

Scenarios for Scrum Master - Product Owner Conversations.

1. The Product Owner is just not getting it. After weeks of working together with the Product Team and with the Scrum Team, the backlog is still a mess and there is no clarity about what needs to be done. The Scrum Master is privately questioning whether this is the right person for the job.
2. The Scrum Master has observed the Product Owner having the same scenario conversations repeatedly with different groups. The Product Owner uses a 32 slide powerpoint with multiple screenshots when having these conversations. The team understands what is said when it is said, but is not retaining the information because of the complexity of inputs and outputs. (Option: Mix it up. Have the Team talk to the PO.)
3. The Product Owner is not as available as the team would like. A busy person, the PO is on the road a lot. Present at the Demos, the PO often has statements of “that’s not what I expected/wanted.” At the Planning Meeting, the PO has minimal Acceptance Criteria. Occasionally, during a Sprint, the PO will dash off an email with a bit of new information regarding a story in progress or something totally new that needs to be slipped in.
4. The Product Owner is with the Team daily. He wants to see everything that is happening and gives immediate feedback. At first the Team was delighted, but the PO contradicts himself and changes his mind frequently. The Team serves the PO, and is just resignedly doing what they are told. Productivity is slipping.
5. The Team has a team of Product Owners. The stories are split up between three Product Owners, all of whom, truth be told, feel that their stories should be ranked number one. The product team answers to one boss, who also weighs in from time to time. Your conversation is with the number one honcho.
6. The Product Owner is following an aggressive marketing campaign where an ever growing number of deliverables is being added to the Release, inflating the backlog almost daily. The Scrum Master estimates that between 150 -175 SP will be delivered, maybe 200, and the PO knew this from the start. The Release date is set in stone. The backlog has recently swelled to 310 SP, and the PO is promising delivery on all features to her bosses. (Option: Mix it up. Have the Team talk to the PO.)
7. The Product Owner is a proxy PO for the overseas Product Management. The proxy PO talks with another proxy in the overseas office twice a week for about an hour each conversation. The conversation is basically a status update. Both the overseas proxy and the real Product Owner, a VP, attend the demo. The stories are sometimes rejected and the general sense of the Team is that the overseas product management is less than happy with their deliverables.
8. The Product Owner is your boss, and the boss of the Team. The PO is not walking the talk. He or she joins many meetings and frequently talks first. In a recent meeting, the PO specifically singled out the Team member with architectural expertise and said, “This is the approach we’re taking, and I don’t want to hear any concerns about code fragility.” (Option: Mix it up. Have the Team talk to the PO.)

Powerful Questions:

"It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers." James Thurber

Focused Listening: Start with good listening skills. Listen patiently. It's all about the person you're listening to. Be curious. Be receptive. Be sensitive. Be open to their reality. Look for the answers in them, not in yourself.

- A. Avoid "why" questions - often too confrontational, but many times they can be phrased as a "what" or "how" question that allows for more creativity and less defensiveness.
- B. Always use Focused Listening before asking a Powerful Question
- C. Always pause before asking a Powerful Question
- D. Be interested, be neutral and do not have any "right" answer in mind
- E. It is about them, not you.

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| 1. What would make it better? | 9. How might that play out? |
| 2. What isn't clear, yet? | 10. What are we amplifying as good? |
| 3. What other angles can you think of? | 11. Whose problem is this? |
| 4. How do you want it to be? | 12. How does that solution feel? |
| 5. If you had it, what would you have? | 13. What have you already tried doing? |
| 6. What do you (feel) most about this? | 14. What's up with that? |
| 7. What resonates? | 15. What do you predict will happen? |
| 8. What is the most (attribute) thing about the vision? | 16. What test would tell you that this is right? |

Acknowledgment Statements

Observational and sincere statements recognizing an intrinsic and valued quality of the other person.

- A. You are courageous.
- B. You are fun to work with.
- C. I appreciate the insight you add to our conversations.
- D. I just want to tell you how I value the calmness you demonstrate at work.