

# In search of a better Product Owner

By Chandan Lal Patary

As described in the Scrum Guide, a Scrum Product Owner is responsible for maximizing the value of the product resulting from the work of the Development Team. I have worked with many great product owners where I have learned a lot from them. They have created many successful products. I was thinking to write down some the key points which will affect the product owners and the products. Organization can build by great products and destroy by the bad products. Product owner are the key player for the product building. It is important to identify this key person for this key role. This paper will explain about the product owner's journey map. How to find a Product owner, how a Project manager can switch into a Product owner role, How Product Owner will be different from Scrum Master, How Product will manage tough customer, How Product will build Design thinking culture?

## 1. Recruiting a Product Owner? How?

I was a part of a panel where I was helping the team to identify a suitable Product Owner for their product. My Team has asked me to help them to find the best Product Owner (PO) for their product.

I was thinking if I ask below questions, I will get the best PO for the project need.

Thought of asking to the candidates to share with me few stories related to the below areas.

1. **Business Model Canvas:** Please share with me, how you as a Product Owner have used Business Model Canvas at your work. What are the key challenges you have faced?
2. What are the key steps for **customer value creation**? Customer discovery steps?
3. Share your journey of creating **customer profile**. And share with me about the end results. Explain **Personas, Usability and Empathy**, how you have used them?
4. Tell me some of the **benefits** customers got from your products and services.
5. What are the various driving forces for you to decide **customer products and services**?
6. How have you applied **Minimum Viable solution**? Sketch it on a napkin. Take a couple of napkins and explain the thoughts.

7. What does your team's **shared vision looks like**? Please write it down on a napkin.
8. Explain the User Story format. Explain **INVEST; DEEP**. Explain three Cs of user stories. Explain **Storyboard** technique. Share few **Acceptance Testing strategies** you have used.
9. Explain the characteristics of **Product Backlog Iceberg**. Why is it called Iceberg?
10. Explain **Kano** and **MOSCOW** techniques.
11. Explain rationale to use of **Fibonacci** number during estimation.
12. Explain various **Slicing** techniques. Give us a couple of examples. What was your **Definition of Ready**?
13. Explain how you have used **Story Mapping** at your project. Explain **Minimum Marketable Feature** and how you have used it at your project?
14. What are the various **Non Functional requirements** you have considered? What is a **system quality card**? How you have used it? What are the various "-ilities"?
15. How do you calculate **Business Value**? How you used **BVM** (Business Value Modeling) Techniques? What benefit did you get?
16. Explain to me how you have used **gherkin** language at your project?
17. Challenges in **Collaborative** exercise? Share with me few key challenges. Explain a few key challenges to **drive specification workshop**.
18. Explain about the **comprehensive Testing strategy** you have used for your product.
19. Explain to me a few scenarios where "before and after learning" about **feature development** was applied. Where have you corrected some key assumptions (Things you have learned about your proposed solution after validating the problem through interacting with customers)?
20. What key **challenges** have you faced during **sprint review meeting**? Share with me some stories. How did you manage your **technical debts and spikes**?
21. Share with me some stories and actions where you have applied **Inspect and Adapt approach**. How have you applied the **Build-Measure-Learn** approach?
22. How have you applied **Design thinking** approach in your current product solution development context?
23. What are the **key metrics** you have measured? One **Metric that Matters** most?

I will be more interested to hear real time use cases from the candidates. If He or She has built any solutions or products, he/she will be able to tell me some interesting insight about all the above points. In a Process I am also planning to check the Attitude, Passion and Curiosity to learn etc. soft skills and domain expertise.

## 2. What organization expects from a Product Owner?

Organizations survive on great products and can be destroyed by bad products.

One of the critical roles is **who builds the product**. Behind every good product there will be a good product owner or many good product owners. **Product Owners are like bridges between customer needs and an organization needs.**

The stories of failed products, what can we learn from Segway, Microsoft Zune, Sony Mylo products?

Checked the legality of the product before burning through multimillion of \$ of research and development investment?

How can we prevent a similar Segway-sized, Microsoft Zune, Sony Mylo screw up with our own product?

In his seminal tech marketing book crossing the Chasm, Geoffrey Moore recommended two separate titles that clearly distinguish the product manager from the product marketer:

**“A product manager is responsible for ensuring that a product gets created, tested, and shipped on schedule and meets specifications. It is a highly internally focused job, bridging the marketing and development organizations and requiring a high degree of technical competence and project management experience.**

**A product marketing manager is responsible for bringing the product to the marketplace and to the distribution organization. It is a highly externally focused job.”**

In 1995, Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland formalized the Scrum development methodology. With it came yet another product management title: product owner.

**“The product owner represents the stakeholders and is the voice of the customer. He or she is accountable for ensuring that the team delivers value to the business. Scrum teams should have one product owner.”**

Developing successful products requires that product managers to **understand what customers want**. This is typically accomplished by defining and segmenting a marketplace by customer needs. By analyzing the segment through marketplace research, current product analysis,

concept test, operational assessment, business and financial analysis, and technical and risk assessment, we can ascertain the value that each places on a product. Stakeholders such as existing customers, prospects, sales managers, product marketers and engineers can contribute valuable assessment information, such as requests for enhancement, defect reports, marketplace analysis, warranty data and call reports, helping to define the needs of the target marketplace.

This information should be converted into metrics that will answer questions such as, what type of customer is asking for this particular feature. And how large is this customer segment?

One of the best descriptions of what a product manager does was crafted by Martin Eriksson, a product manager I've known and respected for a number of years who started the hugely successful Product Tank monthly meetup series in London. Eriksson describes the product manager's role as it changes through the life cycle of a product. **First, the job is not only to define the vision for the product, but to understand the product's market and target customers and then to work with the product team to add a dose of creativity to make the product more alluring. It's then about evangelizing the product vision and inspiring those making the product with that passion.**

As an Agile coach I want to list down a few expectations for a Product Owner so that organization can build world class products:

1. Organization expected Product owner to **own the product**
2. Product owner should KNOW the **customers**
3. Product owner should KNOW **competitors**
4. Product owner should KNOW all the **stakeholders and connect, collaborate and communicate.**
5. Product owner should KNOW sales and marketing team members
6. Product owner should KNOW operation team members ( Installation, commissioning, Site engineers)
7. Product owner should KNOW latest technological trend in the industry
8. Get information from all these team members to improve/build the product
9. Ability to do analysis (e.g. SWOT) from all new ideas about the product improvement or new features.
10. Build a case of investment on new idea with strong business cases for each new requirements or initiatives

