Sprint Retrospective Meeting

(Meetings Section of CollabNet Scrum Web-Based Training)

by

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We see the title page.

We see the same six-module table of contents page as before, this time emphasizing the Sprint Retrospective Meeting.

NARRATOR
Welcome to part six of CollabNet’s Scrum Training Series: The Sprint Retrospective Meeting. I’m Michael James.

We see the Scrum Flow diagram.

NARRATOR
The Retrospective is the very last step of the Scrum cycle, after the Sprint Review Meeting. The empirical feedback from the Sprint Review Meeting should influence the retrospective discussions.


Visual emphasis on the Sprint Retrospective Meeting box (of the Scrum Flow diagram).

We see the circuit diagram animation from the intro. The words “product” and “process” synchronize with the narration.

NARRATOR
The Sprint Review Meeting was our chance to inspect and adapt the PRODUCT. Now the Sprint Retrospective Meeting is the Team’s chance to inspect and adapt its PROCESS.

We see the Team, Product Owner, and ScrumMaster on a green background (the color of the “Chaotic” zone of the Stacey Diagram from the intro module). The ScrumMaster is holding a big golden key, which opens the framework image from the intro module.

The Retrospective is the key to using Scrum as a framework for learning, rather than the stale defined processes we usually see.
Zoom out, to see that all along we have been standing on the Chaotic zone of the Stacey Diagram.

In a complex world, only learning teams and learning organizations will thrive. The ScrumMaster’s goal is to create the conditions for a learning team, and eventually a learning organization.

We see the quote below written out with the full title credit below.

According to The Skilled Facilitator by Roger Schwarz, "The facilitator does not intervene directly in the content of a group's discussions; to do so would be to abandon neutrality and reduce the group's responsibility for solving its problems."

We see emphasis on the ScrumMaster’s ears (see “listening” below). Maybe they get bigger or something.

The ScrumMaster’s listening and facilitation skills in this meeting make a big difference.

We see a team of five or seven people around a round table. They are all the same height.

Even in a team that's declared as self organizing, status affects all transactions.

We see some members of the team grow taller while others get shorter.

Also, some people have a greater tendency to form opinions and vocalize them before others have figured out how they feel.

We see the loudmouth illustration. Two people (same height now) are having a conversation. One person with a large mouth talks loudly about an apple (which we see in his word bubble). The second person starts to form a thought bubble showing an orange, but the apple word bubble pushes it out of the frame.
An effective facilitator sometimes uses status leveling techniques to reveal a greater cross-section of viewpoints from the team.

We see the narrator (MJ) with a pointer and the module agenda: Safety Check, Focused Conversation Principles, Basic Retrospective, Silent Writing, Timeline retrospective

In this module I’ll show you my own interpretation of techniques I’ve found useful. Since I may do things differently than the inventors of these techniques may have intended, at the end I’ll refer you to original sources. As usual, I’ll quiz you along the way.

QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CHOICE

Question: “Henry Ford discovered the more adapted you become to an unchanging situation, the less adaptable you are. In an uncertain world, which is a better area for a ScrumMaster to focus?”

Wrong answer: “An efficient team. More! Better! Faster!”

Right answer: “A learning team. A learning team can become efficient when necessary.”

END QUIZ

BEGIN Chapter 1: Safety Check

NARRATOR
Most people understand that a team will only have candid dialogue in an environment of psychological safety.

We see a team of five. Two people look secure and confident, one person looks neutral, and two people look insecure but try to hide it.

But when someone feels safe in an interaction, they often make the mistake of assuming everyone else is equally safe. A good facilitator knows this is rarely the case.
Rather than make assumptions, I suggest ScrumMasters start with an anonymous safety check.

[ACTION] We see the door of the team room.

We'll watch our ScrumMaster follow a safety check procedure recommended by a facilitator named Steven Smith.

[@DESIGNERS: Insert our usual "Continue" button.]

