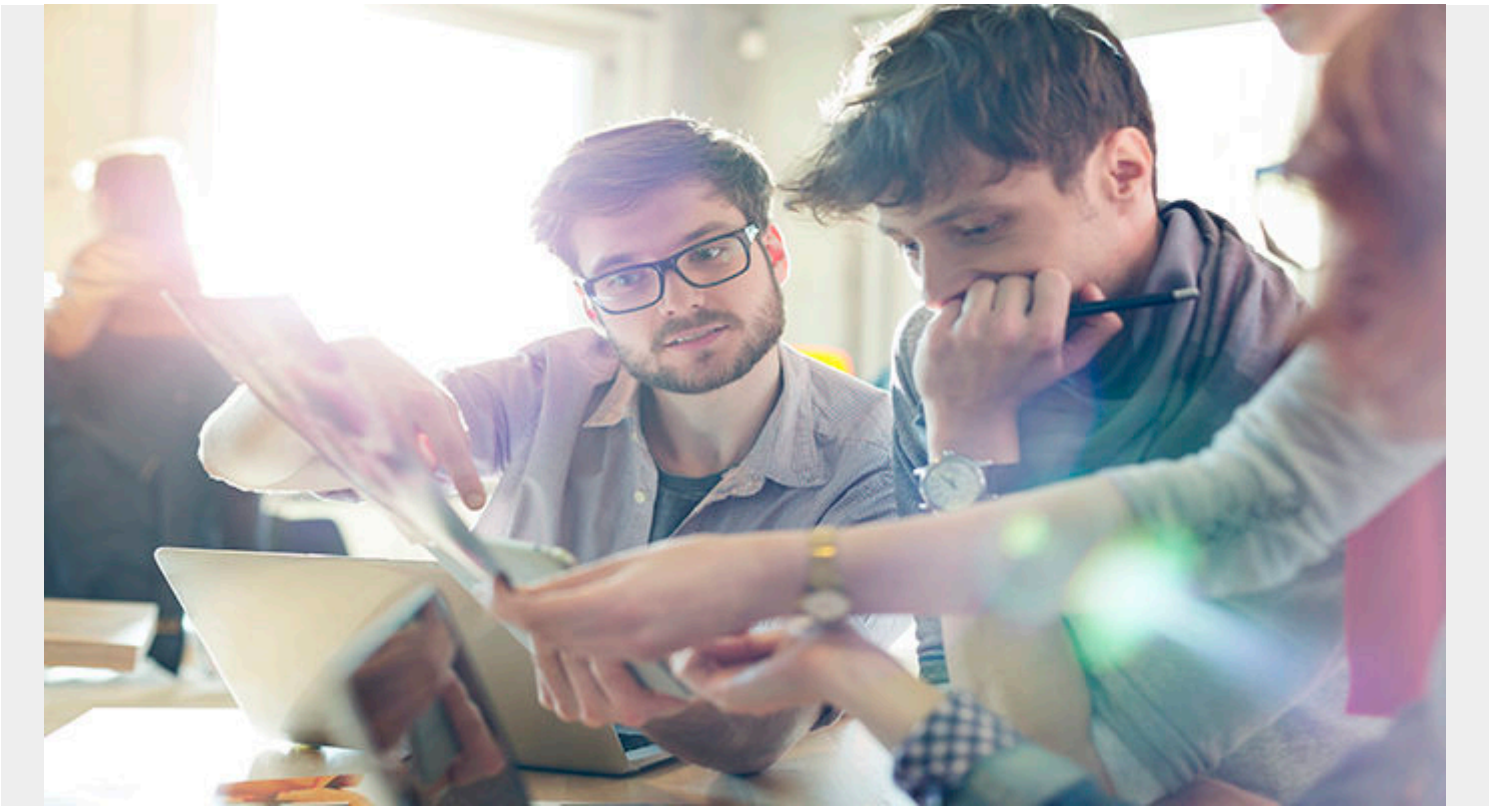
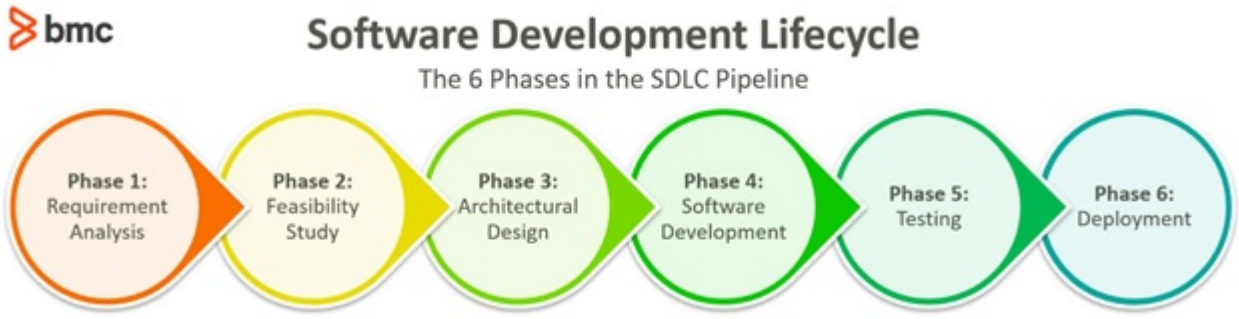
# AGILE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



The Agile software development lifecycle (SDLC) was developed with a clear goal: rapid delivery of software builds through an incremental and iterative process designed to adapt and improve software quality from an end-user perspective. The goal is readily adopted by IT departments and shops, though the process framework is not always adequately adopted.




