Churn in Agile

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Agenda

1. Introductions and Expectations

2. Churn in Agile

   - What is Churn in Agile?

   - How Churn Impacts Stakeholders?

   - How Churn Impacts the Team?

   - How is Churn Calculated?

   - What Causes Churn?

   - Approaches to Manage Churn

3. Quiz

4. Summary / Q&A

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Your Expectations

What do you expect from this webinar?

Why are you here today?

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NK Shrivastava
PMP, RMP, ACP, CSP, SPC4

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- ✓ Successfully led hundreds of projects of all sizes using Waterfall and/or Agile
- ✓ Recovered many projects, saved millions of dollars
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- ✓ Board member of SWMO PMI Chapter (2008-2014)

Born in Meerut, a small town in north India. Now lives in Cary, NC with wife and kids

kanbanize
Partner

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Best Practices for Sprint Planning on ProjectManagement.com https://www.projectmanagement.com/webinars/806108/best-practices-for-sprint-planning	Nov 17

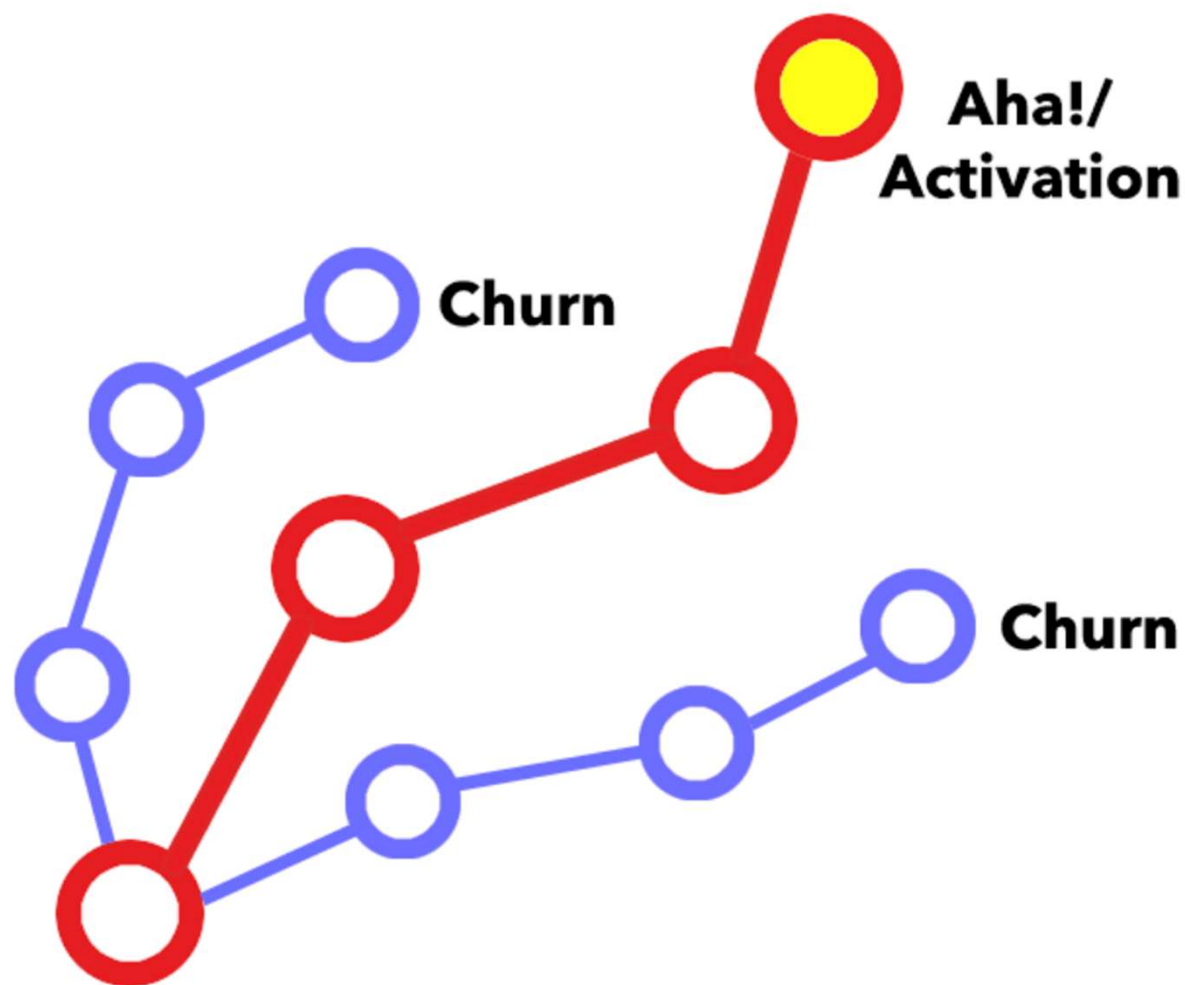| RefineM Products	Self-Paced Online Training
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Survey Question

How often do you experience churn on your teams?

