

# COMPETENCIES OF A **PRODUCT OWNER**

By Agile Cockpit

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# INTRODUCTION

The role of a Product Owner requires an individual to be assertive, collaborative and to maximize the value of the work done by the Development Team. They need to constantly manage the stakeholders and build and maintain an effective Product Backlog. It is the responsibility of a Product Owner to effectively create the Product Vision and the Product Strategy and transparently communicate the same to the stakeholders and the Scrum Team. Product Owners must have a specific set of competencies in order to stand out in their role and be a Product Owner, par excellence.

Competency Framework basically defines the behaviors for successful and excellent performance in a role. Each competency has sub-competencies which are defined and a set of specific 'behavioral indicators' are identified in order to understand what each sub-competency actually means and what are the standards for excellent performance of a Product Owner.

## What is Agile Product Owner Competency Framework?

Our Product Owner Competency Framework strives to articulate the expected behavioral patterns and determine the standard skills, traits and knowledge that are required for a Product Owner to be successful in their role. It comprises of eight primary competencies, having sub-competencies with specific definitions and the exact behavioral indicators which provides a standard to identify, develop and improve the Product Owner's competencies for successful performance and to holistically develop their Agility.



# OVERVIEW OF THE COMPETENCIES

## Personal Agility

The ability to be self-aware and have a realistic view of one's own strengths, weaknesses and areas of improvement.

## People Agility

The ability to understand and relate to other people and collaboratively work with them in dynamic situations to harness and multiply collective performance.

## Stakeholder/Customer Agility

The ability to leverage data to understand and validate stakeholder's/customer's assumptions and hypotheses and ensure complete stakeholder/ customer satisfaction.

## Results Agility

The ability to deliver valuable results in short iterations by inspiring teams and enabling the organization to execute long-range strategic plans.

## Change Agility

The ability to identify and seize opportunities in a consistently changing environment and enabling teams to contribute to change.

## Mental Agility

The ability to think critically to deal with complex problems and expand possibilities.

## Innovation Agility

The ability to focus on untested hypotheses and validate their relevance through continuous experimentation to trigger creative discovery and innovation.

## Systems Agility

The ability to embrace, encourage and follow systems thinking, Agile values, principles and practices.



# COMPETENCIES AND SUBCOMPETENCIES

## Personal Agility

- ▶ Emotional Intelligence
- ▶ Decisiveness
- ▶ Entrepreneurial Mindset
- ▶ Assertiveness

## Systems Agility

- ▶ Product Vision
- ▶ Product Backlog Management
- ▶ Systems Thinking
- ▶ Value Measurement

## People Agility

- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Open Communication

## Stakeholder/customer Agility

- ▶ Stakeholder/customer Management
- ▶ Open Communication

## Results Agility

- ▶ Value Maximization
- ▶ Quality Maximization
- ▶ Forecasting/Estimation

## Mental Agility

- ▶ Analytical Skills

## Change Agility

- ▶ Risk Management
- ▶ Flexibility Towards Consistent Changes

## Innovation Agility

- ▶ Creativity & Innovation



# PERSONAL AGILITY

## Emotional Intelligence

Definition: The Product Owner reflects upon, validates, and manages one's own emotions and perceptions and its impact on the Scrum Team and stakeholders/customers in a consistently changing environment by iterative discovery and learning through experiences.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Reflects, validates and manages one's own emotions and its impact on the Scrum Team and the stakeholders/customers in a consistently changing environment.
- ▶ Learns through experiences and iterative delivery.

## Decisiveness

Definition: The Product Owner makes quick and effective decisions regarding the Product Backlog, Product Vision, and Product Strategy by reflecting upon, and validating assumptions and hypotheses based on early and iterative results. It involves effectively deciding which Product Backlog items to build. The Product Owner is able to validate risks and say NO to the stakeholders/customers based on the capacity of the Development Team.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Makes quick and effective decisions regarding the Product Backlog, Product Vision, and Product Strategy by reflecting upon, and validating assumptions and hypotheses based on early and iterative results.
- ▶ Effectively decides which Product Backlog items to build.
- ▶ Is able to validate risks and say NO to the stakeholders/customers based on the capacity of the Development Team.