BEGIN SCENE

We hear the door sound effect (same sound as Sprint Review Meeting).

Now we see the team and the ScrumMaster in the team room. The room is empty except for them and the safety check gradient (see below).

We see the ScrumMaster doing the actions described in the narration below.

**SCRUMMASTER**

We're going to do a safety check before the main part of the retrospective. I'm giving each of you a blank ballot. Hang on to them for a minute.

We see the ScrumMaster handing out blank ballots.

Think about a situation in your life where you felt unsafe, uncomfortable, or awkward.

We see all team members looking very uncomfortable. Some team members look scared. One looks angry.

Now bring yourself back to the most comfortable and relaxed situation you can remember.
We see all team members looking very relaxed, almost falling asleep.

Now I'm going to ask you how you feel right now in this room doing this retrospective. Please write a number from the safety gradient and fold it so others cannot read it. Even the participants who feel safe should not reveal their choice, to protect the anonymity of those who don't.

We see a close up of the safety gradient diagram with a footnote “© 2000-2012 Steven M. Smith. Used with permission.” The action stops with a button that says “Click to continue.” [@DESIGNERS: For this diagram please reproduce Table 1 from http://stevenmsmith.com/ar-safety-check/ . Keep the words exactly the same, but improve the graphics if you like.]

We see an extreme close up of a participant's hand cupping the card while writing the number 3. Then the participant folds the card in half so the number is hidden.

**SCRUMMASTER**
Now I'll collect and tally your votes.
Please put them in the hat.

The ScrumMaster uses a hat (maybe MJ's cowboy hat) to collect the votes from participants. She unfolds them away from the other participants and we see a close up of the six cards with handwritten numbers on them. The numbers are 3, 4, 2, 3, 2, 1.

[@DESIGNERS: Please examine Table 2 from the Steven Smith Safety Check article.] The ScrumMaster completes the Safety Check Gradient chart by putting one X mark on line 1, two X marks on line 2, two X marks on line 3, and one X mark on line 4.

[@DESIGNERS: Insert our usual Continue button.]

**QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CHOICE**

Question: "According to Roger Schwarz, facilitators should remain neutral about content and attempt to decrease the group's dependence on the facilitator. Therefore, what should the ScrumMaster do next?"

Wrong answer: "Announce her own opinion about the safety check histogram results."
Right answer: "Ask the group to interpret the safety check histogram results."

END QUIZ

SCRUMMASTER
So Team, before we begin the main part of the retrospective, what is your interpretation of the histogram?

END SCENE

BEGIN LECTURE

We see the classroom environment.

NARRATOR
The safety check wasn't in the original Scrum books, but more teams are seeing the value of doing it from time to time, especially in the beginning. A safety check by itself is not a complete retrospective.

If safety is very low, breaking into groups of three or four can be helpful.

We see an illustration of nine people breaking into three groups of three.

A couple weeks ago I dropped in on a retrospective for a group that said they were "doing Scrum" even though they had about 15 people in the room, no clear idea who was on the team, and accountability to people other than the Product Owner.

During the next narration we see an animation of several people talking to each other, then going quiet when a boss walks into the room. [@DESIGNERS: The boss should look friendly.] The boss is not aware people were talking and stopped because of him.
One last point on safety: you've probably heard a productive conversation at work stop as soon as the boss walks in the room, even when the boss is a nice, helpful guy who used to be one of them and never asked to be a boss.

The boss turns around and we now see that he's wearing a gun on his other hip (previously hidden from view)! The boss himself is oblivious to the gun.

I think of this as the "invisible gun effect."

We see the words "Invisible Gun Effect" timed to match the narration.

The gun might be invisible to the boss because he has no intention of harming anyone, he's just there to help. But subordinates sometimes do see it, because they realize the company has given the boss power over who gets promotions, who's retained in the event of a layoff, etc.

[@DESIGNERS: See if you can come up with an illustration of this principle.]