11. Build a prioritized product backlog with product road map from 1-3 years,3-5 years horizon
12. Ability to build a case for right product at the right time for the right market for right people to use
13. Ability to understand organizational capability to build such features or how to build competency to build such features if there is strong market demand.
14. Groom backlog frequently to adjust about the market needs
15. Share vision and customer expectation with the team members and motivate them
16. Let team visualize the solution through customer representative i.e. product owner
17. Update and connect with the customer regarding what is upcoming and pulse checking with the end users
18. Build road map, build capability to reach there
19. Product owner should have good leadership skill, good influencing skill to get the work done, build strong relationship with many stakeholders
20. Product owner is dedicated to product focused
21. Build trust culture where team members believes on product owner and Product owner does not have to force to get the work done.
22. Evangelize the product, inspire others to use the same
23. Get the buy-in from top management; build a case for investment by understanding investors' concerns.
24. Connect with all the end users with various communication mechanisms.
25. Update sales and marketing team, end users, channel partners etc. what is upcoming and what benefit they will get. Set the expectation right
26. Participate in all discussions for product building discussion, help team to build end users expectation
27. Understand end user needs by spending time with them, understand the cultural aspects, empathize with them
28. Should have passion about the product line, usages of technology to simplify product usages and make customer's life easy
29. Smart and good problem solver, come up with out of the box thinking to connect with the customer, understand their need and take the various team's help to solve the problem, apply design thinking or etc. techniques
30. Connect with the problem and solution space and own end result
31. Act like sponge, be a good listener, check the assumption, believe in Kaizen culture
32. Not too much process oriented , preferably people oriented
33. Data driven decision making, data tells what users are doing

34. Ability to do gap analysis, wants vs needs before investment, check the real pulse
35. Good story teller and delight the customers
36. Eat the dog food first before give it customers
37. No big bang failure, incremental learning with MVP

Product owner has to be vigilant about changes in the competitive market (New Technology, New positioning, new distribution mechanism) and come up with different way build to the product to address the change need.

At the end Product owner should help organization and customers to build a world class products which helps organization to make profit and customers to solve their problems.



### 3. Why I want YOU to Become a Product Owner from a Project Manager?

Most of the time, I am getting this question in our conversion from my project manager colleagues: **What role I can take in the new transforming world?**

As I am a Project Manager, I do not find much growth in the new organizational setup which are adopting Agile Transformation.

Every organization is undergoing restructure their setup to become lean and efficient.

All the roles are undergoing microscope, all the roles are redefining, how do my best of the best project manager fit themselves into the new world.

World market is changing rapidly, we are in VUCA world, every organization expects greater value from each of the roles...risks in high when we are becoming LARGE FAT WHITE ELEPHANTS!!

We cannot hide anywhere, we are visible everywhere! **Every day people are asking why you are in the payroll.**

We are building lean and small, flat organization, what role you can play to make us more efficient?

How my project manager friends reinvent themselves?

Let us look into the **skill inventory**, what we have built so far and what more we need to build for my project manager friends.

I want them to create their own position into the new organization.

In the Agile world, especially, scrum world there is nothing much to do for a Project Manager, so this role is shrinking or going to be minimized.

All these agile coaches are transforming teams into self -driven, self-organized, self-motivated team, where no project manager are require!

We have many team members who had spent good amount of time in their career in certain domain as a project manager,

**I am proposing, why they do not look for Product Owner role?**

- If they are **not** hands-on with the technology.
- If they are very good at certain domain (e.g. Healthcare, Aerospace, Banking etc.) where they had spent significant amount of their career.
- If they are good at Technology it is better to become Solution Architect or Technical Lead role.

What need to be done to become a Good Product Owner? Should they do some certification to become Product Owner?

What I am thinking about all my project managers colleagues, let them aspire to become **Product Owners** and excel in this role. They can start looking into below activities.

It is a journey and we need to be **master** through this journey by consciously practicing all these Product Owner skills.

*Let us reuse most of the Project Management skills to shift into Product Owner roles*

Best of Best Project Manager are good at all these skills which can be **reused** into Product Owner role

- As a Great Project Manager, you were a good **leader**, Look into all those great leadership techniques (Mostly soft skills) which has worked for so many years, polish all of those skills. No exception, you are master in soft skills.
- As a Great project manager, you were a great **negotiator**, use all these skill
- As a Great Project Manager, you were a best **People person**, you need to extensively use this skill for **customer collaboration**.
- As Great Project Manager, you have very **good communication skill**, you are a **great motivator**, all these skills you need as a Product Owner.
- As a Great Project Manager you were an expert in **Budget and cost Management**, all these skills you can reuse as a Product Owner.
- As a great Project Manager you used to manage **conflict** efficiently, you are going to use this skill more with customer and team members.

*What are you adding into the new Product Owner Role?*

Your **Product Management capability** need to multiply by 200X times in this new aspiring role and no certification can help you to achieve this

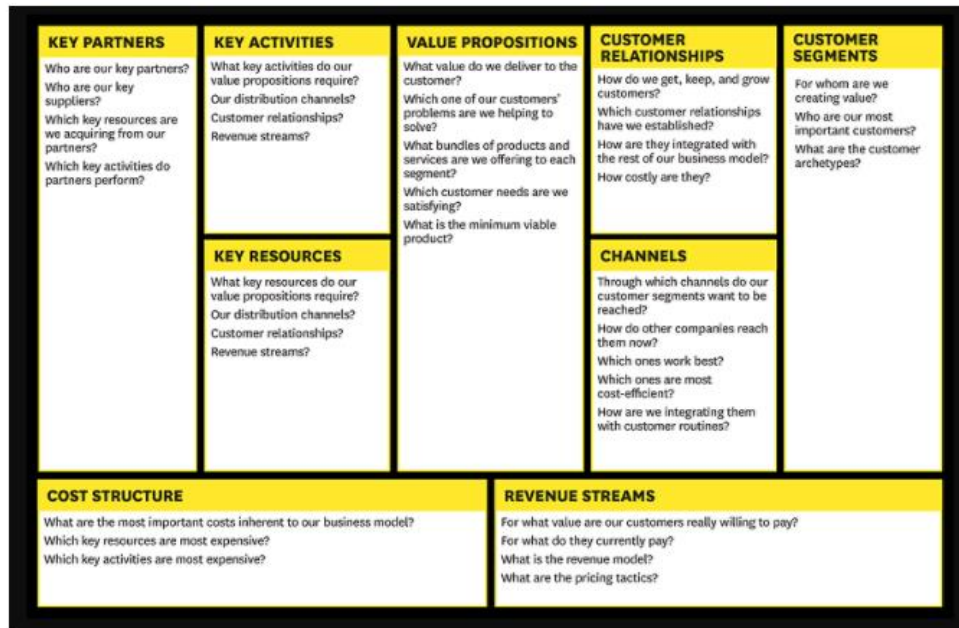
- **Domain Expertise:** Think about a domain where you have developed mastery or have some depth. E.g. If I want to become a product owner, in my career, I have spent significant amount of time in Industrial Automation domain, I could start developing mastery into Industrial Automation domain.
- Product Owner should be a **Domain experts!** It is good if you have done Doctorate into that domain! But we do not have so many people with Doctorate, but some amount



mastery will help. PO should be able to understand customer language and connect with them easily. E.g. If I am building software for Nuclear Power Plant , and as a Product owner I need to know in depth about the power plant and current technological advancement in these areas.