## Entrepreneurial Mindset

Definition: The Product Owner perceives, identifies emerging opportunities and forecasts about by when the product can be released through iterative discovery and validating assumptions in short iterations. It includes discovering the new ways and using the existing time and capacity of the Development Team to create value out of these opportunities by constantly reflecting upon improving iterative delivery of working products. The Product Owner identifies the potential risks, threats and possibilities associated with new opportunities. It also involves openly accepting and implementing any required unforeseen changes in the approach.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Identifies and creates opportunities, discovers new ways and uses the existing time and capacity of the Development Team to create value to ensure frequent iterative delivery of a working product.
- ▶ Forecasts by when the product can be released through iterative discovery and validating assumptions in short iterations.
- ▶ Identifies the potential risks, threats and possibilities associated with new opportunities.
- ▶ Openly accepts and implements any required unforeseen changes in approach.

## Assertiveness

Definition: The Product Owner communicates and shares one's own decisions about the Product Backlog, Product Vision, and Product Strategy with the stakeholders/customers and the Development Team in an honest, direct and respectful manner.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Honestly expresses one's own decisions about the Product Backlog, Product Vision, and Product Strategy with the stakeholders/customers and the Development Team in a respectful manner.
- ▶ Communicates with the stakeholders/customers and Development Team in an open and direct manner.



# PEOPLE AGILITY

## Collaboration

Definition: The Product Owner works along with the stakeholders/customers and the Development Team to create a shared understanding of the Product Backlog, Product Vision and Product Strategy. The Product Owner also helps in deciding the quantity of Product Backlog items to be completed by the Development Team in each Sprint while frequently delivering working products based on the Development Team's capacity. The Product Owner also works along with the Scrum Master to learn and effectively practice Scrum, and to ensure the Development Team improves in each Sprint.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Works along with the stakeholders/customers and the Development Team to create a shared understanding and decide the quantity of Product Backlog items to be completed by the Development Team in each Sprint.
- ▶ Works with the stakeholders/customers to understand their requirements and decide what can be done accordingly.
- ▶ Works along with the Scrum Master to continuously learn and effectively practice Scrum, and to ensure the Development Team improves in each Sprint.

## Open Communication with the Development Team

Definition: The Product Owner enables a two-way communication, and clearly communicates the decisions and defines the goal of the Sprint, Product Backlog, Product Vision, and the Product Strategy to the Scrum Team. The Product Owner gives assistance to the Development Team to select the Product Backlog items and the quantity of work to be done in each iteration to ensure frequent delivery of a working product. It involves understanding the implementation effort of the Development Team.





### Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Enables a two-way communication, and clearly communicates and defines the goal of the Sprint, Product Backlog, Product Vision, and the Product Strategy to the Scrum Team.
- ▶ Gives assistance to the Development Team to select the Product Backlog items and the quantity of work to be done in each iteration.
- ▶ Understands the implementation effort of the Development Team.
- ▶ Communicates the decisions taken by oneself to the Development Team with respect to the capacity of the team.



# STAKEHOLDER AND CUSTOMER AGILITY

## Stakeholder/Customer Management

Definition: The Product Owner constantly keeps the stakeholders/customers engaged and up to date on the Product Backlog. It involves identifying, understanding and critically viewing the assumptions, hypotheses and requirements of the stakeholders/customers and communicating the decisions regarding Product Backlog to the stakeholders/ customers. The Product Owner ensures complete stakeholder/ customer satisfaction by iteratively delivering working products and taking constant feedback during Sprint review and Product Backlog refinement.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Constantly keeps the stakeholders/sustomers engaged and up to date on the Product Backlog.
- ▶ Identifies, understands and critically views the assumptions, hypothesis and requirements of the stakeholders/customers and communicates the decisions regarding Product Backlog to the stakeholders/customers.
- ▶ Ensures complete stakeholder/customer satisfaction by iteratively delivering working products and taking constant feedback.

## Open Communication with Stakeholders/Customers

Definition: The Product Owner enables a high frequency two-way communication, and clearly communicates and defines the goal of the Sprint, and the decided Product Backlog to the stakeholder/customers to ensure iterative delivery of the product. It involves taking consistent feedback after each Sprint to evaluate and validate stakeholders'/customers' assumptions and hypotheses. The Product Owner involves and communicates with the stakeholder/customer during Sprint review and Product Backlog refinement. The Product Owner actively resolves conflicts with and amongst the stakeholders/customers about the Product Backlog.



### Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Enables a high frequency two-way communication, and clearly communicates and defines the goal of the Sprint, and the decided Product Backlog to the stakeholder/customer to ensure iterative delivery of the product.
- ▶ Takes consistent feedback after each iteration to evaluate and validate stakeholders'/ Customers' assumptions and hypotheses.
- ▶ Involves and communicates with the stakeholder/customer during Sprint review and Product Backlog refinement.
- ▶ Actively resolves conflicts with and amongst the stakeholders/ customers about the Product Backlog.



# RESULTS AGILITY

## Value Maximization

Definition: The Product Owner maximizes the value of work done by the Development Team by effectively ordering the Product Backlog in terms of value per unit work, validating long term and short term needs. It involves focussing on frequently delivering simple valuable working products in iterations by establishing and maintaining a short cyclic rhythm. The Product Owner takes constructive feedback about the same to reflect upon and validate the assumptions. The Product Owner also ensures the Development Team understands the items in the Product Backlog to the necessary level.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Maximizes the value of work done by the Development Team and effectively orders Product Backlog in terms of value per unit work, validates long term and short term needs.
- ▶ Ensures the Development Team members understand the items in the Product Backlog to the necessary level.
- ▶ Delivers simple valuable working products in short iterations to the stakeholders/ customers and takes constructive feedback about the same to reflect upon and validate the assumptions.

## Quality Maximization

Definition: The Product Owner maximizes the quality of the work done by the Development Team by iteratively discovering through inspection, experimentation and learning. It involves revisiting the Product Strategy in each iteration, and validating and adapting to the changes as they take place. The Product Owner actively installs and validates the 'Definition of Done' with the help of the Scrum Team. It also involves ensuring each working product meets the criteria for 'Definition of Done' before delivering it.



Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Maximizes the quality of the work done by the Development Team by iterative discovery through inspection, experimentation and learning.
- ▶ Actively installs the 'Definition of Done' and validates it with the help of the Scrum Team.
- ▶ Ensures each working product meets the criteria for 'Definition of Done' before delivering it.
- ▶ Revisits and reflects on the Product Strategy in each iteration, and validates and adapts to the changes as they take place.

## Forecasting/Estimation

Definition: The Product Owner actively estimates and forecasts the effort and how many Product Backlog items can be completed in each Sprint using empirical data with the help of the Development Team. It involves forecasting what items can be delivered and by when. The Product Owner effectively reorders the Product Backlog items to ensure frequent iterative delivery of the working product. It also involves realistic estimation through empirical data.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Actively estimates and forecasts the effort and how many Product Backlog items can be completed in each iteration using empirical data with the help of the Development Team.
- ▶ Forecasts what items can be delivered and by when.
- ▶ Effectively reorders the Product Backlog items to ensure frequent iterative delivery of the working product.
- ▶ Ensures realistic estimation through empirical data.



# MENTAL AGILITY

## Analytical Skills

Definition: The Product Owner effectively and efficiently gathers and breaks down the given information in a logical way to understand what the stakeholders/customers want and why. The Product Owner builds a realistic Product Backlog to resolve the identified problem related to the stakeholders'/customers' assumptions and hypotheses, Product Backlog, Product Vision and Product Strategy for the Development Team to iteratively deliver working products while learning through experiences.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Effectively and efficiently gathers and breaks down the given information in a logical way to understand what the stakeholders/ customers want and why.
- ▶ Builds a realistic Product Backlog to resolve the identified problem related to the stakeholders'/customers' assumptions and hypotheses, Product Backlog, Product Vision and Product Strategy.
- ▶ Iteratively delivers working products while learning through experiences.



# CHANGE AGILITY

## Risk Management

Definition: The Product Owner assists and informs the Development Team to identify, analyse and assess the potential and prevailing risks during Sprint planning that may have an impact on the development of the product. The Product Owner ensures frequent iterative reordering of high-risk Product Backlog items and effectively communicating the same to the Development Team. This also includes early validation of results through frequent iterative delivery of the product to the stakeholders/customers and early identification of risks.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Assists and informs the Development Team to identify, analyse and assess the potential and prevailing risks during Sprint planning that may have an impact on the development of the product.
- ▶ Frequently and iteratively reorders the high risk Product Backlog items and effectively communicates the same to the Development Team.
- ▶ Ensures early validation of results by frequent iterative delivery of the product to stakeholders/customers and identifying risks early in the development process.