Concern about looking good for the boss can color subordinate interactions with each other in ways that might be not align with optimal team self organization.

[@DESIGNERS: See if you can come up with an illustration of individual team members "looking good for the boss" instead of self organizing.]

Also, the presence of someone who has traditionally been responsible for their work has sometimes kept teams from taking as much responsibility as they might otherwise.

It can be hard to see these effects because people don't admit to
themselves they're happening. One group I worked with was so concerned with this problem they put their managers on different teams than their subordinates.

We see MJ holding the globe.

The same challenges can also arise with contractors, especially when they're on the other side of the world.

QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CHOICE

Question: "Is retrospective safety enhanced by inviting outside spectators who weren't working on the team?"

Wrong answer: "Yes. It's just like watching a hockey game."

Right answer: "No. If the team needs to discuss issues with outsiders it's usually better to do this after the retrospective."

END QUIZ

QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CHOICE

Question: "Is a safety check by itself a complete Sprint retrospective?"

Wrong answer: "Yes."

Right answer: "No."

END QUIZ

END CHAPTER

CHAPTER 2: CLASSIC SCRUM RETROSPECTIVE

NARRATOR
Scrum does not define particular retrospective practices other than
suggesting a discussion of what went well and what could be improved.

We see the Classic Retrospective Notes diagram on a marker-board with headers "What went well?" and "What could be improved?" [@DESIGNERS: See emailed sketch classic Scrum Retrospective diagram 1.]

NARRATOR
It's common to refer to these as plusses and deltas for short.

The words in the headers change to a plus sign and a triangle (delta). [@DESIGNERS: See emailed sketch.]

NARRATOR
Other topics could be "What did we learn?" and "What still puzzles us?"

The headers change to "What did we learn?" and "What still puzzles us?"

The idea is for the people on the team to have a conversation leading to agreements about actions. We do this every Sprint instead of waiting until the end like a waterfall project post-mortem. Let's watch one now.

BEGIN SCENE

We see the door of the team room and a Continue button.

We hear the door opening sound effect.

We see the team talking to each other. The plusses and deltas diagram is on a marker-board in the back with illegible writing in both columns. We hear the group conversation sound effect [@MJ: We need the sound of a small group talking, or reuse one of the opening sounds.] Occasionally team members add to the illegible writing in both columns.

We see another marker-board appear, with the header "Actions." We hear the pen squeaking sound effect as team members take turns writing out a numbered list of actions:

Move daily Scrum time from 9AM to 10AM.

Clarify definition of done: help menus revised for UI changes.
Take on less work next Sprint Planning Meeting.
Slice PBIs smaller during Backlog Refinement.
Amend team agreements regarding coding conventions.
Get pens that don't squeak.

END SCENE

NARRATOR
So that was example classic retrospective.

BEGIN QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CHOICE

Question: "In Scrum, how often is the Sprint Retrospective Meeting conducted?"

Wrong answer: "Every day."

Right answer: "Every Sprint."

Wrong answer: "Every project."

END QUIZ

END CHAPTER

CHAPTER 3: Focused Conversation Principles

NARRATOR
According to Roger Schwarz: "Members often begin solving problems by suggesting solutions before agreeing on the problem or its causes."

We see the Roger Schwarz quote with footnote for Skilled Facilitator.

Click to continue.

NARRATOR
A ScrumMaster can help with this problem by keeping the group on the same step.

We see the ORID chart. Under the ORID chart in smaller print we see “a.k.a. The Focused Conversation Model by Brian Stanfield.”
For example, some facilitators like to keep the group in distinct steps for Objective questions such as “What happened?”, Reflective questions such as “How do we feel about it?”, Interpretive Questions such as “What does it mean?”, and Decision Questions such as “What are we going to do about it?”

Professional negotiator William Ury gets people to focus on their interests rather than bargaining in from particular positions.

