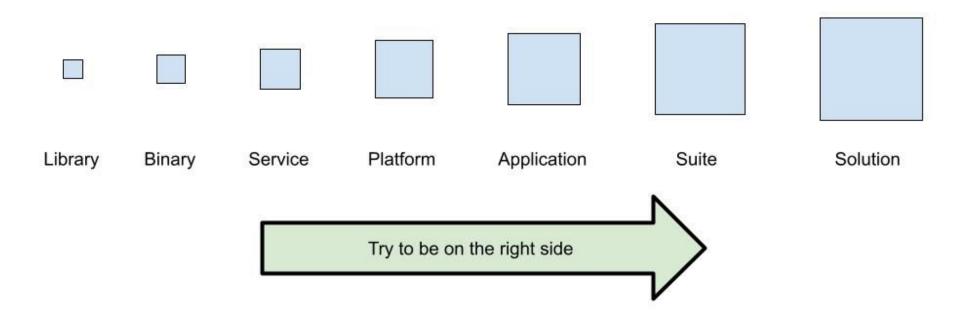
Have appropriately structured teams

Only PO provides work for the teams

Keep project managers away

#### LeSS Product

If you choose a broader product it will constraint your Product Owner choice



### Broader products

Less POs

POs higher in the hierarchy

more customer-centric

less dependencies

business prioritization

less duplicates

simpler organizations

#### **Feature Teams**

Customer focus

End 2 end focus

Focus on value rather than outcome

⇒Less need for coordination

⇒Less need for fake POs

less duplicates in code

flexibility and learning

### **Techniques**

**Broad Products** 

**Feature Teams** 

Education

Budgeting

Practical Indicators that help you find a

candidate Product Owner

# Can kill the product



# No status reports



# Decides priorities alone



# Owns the budget



### Talks to customer more than to teams



#### **Exercise - Product Owner**

Who would be the best fit for a PO in your current assignment?

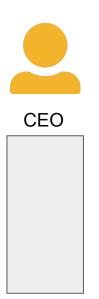
Can kill the Product No status reports Decides alone Owns the budget Talks to customers



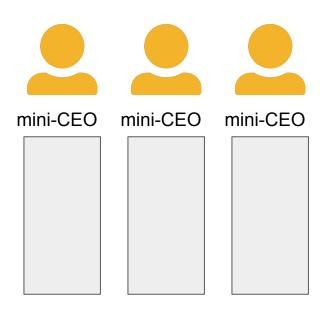
Good choices for Product Owner

## Company Types

#### **One Product**



#### **Multiple Products**



## CEO or mini-CEO (for small companies or small products)

Can kill the Product
No status reports
Decides alone
Owns the budget
Talks to customers?



Team Output Owner

Component owner

Scribe |

<del>Beggar</del>

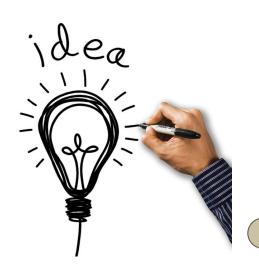
Dictator?

Hamster?

**Committee** 

### **Product Manager**

Can kill the Product No status reports? Decides alone Owns the budget? Talks to customers



Team Output Owner

Component owner

Scribe |

Beggar?

**Dictator** 

Hamster

**Committee** 

#### **Product User**

Can kill the Product?
No status reports?
Decides alone
Owns the budget?
Talks to customers



Team Output Owner
Component owner

Scribe?

Beggar?

**Dictator** 

**Hamster** 

Committee

Maybe needs to be hired

#### Conclusions

Choice of the Product Owner affects adaptiveness

Start with the product definition

Look in the product management department first

Or hire and give enough competences



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