Events in LeSS

Ideas, Tips & Tricks

This document should be considered as an independent guide, experience report, collection of ideas, tips and tricks on how to conduct Large Scale Scrum (LeSS) events in a virtual environment. This is not as a prescriptive manual or 'playbook'.

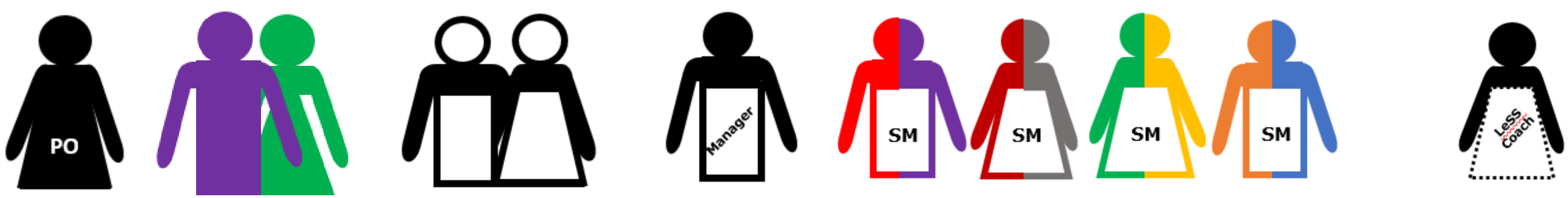
Gene Gendel, Certified Enterprise & Team Coach (CEC-CTC), Certified LeSS Trainer (CLT)

Overview

How To Use This Document?

- This document should be considered as an independent guide, experience report, collection of ideas, tips and tricks on how to conduct Large Scale Scrum (LeSS) events in a virtual environment
- This is NOT a set of 'best practices', cook-book or prescriptive manual. Just like Scrum, Large Scale Scrum (LeSS) encourages a lot of inspection, adaptation and experimentation, and therefore, this guide should only help you with your own experiments
- In this document, the pages alternate:
  - The pages that have "***Note**: For more information, visit the original source: <u>https://less.works/xxxxxxxxx</u>*" in the footer, hold "teasing" information that is directly referenced from less.works web site. You are advised to follow the footer links and read the original site content, as well as navigate around the site, by following its embedded links and navigation
  - The pages that do not have the above mentioned footer, but instead, a list '***Tips & Tricks***', should be referenced to for ideas on how to set up your own virtual LeSS events, by using virtual communication and collaboration tools
- Although this document refers to **Zoom, Miro and Excel**, as the electronic tools of choice, you may consider other, comparable electronic solutions
- With only a few exceptions (e.g. Overall Retrospective), very seldom in this document, will the role of Scrum Master, as a main action taker, is explicitly referenced to. *This is done for a reason*. In Large Scale Scrum (LeSS), the role of Scrum Master is a *full time, non-ending role*, with a gradual shift in his/her coaching focus. You should assume that Scrum Masters are involved in *all* of the herein described activities in the coaching/mentoring/teaching capacity, as needed, non-prescriptively. To learn more about the role of Scrum Master in LeSS, please visit this page: https://less.works/less/framework/scrummaster

- Below are slightly enlarged graphics that represent the roles, referenced throughout the document:



Product Owner
Able to set work priorities for 2-8 teams

Developer(s)
Full-stack, cross-functional, user/customer-facing

Users/Stakeholders
Designted to provide clarifications to developers of LeSS product group

Manager(s)
Optional role in LeSS. If exists, it is focused on enabling/capability building

Scrum Masters
Full time role. Enablers. Coaches. Each Scrum Master is able to support multiple teams (1-3) – thus, multi-colored representation

LeSS Coach
Not explicitly described, as a role, in LeSS but is recommended to have during adoption (LeSS experience is required)

Initial Product Backlog Refinement

Initial Product Backlog Refinement
Before you start your first Sprint, you need ***(1) a Product Backlog with some ready items, and (2) a Definition of Done***. Scrum doesn't name the activity for this, but we'll use the term initial Product Backlog Refinement (initial PBR, IPBR), because it is similar to regular PBR each Sprint.

Typical activities include defining a vision, discovering Product Backlog items, splitting large items, refining items until ready, identifying risks, defining "done", and estimating.

Initial PBR is done once and only once for a product—when you first transition to Scrum or when you start a new product. Subsequently, refinement is done in regular PBR.

Create a shared understanding
Shared understanding of both the overall vision and specific items is important to enhance cooperation between the Teams (and others), and to reduce the inflexibility of Teams not being able to accept the ever-changing highest-order items—because without shared understanding they will say, "we can't do that because we don't know the requirements."