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Churn in Agile

What is Churn in Agile?

Churn is created when stories, tasks or defects are added to the sprint after sprint planning has concluded and sprint goals are finalized.

- ✓ Measure of unplanned work
- ✓ Can derail progress
- ✓ Can cause team burnout

Examples

- ✓ Product owner or stakeholder suggesting a new feature
- ✓ Team member being pulled off of a story for another task

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How Churn Impacts Stakeholders?
Why is it important to reduce/eliminate churn?

1. Affects release schedule and/or contents

2. Affects predictability of team

3. Leads to uncertainty and burnout

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How Churn Impacts the Team?
Why is it important to reduce/eliminate churn?

1. Prevents team from completing sprint goals

2. Affects team morale

3. Leads to burnout

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How is Churn Calculated?

Churn =

$$\frac{\text{\# of stories/tasks/defects added after the sprint was finalized}}{\text{Total \# of stories/tasks/defects in the sprint at the end}}$$

Example: If 2 stories were added to a sprint backlog that was finalized by the team with 5 stories in it, then
Churn = 2/(5+2) or 29%

What if in addition to adding 2 stories, one story and one task were removed from the sprint?
Churn = 2/(5+2-2) or 40%

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Breakout Rooms Fun Activity

What will be the churn for a sprint that was finalized with 10 JIRA tickets, if

1. 2 tickets were added after the sprint?
2. 2 tickets were added and 3 were removed at the end?
3. 0 tickets were added and 1 was removed at the end?

Discuss these situations and calculate churn for each in your breakout rooms.

Duration – 5 minutes

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What Causes Churn?

Possible Root Causes

- ✓ Urgent requests from legal/compliance areas
- ✓ Urgent audit work such as security breach
- ✓ Urgent requests from users/clients
- ✓ Emergency defects
- ✓ No PO or an ineffective PO
- ✓ Absence of working agreement

Behaviors (and mindset) that can cause churn

- ✓ Command and control culture
- ✓ Scrum Master is not able to protect/shield the team
- ✓ PO is not taking charge and pushing back adhoc work
- ✓ Product management is not mature (no roadmap is defined, and prioritization doesn't exist)
- ✓ Team has an "order taking" mindset
- ✓ Non-adherence to working agreements
- ✓ Upper management rewards churn

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Approaches to Manage Churn
What a team can do?

1. Take help from Agile coaches and Scrum Masters to move from an order taken mindset to a self-managed empowered team.

2. Push back the work that doesn't come through sprint planning process

3. Escalate any requests for extra work/changes to PO, if needed.

4. Reserve some capacity if adhoc work is not avoidable.

5. Regularly review churn trends retrospectives and brainstorm ideas to move the trends in the favorable direction

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Approaches to Manage Churn What a PO can do?

1. Work with stakeholders to ensure the product vision and roadmap are clear and understood by the team

2. Ensure backlog is appropriately groomed with ample stories prioritized and in "ready" state prior to each sprint planning ceremony.

3. Work with the team to make sure sprint goal is identified and understood.

4. Push back to any extra work to enter in the sprint that is already in progress.

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Approaches to Manage Churn What
What a Scrum Master can do?

1. Work with the team to make sure sprint goal is identified and understood.

2. Educate stakeholders on the importance of allowing the team to keep the sprint at the size they chose

3. Make sure all work that the team is doing is visible (shows up on the board), and no one works on anything that is not on the board

4. Watch of extra/adhoc stories/tasks added during the sprint, and support the team to push those back

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Breakout Rooms Fun Activity

What will you do to reduce/eliminate churn in your team(s)?

Discuss in your breakout rooms and make a list.

Duration – 5 minutes

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Quiz

Go to menti.com to answer

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Conclusion

1. If churn is present, team is not self-empowered and effective
2. Educate organization on Agile principles and mindset
3. Coach product owner and scrum master to prevent future churn
4. Coach team to self-managed and empowered so they have courage to push back the adhoc work.
5. Measure and review churn on a regular basis

Consistent Churn may be an indicator that you should be Kanban team

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Churn References

1. Wrike. "What is Churn in Agile?"
   https://www.wrike.com/agile-guide/faq/what-is-churn-in-agile/
2. Scott Barstow. "Churn in Software Development."
   https://scottbarstow.com/churn-in-software-development/
3. Mike Cohn. *Succeeding with Agile: Software Development Using Scrum.*

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Next Lunch and Learn

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Questions?

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