

The life of a Product Owner Proxy
Jon Humble

Product Owner Proxies: What they are and why we need them.

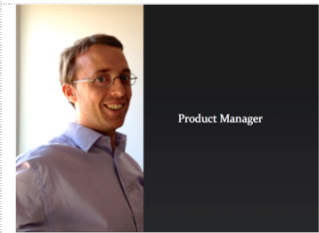
By Jon Humble
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I work for CA Technologies, just down the road from here in Chodov, Prague.



In CA, we have folks like this: his name is Florian and he is a Product Manager.

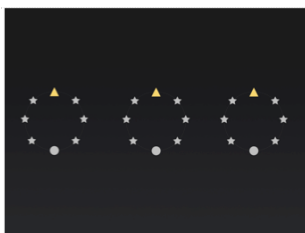
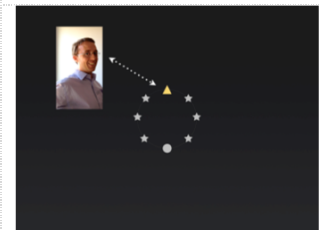
Each product has a Product Manager whose job it is to research customers and markets.



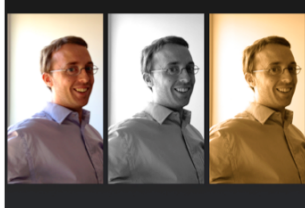
If we consider the scrum roles, Product Managers seem like a good fit for the role of Product Owner.



But there is a problem...



We don't just have one team, we have three.



Since cloning Florian isn't currently technically feasible, we need a solution.



Without a full time PO, our teams are missing an important part.

What we need is someone to bridge the gap between the scrum team and PM.



The role of the person who bridges this gap is not a true Product Owner, since much of this competency lies with Product Management. So let's refer to it as a Product Owner Proxy.

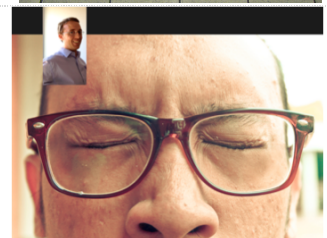


But it's no use if the proxy is just a relay between the team and the PM.

We need to do much more to span the gap between these two parties.

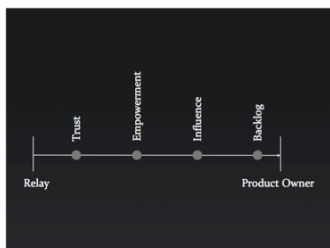


To be able to think like the PM, which is necessary for a good PO Proxy, is really hard. Regular meetings between the PM and proxy make this easier. Face to face meetings are ideal.



The proxy must understand PM's motivation for the features his team is to implement.

Imagine a scale from relay through to true PO. Along the way are some significant points.



Trust between the PM and Proxy can help prevent the necessity to relay all questions.

Empowerment of the proxy allows her to act proactively in the stead of the PM.

Influence occurs when ideas flow from the team back to the PM.

Backlog ownership is the true mark of a PO.



Giving the team and their proxy a slice of the system to own is one way of achieving one PM at scale.

We have had some success with this.



Be the bridge!

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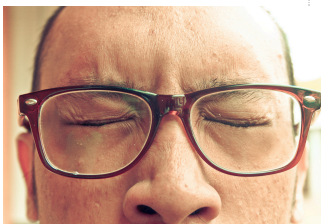
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