- **Business Expertise:** The product owner is the face of the business for the development team. Product Owner on behalf of the business connect with the development team. Product Owner on daily basis talk to the business and understand their pain points. Collect all those points which will help PO to build the product Vision and Product Backlog. Product owner study the market and trend, propose new feature for the customer, do the cost benefit analysis, influence all the stakeholders to create new product road map.
- **Influencing Ability:** Product owners one of the key capabilities is, ability to work with the business and executives to get the buy-in for investment. He/she has to prepare business case, present the same to the business executives to influence them to believe his or her thought process. Same like startup company, to get the fund from venture capitalist, founder has to give sales pitch to tempo has to do the same for every six months or every year.
- As a Product owner, you are an **individual contributor**, you should be able to rely only on your own competency, capability, skill and knowledge. There is no one who is working for you (that will be the mindset). You do not have army of people working for you.
- Specialist in **Customer Management:** Your mastery in customer discovery, customer building, Customer creation and customer validation has to be polished and shining. How do we achieve this? Practice, Practice, and practice! No exception.
- **You are an entrepreneur.** You as a Product Owner is an entrepreneur for a product. You have a keen eye for opportunities, focuses on business value and the Return on Investment and acts proactively on the possible risks and threats. Everything with the growth (size, quality, market share) of his/her product taken into account.
- **Product life cycle and Management:** You are owner of the product. You are aware about the market trends and take right decision to build right product for right markets.

You are master to fill this template with your excellent knowledge



At the end all these skills are minimum requirement to become a Product Owner.

*You have live by Agile Scrum way of developing Products and solutions.*

What skills does Project Manager need to **unlearn**? All these are anti-pattern in agile world

- Command and Control mindset
- Everything cannot be planned up front; full visibility will not be there. Plan driven mindset
- Less experiment mindset
- Old Project and Product Development knowledge
- Uncomfortable with ambiguity
- Too much Process focused

Once we practices all the above steps for several years, it becomes a second nature for all of us as a great Product Owner.

#### 4. Product Owners are from Mars and Scrum Masters are from Venus!

I am getting this question more often; can the same person play both the role PO and SM?

Team Manager says my PO is good at communication and he/she is mature to handle the situations, why cannot he/she perform both these role?

- Characteristics of Mars and Venus person:

Mars is to stand up, be noticed and get things done -- sitting on the sidelines belongs somewhere else in the heavens. Mars speaks to the power and confident expression of the individual. Whether it's at work or on the field of play, Mars encourages us to face challenges and to be our best -- or better. Aggression is part of the plan here, although Mars also values courage and honor. Assertion and a daring, fearless nature please this planet.

Venus rules our sentiments, what we value, and the pleasure we take in life. Grace, charm, and beauty are all ruled by Venus. Through Venus, we learn about our tastes, pleasures, artistic inclinations, and what makes us happy. Venus rules attachments to others. Venus energy is harmonious, and this is why people with Venus prominent in their charts are often peace-makers. In Venus, we find a need to be appreciated and to appreciate.

A Venus person is “a lover, not a fighter,” preferring harmony and collaboration, rather than strife and competition, in all their relationships. They seem to know the right thing to say to defuse tense situations, and have excellent manners.

Venus People gravitate to them because they are kind-hearted, and have a way of talking to you that makes you feel like you are special. They will ask you about your family, your health, your opinions, and really be interested in your answers. You feel like they “get” you.

Venus People value love, communication, beauty, and relationships. They spend a lot of time supporting, helping, and nurturing one another. Their sense of self is defined through their feelings and the quality of their relationships. They experience fulfillment through sharing and relating.

Similarly what PO and SM supposed to do?

#### **Product Owner:**

- Own the product on behalf of business owners
- Cares about the user needs and business goals
- Collaborate with the dev team and stakeholders
- Stakeholder vision while developing product

- Responsible for the product success
- Able to see big picture
- Accept or reject the work
- Responsible for ROI
- PO is domain experts
- Demonstrated ability to understand, translate and communicate technical and complex ideas and situations to a wide variety of audiences including clients, coworkers and management.

#### **Scrum Master:**

- Process check master
- Help team to be self-organized
- Remove team dysfunctional work
- Able to remove team impediments
- With team ensures work demo is happening
- SM is servant leader
- Great interpersonal skills and a proven ability to build strong relationships with team members fostering a repeatable development process
- Appreciate when team does well( Reward and recognize team members)
- Facilitates meetings, discussions, decision making and conflict resolution to ensure work gets done
- Detail oriented, organized, and able to handle multiple tasks simultaneously

The roles are different, expectation out of these roles are different.

To get the expected output it is not good to play these role by the same person.

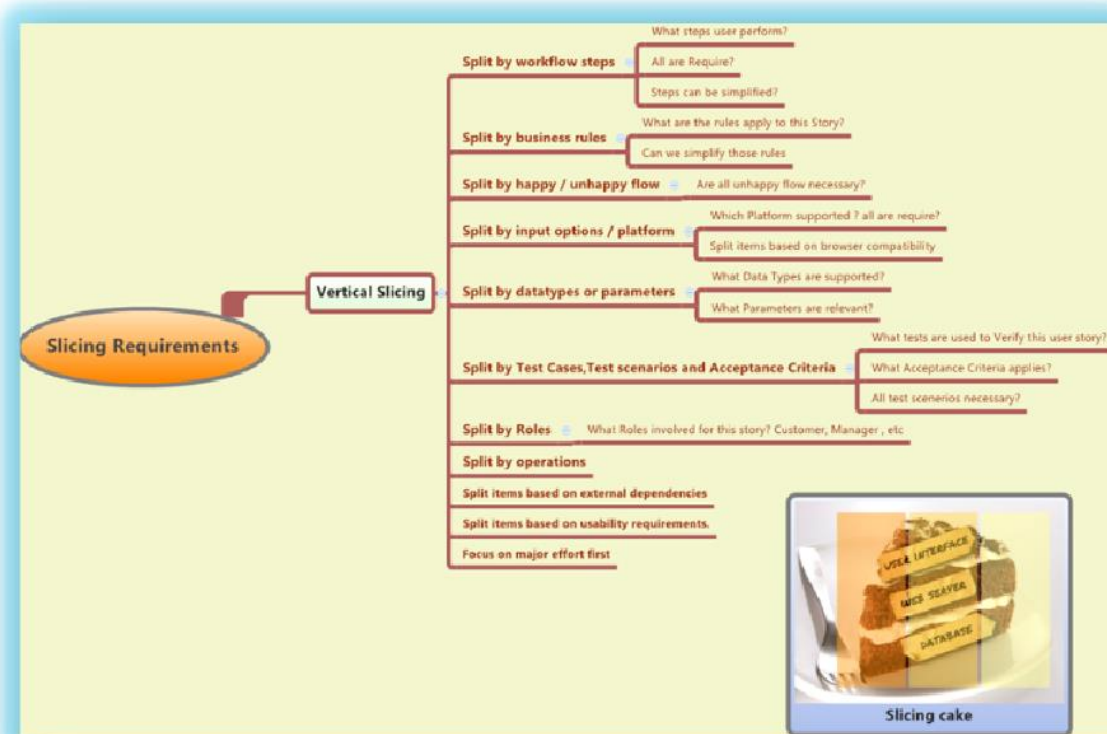
## **5. Product Backlog Grooming: How can we MAXIMIZE Output?**

#### **Scrum Guide says:**

*Product Backlog refinement is the act of **adding** detail, estimates, and order to items in the Product Backlog. This is an ongoing process in which the Product Owner and the Development Team collaborate on the details of Product Backlog items. During Product Backlog refinement, **items** are reviewed and **revised**. The Scrum Team decides how and when refinement*

is done. Refinement usually consumes no more than 10% of the capacity of the Development Team. However, Product Backlog items can be updated at any time by the Product Owner or at the Product Owner’s discretion.