Create Definition of Done
This workshop is usually the place to create the initial Definition of Done. How this can be done is explored in the [Definition of Done section](#)

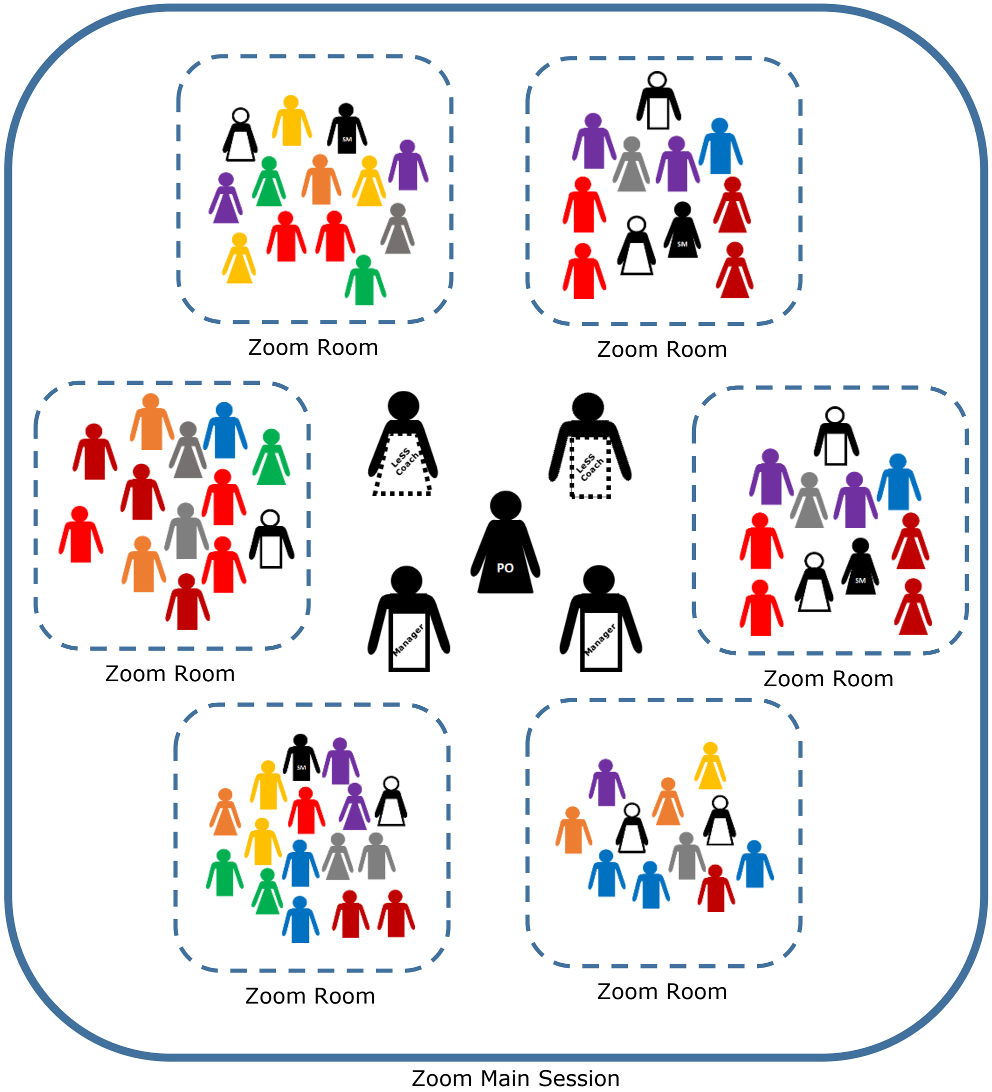
Note: *For more information, visit the original source:* https://less.works/less/framework/initial-product-backlog-refinement

Initial Product Backlog Refinement

PBR - Initial: **Frequency:** Once. Before Sprint 1. | **Duration:** 2 days| **Participation**: teams, PO, users/customers/LeSS coach

Tips & Tricks:

1) Everyone who is involved in product development (LeSS product group, PO, users/stakeholders/customers) joins the *same Zoom main session*. Have Zoom-savvy moderator available. Use Zoom chat and Zoom team broadcasting, for individual, team and public communication.
2) Use Miro board to display and discuss overall product vision, mission, strategic goals, OKRs, etc.
3) Configure Miro board (its various templates) to support various activities, that everyone participates: story mapping, customer journeys, persona identification, use case definition and decomposition, etc. **Avoid putting them into heavier e-tools, for as long as live discussions are underway**. Keep things simple.
4) Zoom rooms are created on-demand for diverging into tailored discussions and activities (specific topics of interest)
5) People **converge-diverge** into/out-of zoom rooms, to have discussions with other colleagues
6) Create an initial ***Definition of Done (DoD)*** that will be reasonable for all teams to start with - display it in Miro Later, any team may decide if its DoD should be made a bit stricter than a shared DoD
7) Gradually, build up a **Product Backlog** to provide work for, at least, a few initial sprints – keep it displayed in Miro until the end of Initial PBR (keep 'one single source of truth'). Keep things simple. Upon completion of Initial PBR, you may transfer a backlog to another, more persistent tool(e.g. excel spreadsheet)
8) **Complete the event by restating** the overall product vision, mission, strategic goals, OKRs, as well as tactical goals (if any) for an upcoming sprint
9) Celebrate