And marriage researcher John Gottman finds couples are more likely to stay married if they learn to start negotiating from their core interests rather than pushing for particular outcomes.

The common element to remember from all the experts is to make sure decisions about actions come last. In the next chapter we'll see an example technique to help with this.
minutes writing one observation per Post-It note about the previous Sprint. Write them down whether they're good, bad, or neutral, and don't worry about categorizing them yet. Hold off on discussing them until everyone's done writing.

We hear the intro_outro theme, or some other music. We see the team members filling out Post-It Notes. After a minute, two team members get stuck and stop writing.

SCRUMMASTER
When you get stuck, consider writing down the things you weren't sure whether to write.

More music. We see the two stuck team members start writing again.

As the whole team continues to write, we see the timebox tick down from 10 minutes to zero.

SCRUMMASTER
When you're ready, stick your notes on the board here and have a conversation about them. Make sure none of them are ignored. If you like, you can group the related ones.

More music. We see the team stick lots of Post-It notes on a large marker-board. Then we see/hear a lot of talking. The team moves the Post-It Notes around until they form five groups.

SCRUMMASTER
Has everyone had a chance to talk about the things they wrote?

Brief pause while the ScrumMaster listens.

SCRUMMASTER
Now work out some agreed actions to take for future Sprints, based on your shared understanding.

TEAM MEMBER
Should we write down the actions?

BEGIN QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CHOICE
Question: "What should the ScrumMaster say next?"

Wrong answer: "Yes, I need to put them in a tracking system so we can make sure everyone else in the company approves of the way you work with each other."

Right answer: "Yes, writing down agreements is a way to confirm you understand each other. However, since you own your internal agreements they don't have to leave this room."

END QUIZ

END SCENE

END CHAPTER

BEGIN CHAPTER 5: Timeline Retrospective

We return to MJ's classroom.

NARRATOR
I first experienced a timeline retrospective when my friend ran one for my team. ScrumMasters can throw this one in occasionally to surface things that might not have been discussed otherwise. Here's just one way to do this.

BEGIN SCENE

Once again we see the team room door and a Continue button. As usual, after clicking Continue we hear the door opening sound.

In the teamroom we watch the ScrumMaster draw the timeline diagram (see Timeline_Diagram.pdf).

SCRUMMASTER
Team, write down your recollection of the previous Sprint's events and stick them up on the timeline roughly corresponding to when they occurred.

We see the team write about 20 Post-It notes and stick them along the timeline. There are three main clumps: the beginning, the halfway point, and the end. A few Post-It notes are between the clumps.
SCRUMMASTER
Now read each other's notes and have a discussion about what they mean.

PETER PILOT
For example?

The ScrumMaster points to a clump of Post-It Notes toward the center of the timeline diagram.

SCRUMMASTER
For example, this clump here in the middle of the Sprint. What was that about?

Peter pilot points to the same clump of Post-It Notes.

PETER PILOT
Halfway through the Sprint there was a disagreement whether to keep using custom client side libraries or switch to kQuery. Most of us wrote something Objective about that here.

SCRUMMASTER
This meeting could be a time to collect Reflections and Interpretations about how you handled that, leading to Decisions on how to handle design disagreements in the future.

PETER PILOT
But our team never seems to decide anything!

SCRUMMASTER
We'll get to that soon.

END SCENE

We see MJ in front of the chalkboard again. The chalkboard shows the Timeline Retrospective Scope diagram (see Timeline_Retrospective_Scope_Diagram.pdf).

NARRATOR
In this example the timeline focused only on the Sprint, which would be the normal scope of a Sprint Retrospective Meeting.
MJ uses the chalk to check off the word “Sprint” on the Timeline Retrospective Scope diagram.

NARRATOR
In special cases it may also be useful to expand the scope to an entire release cycle, or even a team’s entire history.

As MJ speaks he checks off the two corresponding lines of the diagram.