Higher ordered Product Backlog items are usually clearer and more detailed than lower ordered ones. More precise estimates are made based on the greater clarity and increased detail; the lower the order, the less detail. Product Backlog items that will occupy the Development Team for the upcoming Sprint are refined so that any one item can reasonably be “Done” within the Sprint time-box. Product Backlog items that can be “Done” by the Development Team within one Sprint are deemed “Ready” for selection in a Sprint Planning. Product Backlog items usually acquire this degree of transparency through the above described refining activities.



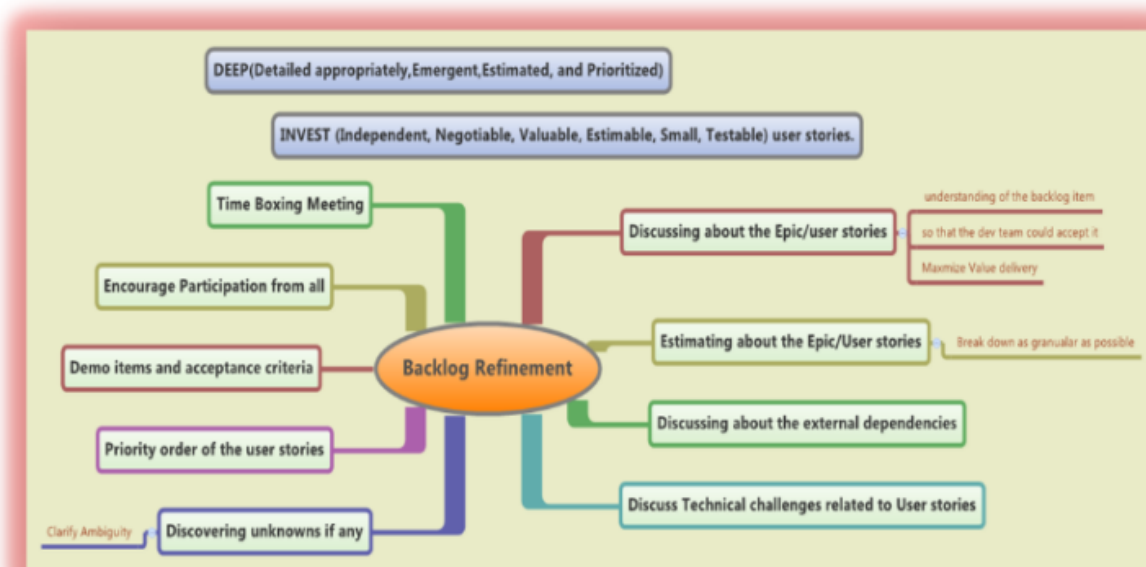
Roman Pichler mentioned the strong advantage of having the entire team involved. According to Roman,

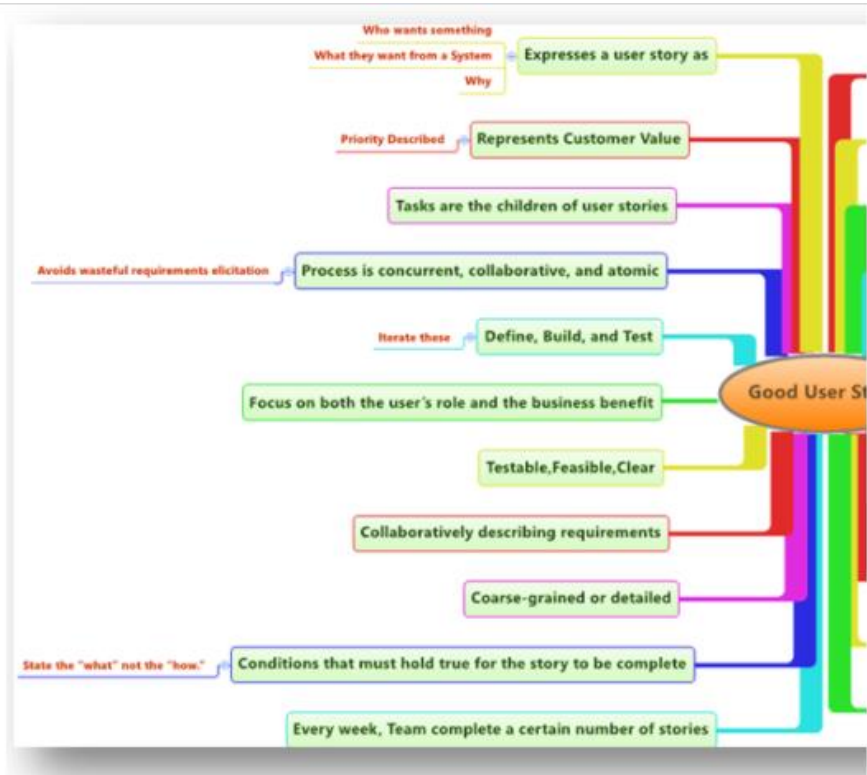
*Grooming the product backlog collaboratively creates a dialogue within the Scrum team and between the team and the stakeholders. It removes the divide between “the business” and “the*

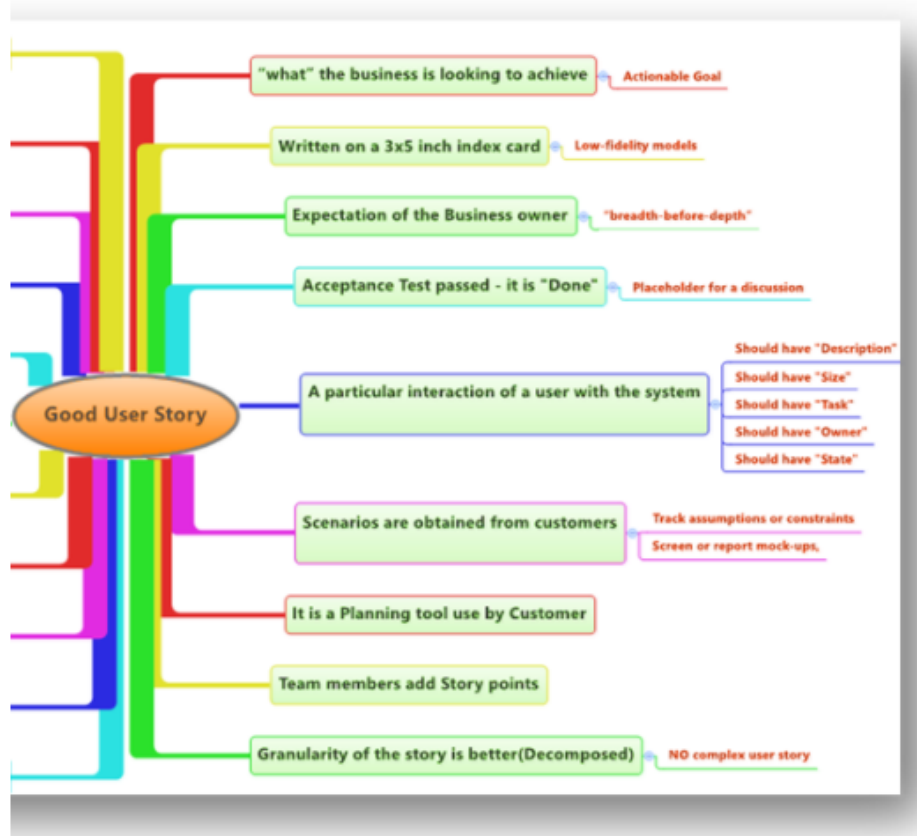
techies.” It eliminates wasteful handoffs, and avoids miscommunication and misalignment. Requirements are no longer handed off to the team; the team members coauthor them. This increases the clarity of the requirements, leverages the Scrum team’s collective knowledge and creativity, and creates buy-in and joint ownership.