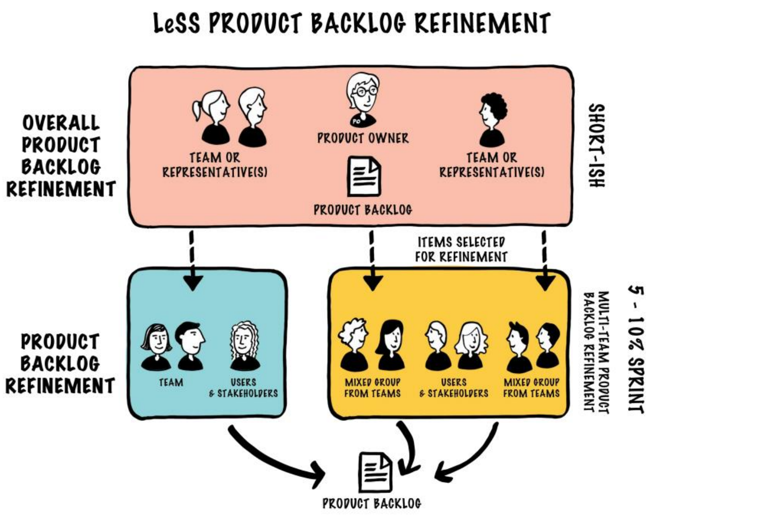
Notes:

- Take frequent breaks (e.g. every 60-90 min), so people can re-fresh/re-energize.
- Periodically, consider watching funny/educational videos-energizers, to avoid Zoom fatigue

Product Backlog Refinement

Ongoing Product Backlog Refinement (PBR) is needed within each Sprint to refine items to be ready for future Sprints. Key activities of PBR are (1) splitting big items, (2) clarifying items until ready for implementation without further “what” questions, and (3) estimating size, “value”, risks, and so forth. In short form: *split, clarify, estimate*. In the spirit of empirical process control, Scrum does not say how to do PBR, though the Scrum Guide observes that the Team usually spends no more than 10% of their Sprint capacity on it. It usually happens “mid-Sprint.”

Note! Clarification of items is not done separately by the Product Owner or a business analysis group — doing that would increase the lean wastes of hand-off and information scatter. Rather, the entire Team does this clarification — and not a subset of the Team, but *the whole Team*, as Scrum rules prohibit sub-groups dedicated to particular domains such as analysis or testing.



https://less.works/img/framework/product-backlog-refinement.pdf

Product Backlog Refinement Overview

In LeSS PBR is an expected formal event (workshop meeting) rather than just an unspecified “activity”, and is done in:

•Multi-team PBR

•Overall PBR

•Single-team PBR

Note: *For more information, visit the original source:* https://less.works/less/framework/product-backlog-refinement

Product Backlog Refinement

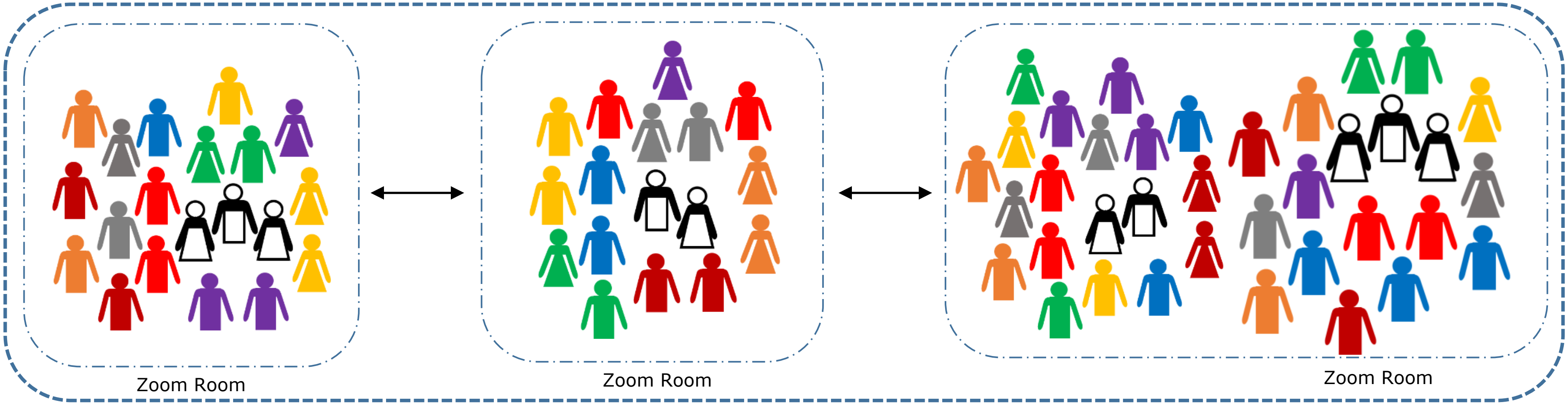
PBR - Overall: Frequency: every sprint | **Duration:** 1h | **Participation**: developers-representatives from each team + PO

Zoom Main Session

Tips & Tricks:

1) Have representative(s) from each team enter the same Zoom session, along with Product Owner
2) Make product backlog (e.g. spreadsheet or Miro board) highly visible to everyone
3) Review and agree if/which backlog items are strongly-related and need to be discussed *together (*e.g. a shared theme, big feature*)*
4) Do not create too many small sub-groups of backlog items, to avoid having too many small groups of mixed groups of developers

PBR – Multi-Team: Frequency: every sprint | **Duration:** 10% of sprint| **Participation**: mixed groups of dev, users, stakeholders



Zoom Main Session

Tips & Tricks:

1) Have Zoom-savvy moderator available. Use Zoom chat and Zoom team broadcasting, for individual, team and public communication.
2) Multiple mixed groups of developers, with selected SMEs/stakeholders/customers, enter multiple Zoom room to: clarify, refine and estimate backlog items
3) "*Assign*" backlog items and some key SMEs/stakeholders/customers to each Zoom room (they do not rotate) but *frequently rotate* developers and remaining stakeholders/users
4) Try: with each rotation everyone gets to speak/listen/estimate - in each Zoom room
5) Try: each backlog item, as it gets clarified, is clearly visualized on Miro board, so that everyone involved can see all live updates, from prior rotations
6) After a refinement, make sure that a product backlog (e.g. spreadsheet) is updated

Notes:

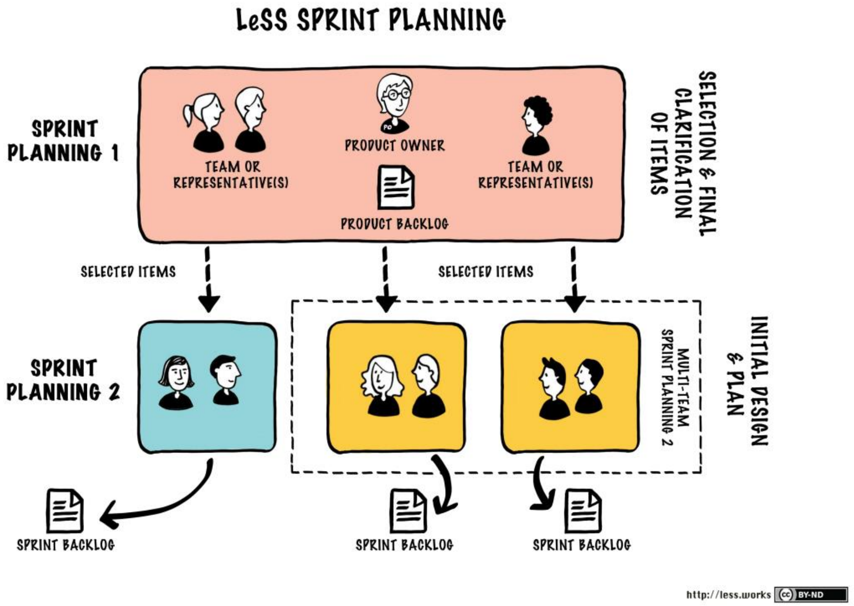
- Avoid having a single team (even if with SMEs/stakeholders/customers) refine in a silo, or everyone from the same team attending the same Zoom room
- While rotation should be frequent, make sure that people spend enough time in each Zoom room to contribute/benefit sufficiently

Sprint Planning

Sprint Planning consists of two parts that boil down to *what* and *how*:

Sprint Planning One
Sprint Planning One focuses on selection of ready items from those offered by the Product Owner, wrapping up lingering questions, and definition of the Sprint Goal. Sprint Planning Two focuses on creating a plan of work to get to ‘done’ for each item. The items and plan of action or tasks comprise the Sprint Backlog.

Sprint Planning Overview
In LeSS, Sprint Planning One is a meeting for all of the Teams together where they decide which team will work on which items. Sprint Planning Two is a separate meeting per team where each team creates the plan for getting the items to ‘done’ during the Sprint.



Sprint Planning Two
Sprint Planning Two is mostly the same as in one-team Scrum… the team creates their plan for getting the items to ‘done.’

Sprint Planning Overview
In LeSS, Sprint Planning One is a meeting of all of the Teams together. At the meeting, the teams collectively decide which items each team will work on. Each team conducts its own Sprint Planning Two meeting where the team creates its plan for getting the items to ‘done’ during the Sprint.

Multi-team Sprint Planning Two
It is common for two teams to work on similar related features or work on different features that affect the same components. In that case, it can be useful to have a Multi-team Sprint Planning Two meeting. This is done by having the teams meet in the same physical location with each team conducting its own Sprint Planning Two. That way the teams can: have a shared design session, ask questions of one another at any time, coordinate shared work, find other opportunities to work together and learn from each other (e.g. cross-team pair programming).