NARRATOR
For other ideas, see Agile Retrospectives by Derby and Larson, or for an earlier description see Project Retrospectives by Norman Kerth.

END CHAPTER

BEGIN CHAPTER 6: Decisions

BEGIN SCENE

Usual scene beginning: door of team room, continue button, door opening sound.

We see the ScrumMaster addressing the team. There are Post-It Notes scattered all over the floor.

SCRUMMASTER
It sounds like your conversation has wound down. Do you feel you've reached an understanding of each other’s perspectives? Any new reflections and insights?

PETER PILOT
(joking)
Yes, I finally realized that not all emacs users are stubborn people with left hand carpal tunnel syndrome from
typing control-alt-shift-Z. Only Andy is.

ANDY ARCHITECT
(joking)

What was that Mr. Vee Eye Guy? I didn't get that because I wasn't in text insert mode.

Peter and Andy high five. Team looks a little confused.

ANDY ARCHITECT
(now serious)

Maybe I should get this hand looked at though.

We see that the pinky and ring finger of Andy's left hand are twisted up from years of using an ergonomically unfriendly text editor.

SCRUMMASTER

OK, that was interesting. Is there any other unfinished business before we move on to decision making?

Team is silent.

END SCENE

We're back in the classroom.

NARRATOR

In this case the ScrumMaster moved for closure, though in later Sprints we'd expect the team to rely on her less (as her focus shifts to impediments caused by the outer organization). In either case, the team should write out a few actions to take. For the Team to own their commitment to action, the ScrumMaster should ask the Team to do the writing. In fact, Amway Corporation discovered customers are more likely to keep purchase agreements when the customers write up the sales order instead of the salesman.*
NARRATOR
Not all differences can be resolved and not all teams have enough reason to stay together. Nearly all situations can be substantially improved when the group is committed to this. Small teams do have a greater probability of reaching consensus than large groups, especially when they have some control over who joins them.

BEGIN QUIZ -- MULTIPLE CORRECT -- "Choose three."

Groups often fool themselves with "pseudo-solutions" that don't really change anything. Which of the following are more likely to result in action (i.e. NOT pseudo-solutions*)?

Wrong answer: "Make an agreement that will be vetoed by someone who is not present."

Wrong answer: "Agree to 'try harder' from now on."

Right answer: "A volunteer agrees to a specific action by a specific date."

Right answer: "Team writes concrete adjustments to its working agreements."

Right answer: "Team agrees to try a different approach as an experiment for one Sprint."

Wrong answer: "Delegate a job to someone who won't have time to do it."


END QUIZ
example of coming from positions rather than core interests
actions have deadlines, point people
Organizational impediments form.
Agile Manifesto.

[ENDING CALL TO ACTION]

NARRATOR
While this module is intended to open your eyes a little

Show covers of these books, maybe held up by cartoon images of their authors?

I would expect a serious ScrumMaster mix up techniques from books such as Agile Retrospectives by Esther Derby/Diane Larsen, Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision Making by Sam Kaner, and The Skilled Facilitator by Roger Schwarz. I’ve learned even more from classes on facilitation, Scrum Gatherings, and conferences such as Amplifying Your Effectiveness (AYE). These are different skills and a different way of being than conventional management. Once you’ve adopted the different way of being, the particular techniques don’t matter as much.

We see the conclusion slide

NARRATOR
Congratulations, you’ve completed the last module in this series. If you did all the quizzes, studied the six-page Scrum Reference Card, and are prepared to answer questions about the four values and twelve principles of the Agile Manifesto, you’re probably in good shape for my class, or anyone else’s. Feel free to repeat these modules and quizzes as many times as you need to. Most of the trouble
people have in class or on the tests are due to language differences. If you had any trouble understanding me, go through this again or contact your instructor for help.

If you enjoyed these modules, or if you hated them, please drop me a line with your feedback. Thank you for listening.

END LESSON

END SERIES