Charles Bradley suggested that for their team, the best time to do backlog grooming was three business days prior to the start of the next sprint and with the entire team. Charles listed the following benefits of backlog grooming

- **More time for the new stories to "sink in" before estimating and working.**
- **More time to optimize design**
- **More time to research/bone up on requirement hurdles**
- **Forces the PO to be well prepared for the SPM.**
- **If the PO discovers something in presenting new stories then he can take corrective action.**







User stories follow a template determined together by the team and stakeholders.

Mike Cohn (2004) recommends the following:

**As a <user role>, I want <goal> [so that <reason>].**

This template includes the following:

- **User role:** A customer of the game or a user of the pipeline who benefits from this story.
  - **Goal:** The goal of the story. This is a feature or function in the game, tool, or pipeline.
  - **Reason:** The benefit to the customer or user when this feature or function is used.
- The last portion of the story template, “so that <reason>,” is optional. It’s often left out when the reason is apparent.

## 6. Design thinking for PRODUCT OWNERS: How to develop this skill?



I had taken one session with one of the team whom I am coaching regarding how they can start using Design Thinking at their context.

I have started thinking how can we scale up these activities to all the team members.

The problem statement was, **how can we implement Design thinking with software Development project esp. when we are building solution where uncertainties are very high?**

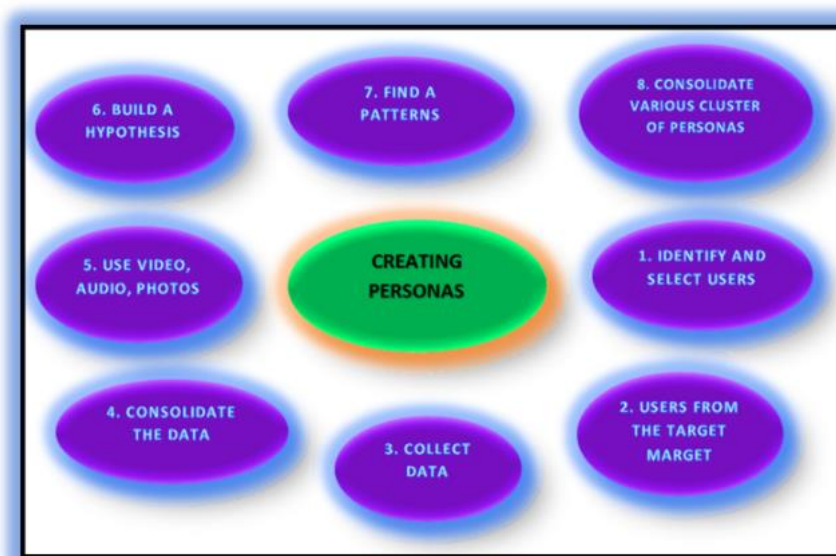
Design thinking provides a **way to think about creative work.**

It starts with **empathy**, working to really understand the problems people are facing before attempting to create solutions.

Design thinking is best applied in situations in which the **problem, or opportunity, is not well defined**, and/or a breakthrough idea or concept is needed.

How can we apply Design thinking for software PRODUCT OWNERS?

a) To start with let us build **personas**: A clearly defined persona makes it easier for designers and engineers to achieve a common understanding about a user and the scope of a solution.



b) Next, Let us create **storyboard**: To understand each product concept better so the team can decide, each concept is storyboarded.

**Storyboarding, or picture writing,** is the origin of all written languages, used by ancient cultures before text evolved and as a natural bridge to text. The Chinese language was built using pictographs. Egyptians used storyboards, or hieroglyphics, first etched in stone and later written on papyrus, to organize a complex society and to rule the ancient world.

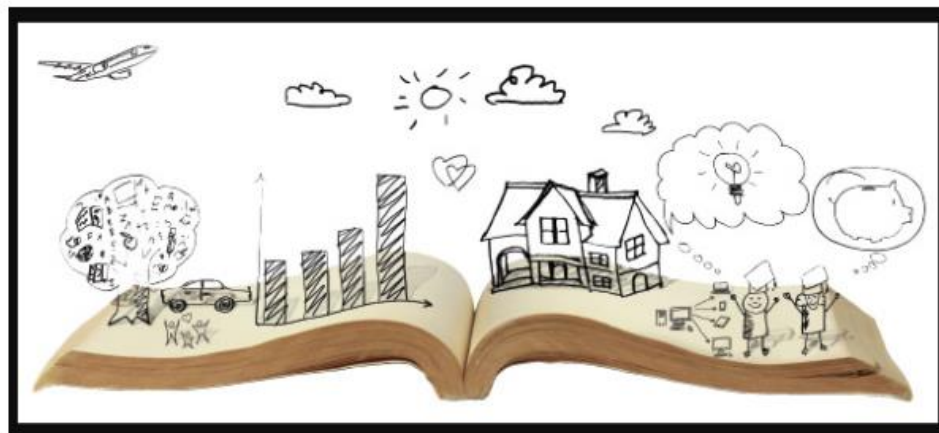


c) Next, let us do **Customer Experience Map:** As articulated by Tim Brown (2008), knowledge of “human behavior, needs, and preferences” is what helps “capture unexpected insights and product innovation” that will be more desired by consumers. Brown further claims, consistent with many design and innovation consultancies we have encountered, that most successful innovations “are inspired by a deep understanding of consumers’ lives.”