Note: *For more information, visit the original source:* https://less.works/less/framework/sprint-planning-one

Sprint Planning

Sprint Planning 1: **Frequency:** every sprint | **Duration:** 1h | **Participation**: developers-representatives from each team + PO

Tips & Tricks:

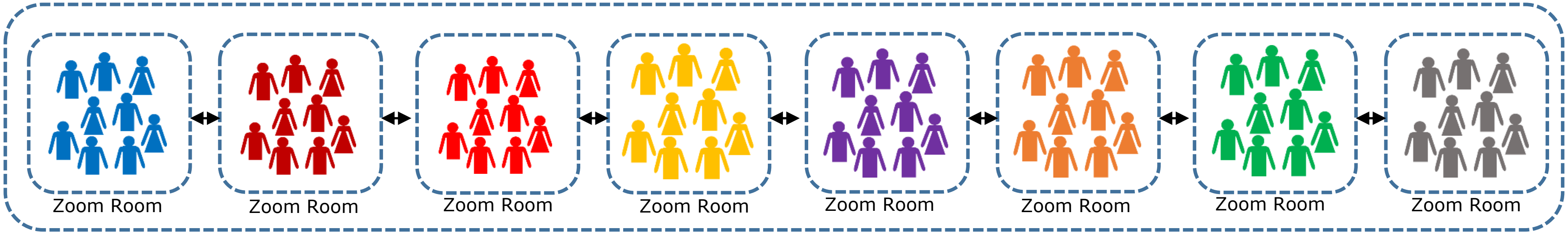
1) Team representative(s) from each team and PO enter Zoom main session to discuss highest priority items and confirm final (minor) clarifications
2) Team representative(s) agree on which team will be working on what item(s) and update Miro board, in each team's work area, accordingly

Notes:

- Do not go into deep discussions on items that are not well defined and require a lot of additional clarification by whole teams
- Make sure that teams are **NOT represented by Scrum Masters**; rather – by developers. Rotate team representatives from sprint to sprint
- If more than one team representative attends, pair up people with complimentary skills and/or with different degree of experience

Zoom Main Session

Sprint Planning 2: **Frequency:** every sprint | **Duration:** 2-4h of sprint| **Participation**: per team; close collaboration between teams



Zoom Main Session

Tips & Tricks:

1) Each team enters a private Zoom room and runs a standard 1-team Sprint Planning (time-boxed), splitting items that were picked by team representatives
2) Each team selects an area on Miro board, in close proximity (e.g. same frame) to other teams' work areas
3) Each team visualizes on Miro board how it will break down upcoming sprint work, so that all other teams can also easily see it, by scrolling Miro board
4) Each team, periodically, inspects other teams' breakdown work, to identify **opportunities for collaboration**, shared design, pair programming, etc.
5) If such opportunities (as per #4 above) arise, teams send/swap representatives into each other's Zoom room or temporarily unite in the same Zoom room
6) Each team, produces a **sprint backlog** that is clearly visible on Miro board to all other teams. Cross-team related items can be connected by arrows

Notes:

- Avoid: having teams that break down work in silos, without paying attention to work breakdown of others teams
- Try: having a team's sprint backlog not being perceived as a team's private product backlog
- Be explicit with other teams (don't assume they know it) about any work that needs to be *coordinated across teams* during an upcoming sprint
- Take frequent breaks (e.g. every 60-90 min), so people can re-fresh/re-energize.
- Periodically, consider watching funny/educational videos-energizers, to avoid Zoom fatigue

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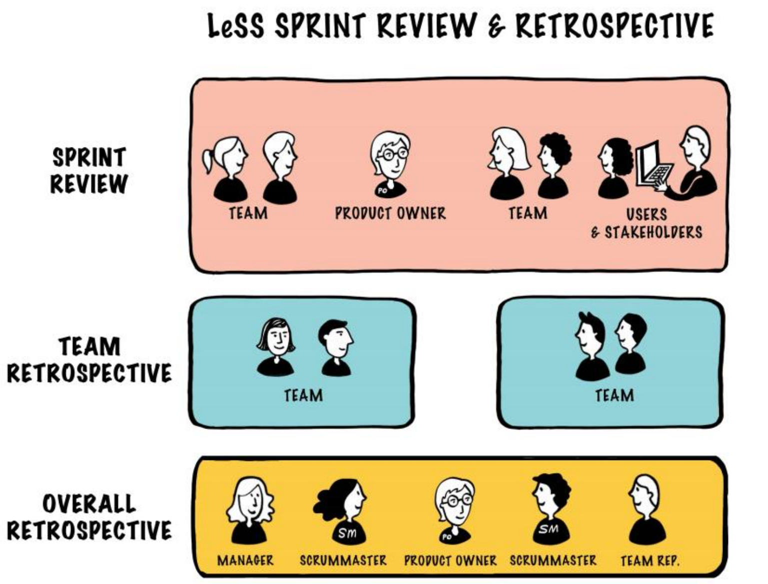
Sprint Review



https://less.works/img/framework/sprint-review-retrospective.pdf

Sprint Review
The Sprint Review is an inspect-adapt point at the end of the Sprint. During the Sprint Review, customers and stakeholders examine what the teams built during the Sprint and discuss changes and new ideas. Together the Teams, Product Owner and users/customers/stakeholders decide the direction of the product.

Overview of the Sprint Review
The Sprint Review is the occasion for all of the teams to review the *one* potentially shippable Product Increment together. The focus is on the whole product.