## Flexibility Towards Consistent Changes

Definition: The Product Owner reflects upon, embraces and validates the consistently changing and dynamic stakeholder/customer assumptions and hypotheses, and feedback after frequent iterative deliveries of working products by reordering the Product Backlog in an efficient manner. The Product Owner searches for learning from experience in each iteration.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Embraces, validates and proactively responds to consistent change in requirements of stakeholders/customers and feedback after frequent iterative deliveries of working products.
- ▶ Reorders Product Backlog in an efficient manner according to requirements and feedback of stakeholder/customer.
- ▶ Learns from experience in each iteration.



# INNOVATION AGILITY

## Creativity & Innovation

Definition: The Product Owner has an experimental, innovative and creative mindset to ensure effective Product Backlog management and stakeholder/customer management through frequent inspection, reflection and constant learning through experiences. The Product Owner validates the hypotheses and assumptions of the stakeholders/ customers in short iterations. The Product Owner is also externally focussed and validates the market conditions constantly.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Has an experimental, innovative and creative mindset to ensure effective Product Backlog management and stakeholder/customer management.
- ▶ Validates the hypotheses and assumptions of the stakeholders/ customers in short iterations.
- ▶ Externally focussed and validates the market conditions constantly.
- ▶ Frequently inspects, reflects upon and constantly learns through experiences.





# SYSTEMS AGILITY

## Product Vision

Definition: The Product Owner provides clarity for iterations and incremental development of the product- what product is being built, why is it being built, for whom is it being built, and what problem(s) will it solve, to the Scrum Team. The Product Vision is adapted based on iterative discovery and learning from experiences in the process of validating the stakeholders/ customers assumptions. The Product Owner ensures the Product Vision is transparent and shared with everyone involved.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ The Product Owner sets a road map and clearly defines the Product Backlog and communicates it to the Development Team.
- ▶ Iteratively and incrementally develops and defines what product is being built.
- ▶ Clearly defines the purpose of the product and requirements of the stakeholders/ customers to the Development Team.
- ▶ Ensures the Product Vision is transparent and shared with everyone involved.
- ▶ Defines the Product Vision iteratively by experientially adapting and learning after each Sprint according to the requirements of the stakeholder/customer.

## Product Backlog Management

Definition: The Product Owner can realistically build, iteratively order, manage and transparently communicate the Product Backlog to the Development Team and the stakeholders/customers. It involves regularly refining the Product Backlog with the help of stakeholders/customers and the Development Team to ensure the Product Backlog reflects the latest requirements of the stakeholders/customers. The Product Owner enables the Development Team to easily plan Sprints by estimating effort, removing dependencies and by validating assumptions and hypotheses based on early and frequent delivery of a working product.



Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Realistically builds, iteratively prioritizes, manages and transparently communicates the Product Backlog to the Development Team and the stakeholders/customers.
- ▶ Regularly refines the Product Backlog with the help of stakeholders/customers and the Development Team to ensure the Product Backlog reflects the latest requirements of the stakeholders/customers.
- ▶ Enables the Development Team to easily plan Sprints by estimating effort and removing dependencies.
- ▶ Determines whether the Product Backlog was delivered right or not and have the final say.
- ▶ Validates stakeholder/customer assumptions and hypotheses based on early and frequent delivery of a working product.

## Systems Thinking

Definition: The Product Owner analyzes the cause and effect to understand the reasons of a problem through multiple perspectives to iteratively deliver working products while constantly learning through experiences. The Product Owner focusses on the whole situation rather than the parts to ensure iterative discovery.

Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Analyzes the cause and effect to understand the reasons of a problem through multiple perspectives to iteratively deliver working products.
- ▶ Constantly learns through experiences by focussing on the whole situation rather than the individual parts.

## Value Measurement

Definition: The Product Owner ensures data driven validation of the hypotheses and assumptions of the stakeholders/customers. The Product Owner also measures the value of the Product Backlog items and constantly and iteratively refines the Product Backlog with the help of the Development Team on the basis of the data gathered through experiences.



### Behavioral Indicators:

- ▶ Ensures data driven validation of the hypotheses and assumptions of the stakeholders/ customers.
- ▶ Measures the value of the Product Backlog items and constantly and iteratively refines the Product Backlog with the help of the Development Team on the basis of the data gathered through experiences.



## ABOUT US

Agile Cockpit is a Dutch Software & Consulting firm with its offices in the Netherlands, UK, US and India and provides its services across the globe. Our mission is to create high performing digital enterprises and to achieve this, we offer - Software, Consulting and Training services. Discover our global data-driven experience and increase the impact of your Agile journey today!

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