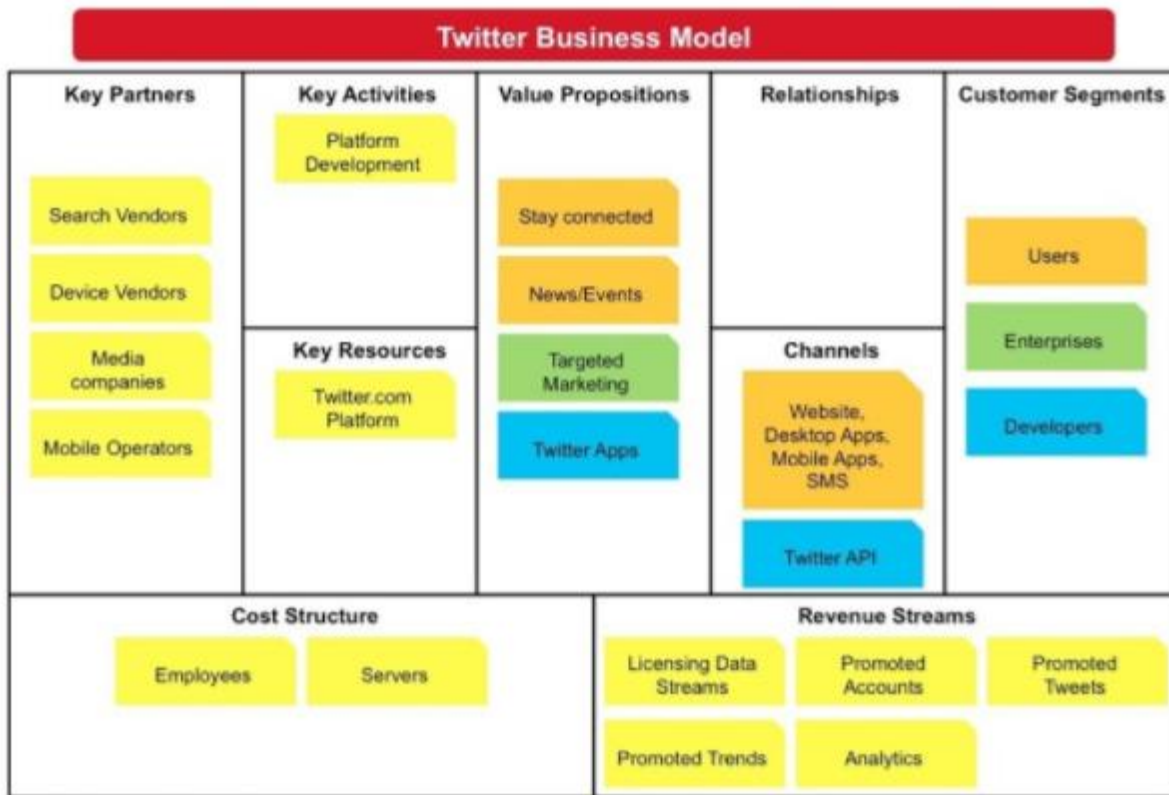


d) **Storytelling:** We connect better when we hear story, our brain designed in that way.

Convert all the requirements as a story and share with the team members



e) Think about **Business Model canvas:** It can help us to determine the feasibility of our product or service innovation

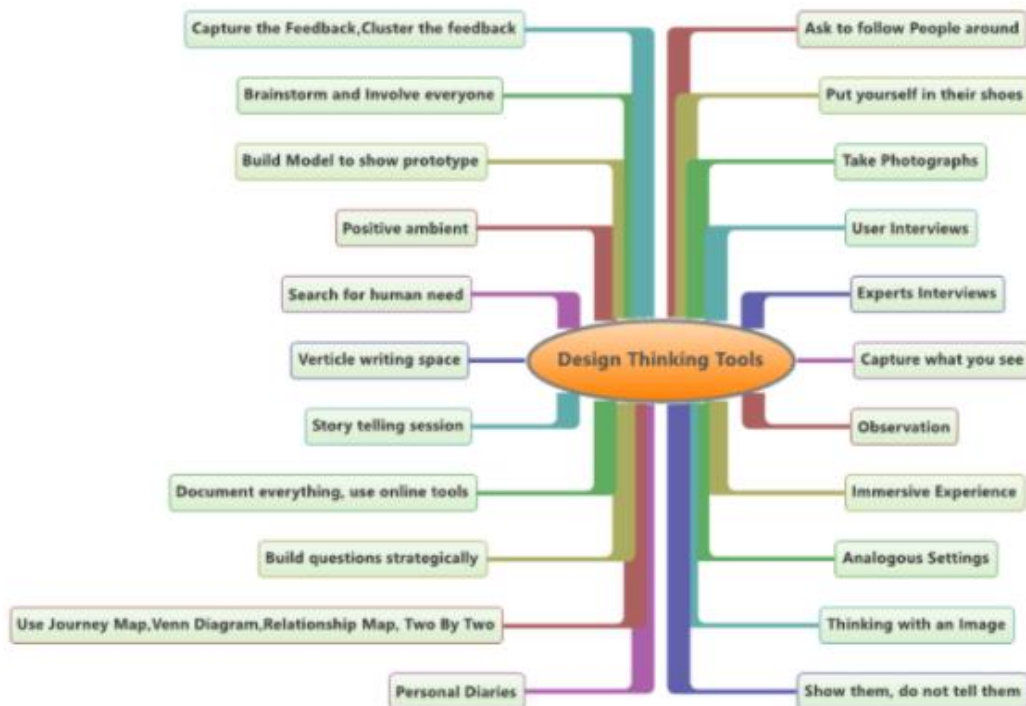


In all these process, **what common points we are finding?**

*Human-Centered, Experimental, Collaborative process*

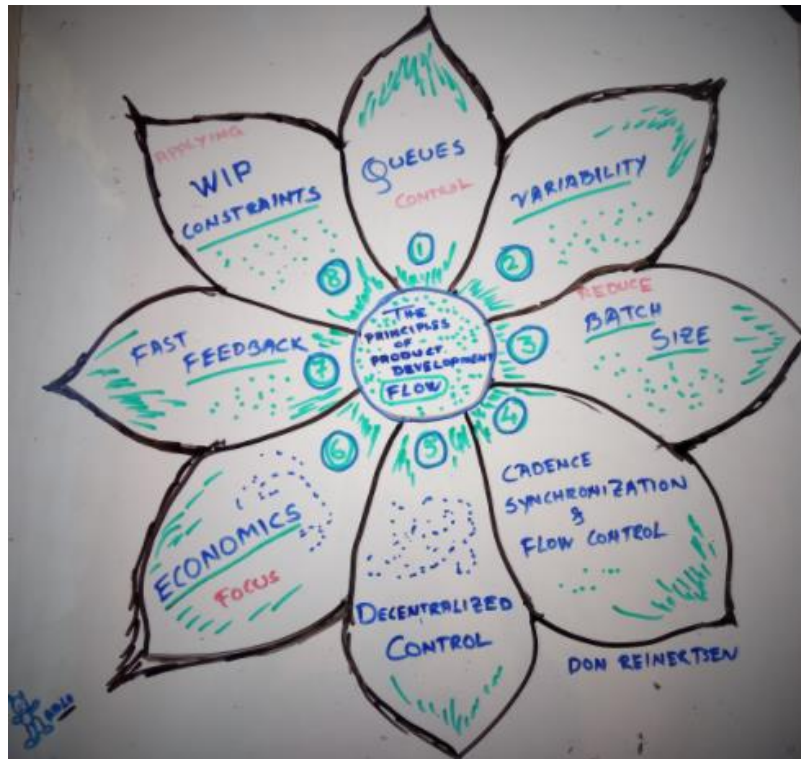
As a Product Owner with the Users and team, they can do all these exercise to build the right product which customer will buy.