Inspect-Adapt and not Inspect-Accept
The most common mistake in a Sprint Review is to focus on the Product Owner accepting items from the teams. This is a misunderstanding of the purpose of the Sprint Review and moves it away from empirical process control towards finding blame. The Sprint Review is an opportunity for everyone to collaborate about the product.
Sprint Review Bazaar
The Sprint Review is best conducted using a diverge-converge meeting pattern. During the diverge periods, use a bazaar. This is analogous to a science fair: A large room has multiple areas, each staffed by team representatives, where the items developed by a team are shown and discussed. Stakeholders visit areas of interest.
During the converge periods, stakeholders summarize their opinions from the bazaar. A subset of items may be inspected on a common computer projector during this time, also.
There may be multiple diverge-converge cycles.

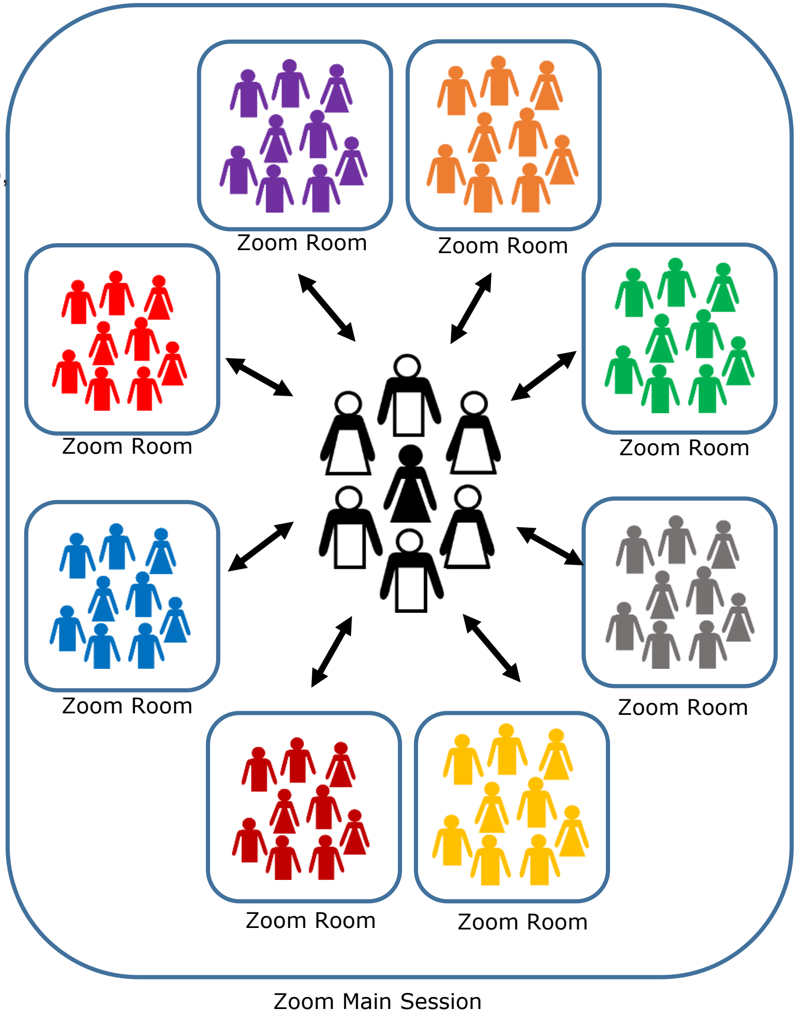
Note: *For more information, visit the original source:* https://less.works/less/framework/sprint-review

Sprint Review

Frequency: every sprint | **Duration:** 2h | **Participation**: developers-representatives from each team + PO

Tips & Tricks:

1) The whole LeSS product group, PO, users/stakeholders join the **same Zoom meeting**
2) Use Miro to display and re-state Sprint Goal (if it was explicitly set initially)
3) Each team enters a private **Zoom room (diverges)**, where it shows what it developed
4) PO, users/stakeholders visit each room, as per their interest, to provide feedback
5) Converge in a main Zoom session (***bazaar***) to summarize opinions/feedback
6) Converge-diverge in-out of Zoom rooms multiple times
7) Try: outcomes from Sprint Review become input into each team's private area on Miro, for retrospective