## 7. Product Owner to know flow based product development

In The Principles of Product Development Flow, **Don Reinertsen (2009)** defines the eight lean principles that he asserts are critically important to maximizing value flow as the following:



All the product owners are expected to know all these factors which influence the product development.

## 8. Building Questioning Skills: Great skill for Product Owner?

Many of my team whom I am coaching, I tell them "You have to develop better questioning skill" , they are sitting in remote corner and users are in other part of the world , how they could develop better questioning skill so that they can get the output in shorter time scale with expected output.

I was imagining how I should be coaching them so that they can start applying to develop this questioning skill.

*The unexamined life is not worth living. —Socrates*

In **The Art of Powerful Questions**, Eric Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs outlined the steps of a game plan that organizations might follow to use query to catalyze insight, innovation, and action. The game plan involves

- **assessing the current situation,**
- **discovering the big questions,**
- **creating images of possibilities,**
- **and evolving workable strategies**

To build ability to ask powerful question, we need to understand **WHY** we are doing it.

So

- Start with **Relationship building question**
- **START WITH WHY?** Why I am asking these questions? **What is the Purpose?**
- **Listen** and understand the perspective of the other person.
- Ask with **Positive Intent**
- Ask with **Curiosity**, To **discover**, to unearth the hidden assumptions
- Ask to **promote thinking**
- Ask to **clarify** assumptions to avoid misunderstanding, to get more information
- More **OPEN** ended questions , Less **Close** ended questions
- Ask for More **Elaboration**
- Ask for specific **example, Learning**
- Ask for specific **challenges**
- Ask questions related to **Roadblocks** and **constraints**
- Ask question to **inspire**, generate **positive energy**
- Ask Question to **create** more question
- Ask more **Chaining** questions
- Ask more **Funnel** Questions, starting with closed questions

Use also AI (**Appreciative Inquiry**)

From the *Handbook of Appreciative Inquiry*,

"Appreciative Inquiry is the co-evolutionary, co-operative **search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them ...**

AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential ...

AI practice focuses on the speed of the imagination and innovation. **Instead of negative, critical, and spiraling diagnoses commonly used in our organizations** ... there is discovery, dream, design and destiny.”

How do I apply this? Start applying with the team whom you are coaching, whom you are interacting?

How I am getting benefit is,

- a) While Interacting with the Product Owner to validate their Maturity
- b) While Interacting with the Scrum Master to Validate their Maturity
- c) While Interacting with the Scrum Team to Validate their Maturity
- d) While coaching to understand the gap
- e) While providing training, all these Q skills helps

**Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.” – Voltaire**

## 9. How to deal with the tough customers

How to effectively connect with the people? We need to follow certain practices. What are the specialty of the difficult people? Why they are difficult? Once someone spend good amount of time with certain domain, why they become head strong, high attitude, high ego, less tolerance level? How to get along with them?

Different people obviously have differing personalities. Character largely determines the way individuals act. Character is a product of genetics and upbringing.

How can we get along with the people by following certain practices?



I have worked in various domains with heavyweight domain experts; I have learn couple of observation which helped me to work these heavyweight people. They are really good at their area of inspiration or domain.

How to work this difficult people? By doing certain tricks!

- **Help them:** Whenever time comes help these team members, whatever possible way. Soon they will become your buddy. Look for all the opportunity to help them, service mindset. Think all the probable way how can you support them to make their life simpler. Sincerely help them without any expectation.
- **No Fault Finding:** let us not focus on individual fault rather, “let us solve the problem”, “improve the situation together” mindset. It will help to build the relationship. When we find fault in others they become defensive and more and more we do this pattern it changes their behavior. They become suspicious and generalize that all people are here to find fault. They repeat defensive behaviors when someone approach them. Let us build positive culture and energy by helping each other. Not by finding fault but by experimenting and learn from each other mistake. So no fault finding. Let us forgive more and understand intending to help others. Give constructive feedback to others which help them for their growth.
- **Unproductive BUT smart people:** They pretend a lot, fight a lot, fake a lot, we need to have patience to deal with them. Help them to produce what is expected from them, they will soon come to the original human behavior. Spend more time with them and understand their genuine concern and support wherever possible. They will become cooperative and productive.
- **Unproductive BUT Busy Person:** They would love to take more challenges, willingness to contribute more but as they are overcommitted, output is less. As a result of that they will be panic, irritated and will not cooperate properly. We need to analyze such person and assess their capacity vs commitment. Help them to plan and organize. They will become your pal. It is not their fault to become unproductive but they want to do so much, there is not so much to do with current bandwidth so that mostly clutter.
- **Working with subject matter experts:** We have to give them their due recognition wherever it is due, we have to acknowledged and appreciate their talent, and praise for their dedication. They will get along with you. Whenever they need improvement, carefully bring it to their notice so that it become a win-win point to discuss. Ask for their help whenever and wherever applicable. Let us not try to show smartness to them by pretending subject matter experts where we may not be the experts. Take their help and recognize them.

- **Arguing and losing temper with team members:** Most of the time in situation where we are working with high attitude team members, there is possibility emotional outburst may vent. Avoid involving in such discussion. Do not fight back, output will be zero. Be friendly with them but do not run away. Discuss and resolve the issue their only. Share your distressed emotion skillfully and express and discuss for common understanding. Face the conflict and constructively resolve.
- **Pygmalion effect:** Let us help people by expecting more from them, encouraging them that they are great and they can do more, contribute more. Genuinely expect more from them. Do not underestimate them or tell them.
- **Modulate your tune:** Neither increase nor decrease too much your volume. Do not allow others also to do the same. Sound has its own effect to the ambient! Manage it professionally. Listen from your heart, do not pretend you are listening, it irritate opponents if they realize it. Connect with the person from core of the heart. Find out what could be the best way we can connect with that personality. There are some cohesion between you and the person, use those common factors to influence that person.
- Understand the underlying **prerequisite** of these team members, based on the need, fulfill the need, be it the recognition, appreciation, and support whatever it is. Then we will be able to connect with the team members whatever may be their ego is. Connection will be at much deeper leave.
- Let us maximize the **commonality** between the team members, then **connection** will be much deeper. Let us discover what are the common connection between us (Team member A vs me or Team member B vs me) let us all swing in same direction. Let us all be like a SINE wave. How can we do that? We have to do good amount of homework about each individual team members.
- Let us analyze and understand each and every team members, understand the behavior, intention and truly connect with them to get their support. Let us understand what situation all these team members get annoy, frustrate shout, yells etc. Let us observe all the negative emotional disbursement situation, with the proper analysis, help them and become the best buddy with them.
- Change is always tough, team members always want to be at their comfort zone. Until unless I see a bigger benefit and sure path, I will not change. Same with most of us, we become annoy and frustrate when change is big and output is not immediate. When we expect others to change fast without part of the game, they feel treated badly and they resist the changes. Let us change first before I expect some changes in other, then it will be much easy to influence others.

- Let us create an ambient where people can **open up**. More and more we are in this situation, we can be closure to that person. It is our art how can we reach that open up situation for long time to effectively connect with that person so that connection is become real and bonding will be permanent.
- Influence team members for a common set of **purpose**. Agreement with a purpose. There is reason to be together. It will energize both the party for **bigger vision** and they will be part of our journey easily. Emphasize that **bigger picture**.