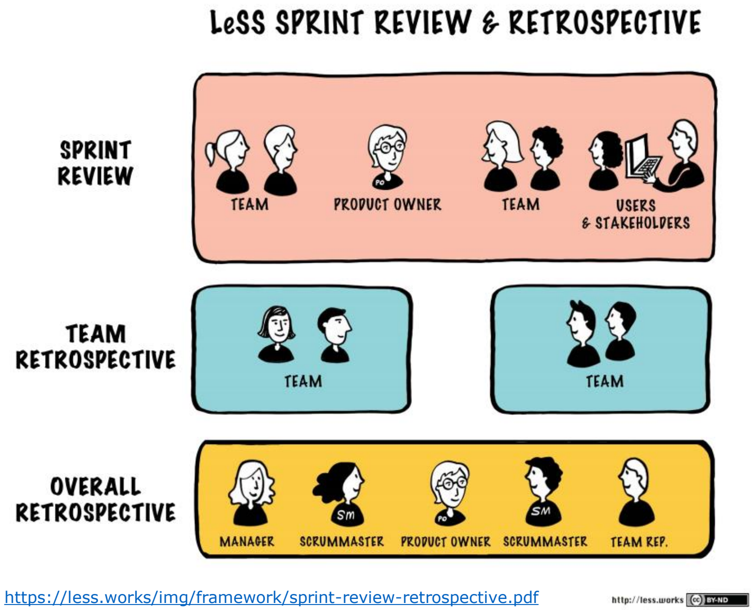
Notes:

- PO and stakeholders should focus on discussing, collaborating and reviewing

Sprint Retrospective

Retrospective
At the end of the Sprint, all the teams have their individual Retrospectives. This is the same as a one-team Scrum retrospective. During each of the individual team Retrospectives, they should also brainstorm about larger obstacles that are impeding them and all the other teams and put them on the organizational improvement backlog

Overall Retrospective
The Overall Retrospective is a new meeting in LeSS. Its purpose is to discuss cross-team, organizational and systemic problems within the organization.



https://less.works/img/framework/sprint-review-retrospective.pdf

Questions to explore
In an Overall Retrospective, the systemic and organizational issues explored are above the level of a single team. Topics that might be discussed in an Overall Retrospective are:

- How well are the teams working together?
- Are the Communities of Practice working?
- Is there something that a team did that should be shared?
- Are the teams learning together?
- Are teams close to customers?
- Are there systemic organizational issues that cause problems in how teams operate?
- Is the Product Owner doing well?
- Is the Product Owner maintaining his five relationships?

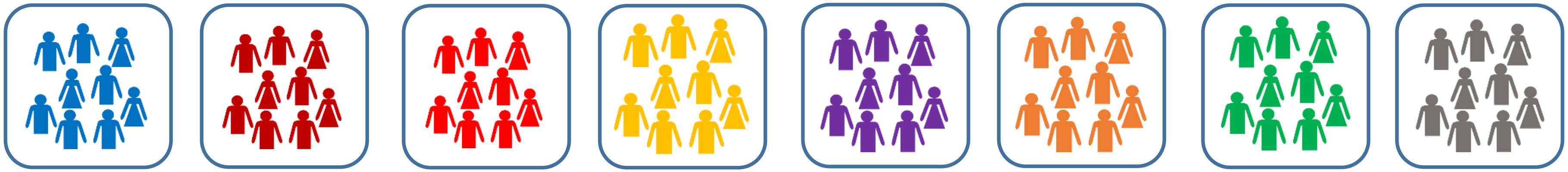
Participants
An Overall Retrospective is attended by the Product Owner, Scrum Masters, Team representatives, and managers (if any).

Timing
Conceptually, the Overall Retrospective occurs right after the team Retrospectives. Practically, this can pose a problem as the team Retrospectives are often at the end of the day at the end of a Sprint. Not only are people often exhausted, but they also don't have time to continue with another Retrospective meeting.
The common way out of this is to have the Overall Retrospective at the beginning of the next Sprint.

Note: *For more information, visit the original source: :* https://less.works/less/framework/retrospective

Sprint Retrospective

Team Retrospective: **Frequency:** every sprint | **Duration:** 1h | **Participation**: per team



Tips & Tricks:

1) The whole LeSS product group (2-8 teams), joins the **same Zoom meeting** and the same Miro board
2) Each team enters a **private Zoom room** and runs a standard 1-team Retrospective (time-boxed)
3) Each team may use it own Miro *board (*available only to team members*)*, not to get distracted by other teams and to protect its own and other teams' privacy
4) Each team can use any of many retrospective tools in Miro, to run a retrospective
5) Each team captures its personal action items (e.g. team action list)
6) Each team enters (if any) large obstacles/impediments in a shared Miro board, in a highly visible area - *organizational improvement backlog*

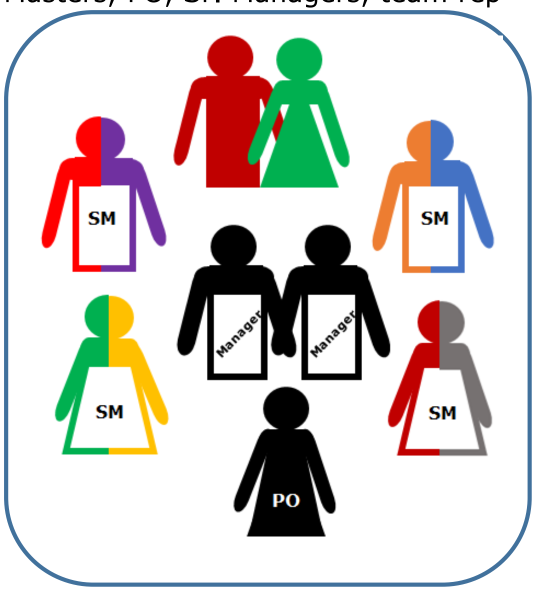
Overall Retrospective: **Frequency:** every sprint | **Duration:** 1.5h | **Participation**: Scrum Masters, PO, Sr. Managers, team rep

Tips & Tricks:

1) Use Zoom main session, once team Retrospectives have finished (last day of the sprint) OR very early (e.g. day 1) of the following sprint
2) Refer to **organizational improvement backlog** in your discussions
3) Use any of many retrospective tools in Miro, to run the event (prefer **System Modelling**)
4) For System Modelling, use Miro objects/shapes, to build a causal loop diagram, to see the *whole*
5) Update (prioritize) organizational improvement backlog, based on new discoveries

Notes:

- Make sure that SMs explicitly visualize and explain cross-team, organizational impediments everyone faces
- Try: **having managers and PO walk away with *concrete* TO DO** items – to fix impediments
- Try: **having TO DO items that are put to WIP are visualized** on Miro board



Zoom Main Session

Team Daily Scrum & Scrum of Scrums (on demand)

The Daily Scrum in LeSS is done per team and is no different than in single-team Scrum.

The Team will spend 15 minutes together, during which each team member answers three questions:
- What did I do yesterday?
- What will I work on today?
- What is in my way?

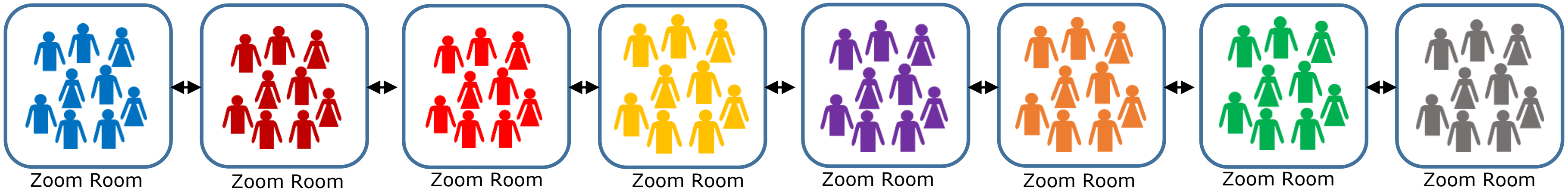
This gives the Team the information they need to take a shared responsibility and manage themselves to achieve their Sprint goal. The Daily Scrum is a meeting for the Team, not for the Scrum Master or managers.
In LeSS, the Daily Scrum can be used for coordination between teams by having people from other teams join in to observe. Based on information learned during the Daily Scrum, team members may decide to have follow up discussions outside the Daily Scrum.

Another coordination technique related to the Daily Scrum is the Scrum of Scrums, which tends to happen 3 times a week. In the Scrum of Scrums, representatives of each team (team members who are actually involved in doing the work and not the Scrum Master) meet to decide what coordination is needed across teams. The Scrum of Scrums usually follows a similar format as the single-team Daily Scrum except that it focuses on things relevant to interaction between teams. The Scrum of Scrums in not recommended in LeSS, but if it works for you then keep it.

Note: *For more information, visit the original source: https://less.works/less/framework/daily-scrum*

Team Daily Scrum & Scrum of Scrums (on demand)

Daily Scrum: **Frequency:** daily | **Duration:** 15 min | **Participation**: per team/whole team



Tips & Tricks:

1) The whole LeSS product group (2-8 teams), joins the same Zoom meeting and the same Miro board
2) Each team enters a private Zoom room and runs a standard 1-team daily Scrum (time-boxed)
3) Each team uses an area (e.g. frame) on Miro, for comments/questions (sticky notes), proximal to other teams' areas
4) Each team may use Miro or *another* facility (e.g. spread sheet), imbedded in Miro, to visualize its sprint board, to support a discussion
5) Each team decides if someone (not SM) needs to ***join/scout*** another team(s) daily Scrum, to observe/interact
6) All teams pay attention to their own Miro board area and keep an eye on other teams' areas, to help themselves decide if #5) is required
7) Each team decides if further coordination with other team(s) is required (Scrum of Scrums), based on its own daily Scrum

Notes:

- Zoom meeting/rooms and Miro board can be pre-configured, ahead of time and kept consistent for every event
- Do not use Scrum Masters for intra- and inter-team coordination or delegation of responsibilities. Use developers for this.

Scrum of Scrums: **Frequency:** 3 times/week | **Duration:** as needed | **Participation**: developers-representative from each team

Tips & Tricks:

1) **Use Zoom main session** for SoS, once daily Scrum by each team is over, or shortly thereafter
2) **Send developers** (not Scrum Masters!) to coordinate with other developers
3) Leverage comments/questions (sticky notes) from individual teams and/or anything else, to coordinate interaction between teams
4) Bring collected knowledge back to respective teams after SoS

Notes:

- Try: Rotating developers that attend SoS
- Have SoS *on-demand only*, not as a mandatory event.
- Try: doing it no more than *three* times per week