Buddha said, “You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger. “

Take a deep breath and learn to control your emotion. It helps in relationship. Observe your emotion pattern and control when it is going beyond your influence. Always smile it creates positive energy with the work environment. Practice good courtesy, it is contagious and helps to build good relation. Let us build climate of trust where everyone feel like contributing and safe. People will be free to open up and collaborate for bigger mission.



## 10. How Product Owner can contribute to build Design culture to create better products?

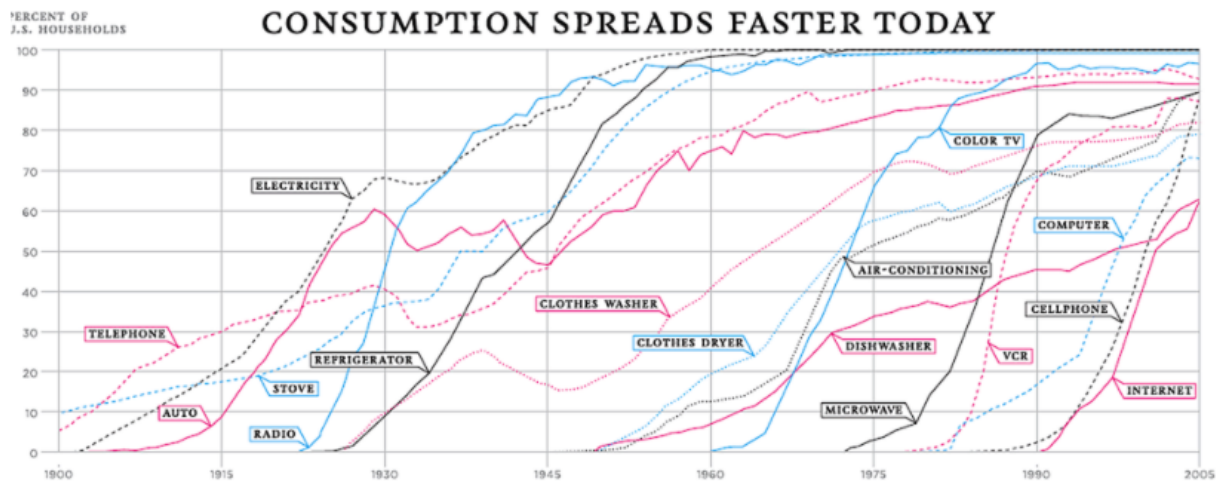
The Cambridge English Dictionary states that **culture** is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time."

Culture is the systems of **knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.**

Culture is symbolic **communication.** Some of its symbols include a **group's skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives.**

'You cannot hold a design in your hand. It is not a thing. It is a **process.** A **system.** A **way of thinking.**' Bob Gill, *Graphic Design as a Second Language.*

How do we build the same - **Design culture within an organization?**





Technology obsolescence is also very fast today!

Building design culture will help organization to build product which is more relevant to the end user needs. It will be marriage between latest technology and solving customer problem with the relevant technology.

Design is a process that turns a brief or requirement into a finished product or design solution. Same process has to inject into the organization culture. Every team members has to adapt this process stages define, research, ideate, prototype, select, implement and learn.

Building Design culture is a mindset change process. It starts with thinking that we are all designers. We are an explorer, exploring to solve a wicked problem.

The Journey to create this cultural changes are below, we need to update all our team members to think like below irrespective of the role they are playing

- Discover your end user. Develop a working relation with client and designer. Both party needs to have shared expectation. Build trusted atmosphere. Make user feel important and comfortable.
- Identify their motivation. Asking powerful questions( Why, Where, What, What, When and How)
- Empathize with the end user and identify their needs. Write, rewrite the expectation. Review the expectation.
- Look for indications that reveal what people care about—and keep in mind that they may contradict themselves. Build abilities to capture what you see in all aspects.



- Be a good story teller, encourage other also to tell stories by helping them to build their stories, be a good listener, and capture every aspects of your observation.
- Create a collaborate workshop to solve the problem, create shared ownership space. Do one to one interview. Build great facilitation skill. Influence everyone to participate. Creative participation.
- Build ability to be intuitive, to interpret what you observe and to develop ideas that are emotionally meaningful to those you are designing for.
- Generate as many questions as possible, Discuss all these questions (Build good Questioning skill-Open-ended questions), document the answers.
- Keep rewriting the challenges, constraints until it feels approachable, understandable and actionable to everyone on the team.
- Propose a probable solution for the needs; Brainstorm the same with the core groups. Once it is approve, have review with the end user.
- Implement the solution; it may not be the successful approach but full with experiments.
- Get continuous feedback from the user and improve. Iterate the steps several times.
- Communication, Communication and Communication with Collaboration with cross disciplines subject matter experts!
- Visual, Talk visual, think visual, show visual, refer visual every discussion with Visual. Use diagrams, sketches, post its, walls for drawing etc.



- Invest on each team members creativity development

- Building curious attitude, Building optimistic attitude, Building failing mindset, avoiding "I know the solution" mindset.
- Should have growth mindset( Not fixed mindset)
- Build Community of Practice (COP) where team will discuss latest research trend, leanings, Inspire others in various way, explore unfamiliar terrain/areas, Learn from experts, users, etc. Broadcast in your network about the happening , connect with new people to discover and learn more
- Ability to interpret, create insights, connect theme from various stories. Avoid noise and let go unimportant information.
- Create and execute action plan. Work for closure.
- Do not jump to conclusion, Do not jump to solution, Do not just refer your past experience, clarify the assumption clearly, understand the context efficiently.
- Do enough research to build capability, create competitive advantage at your dominated space? Should have a fair amount of data, both quantitative (think numbers, scaled responses, answers that can be measured) and qualitative (typically responses to open-ended questions)

Once we spread these practices at the core of DNA of an organization, Design culture will spread.

## 11. Conclusion

Product owner journey is full with different experiments and various challenges. I have captured some of the important points which will help the product owners to start their journey and execute the product development journey and build great products.

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## About the Author



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**Mr. Chandan Lal Patary** currently works as Enterprise Agile coach at Societe Generale. He has deep experience in developing Software applications across various domains and has successfully executed many Projects. Chandan has worked on domain like Banking, Healthcare, Aerospace, Building automation, Power automation, Industrial Automaton under real time mission critical product development to large scale application development. Chandan has 18+ years of industry experience. He is a SAFe Agilist (SA) from 2017. He is certified PMP from 2008, Green Belt certified holder from 2005. Chandan is an agile practitioner and Certified Scrum Master from 2011. Chandan holds a Bachelor's from National Institute of Technology (NIT-Agartala) in Electrical Engineering. He has completed one year Executive General Management program from IIM Bangalore in 2007. He has published **6** e-books, **20** technical papers, posted **326** Linked-in blogs, **30** Slide share Presentations. He was speaker at **10** various conferences (India Agile week- 2013 and 2015, Software Test Conference-STC2014, Regional Scrum Gathering 2015, and PMPC2013). He can be reachable through email/LinkedIn:

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