Organizations adopting an Agile approach may find themselves resorting to traditional/waterfall SDLC practices due to inappropriate distribution of Agile roles and responsibilities. So, let's take a look at the roles that support Agile software development.

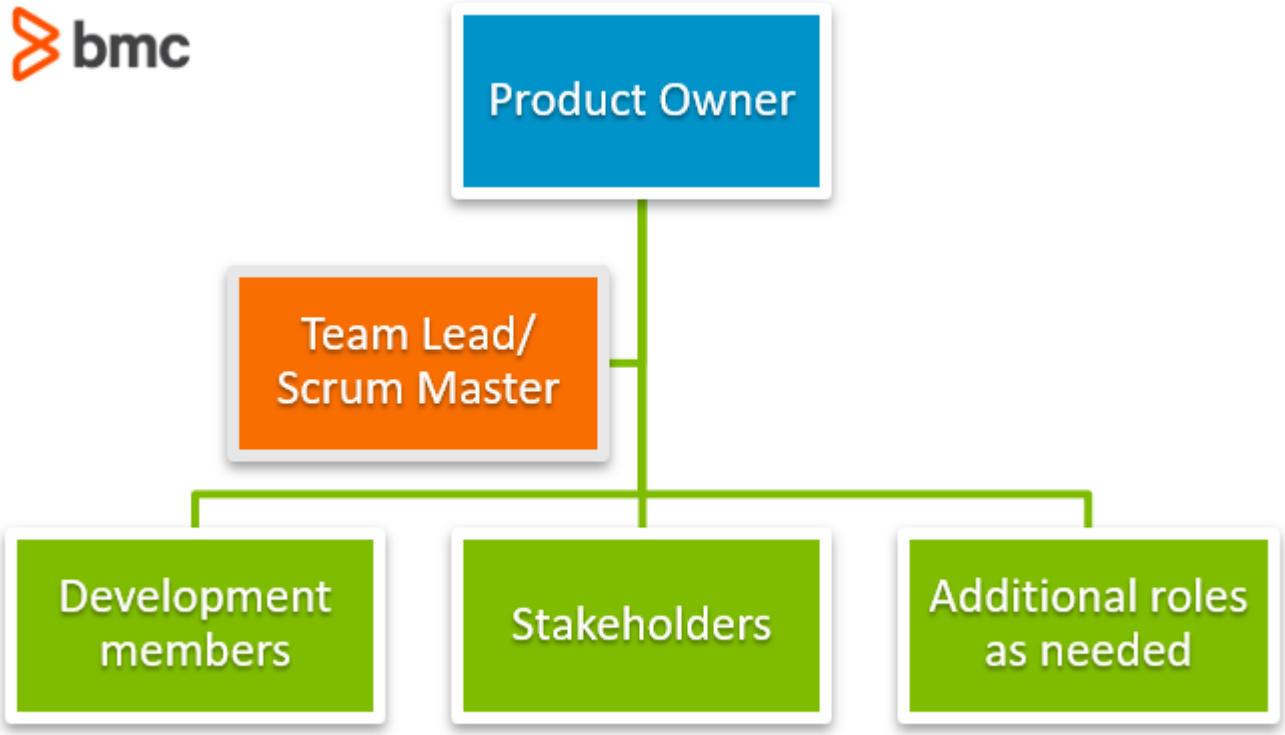
- Product Owner
- Team lead/Scrum master
- Agile developers
- Agile project managers
- Agile integrators

# Roles in an Agile team

This article explores the roles and responsibilities within the Scrum framework for Agile implementation. Some key differences in Agile team building exercise include:

- The development of holistic teams with cross-functional expertise
- Domain specialists with a broad knowledge and view of the business aspects associated with their work areas
- Stable team structures that can iterate and improve the SDLC workflows on a continuous basis.

Agile teams are often comprised of the following key roles and responsibilities:




*Agile Team Roles*

Let's take a look at each.

# Product owner

The product owner represents the stakeholders of the project. The role is primarily responsible for setting the direction for product development or project progress.

The Product Owner understands the requirements of the project from a stakeholder perspective and has the necessary soft skills to communicate the requirements to the product development team. The Product Owner also understand the long-term business vision and aligns the project with the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. End-user feedback is taken into account to determine appropriate next-best action plans for the development throughout the project cycle.

The key responsibilities of a Product Owner include:

- Scrum backlog management
- Release management
- Stakeholder management

The Product Owner is knowledgeable of the backlog items added to the list as well as items selected for work. The Product Owner changes and sets the priority of backlog item list based on stakeholder feedback and project circumstances. The role also manages the release cycle planning to ensure that the development team can deliver updated project iterations on a continuous basis.

Finally, the Product Owner ensures that product development translates into value for the stakeholders. Communication with end-users, business executives, partners and the development team is therefore a key responsibility.

## Team lead/Scrum master

The Team Lead or Scrum Master ensures team coordination and supports the progress of the project between individual team members. The Scrum Master takes the instructions from the Product Owner and ensure that the tasks are performed accordingly.

The role may involve:

- Facilitating the daily Scrum and Sprint initiatives
- Communicating between team members about evolving requirements and planning
- Coaching team members on delivering results
- Handling administrative tasks such as conducting meetings, facilitating collaboration, and eliminating hurdles affecting project progress
- Shielding team members from external interferences and distractions

The role is also responsible to manage external coordination with the organization and the Product Owner to ensure effective implementation of the Scrum framework. The responsibilities may include:

- Implementing changes
- Coordinating between stakeholders to find necessary resources
- Helping Product Owners optimize the backlog planning for optimum performance

The role of a Scrum Master is focused on attributes such as transparency across the Scrum Team, self-organization, commitment, respect and most importantly, following an empirical process to identify the best approach for product development.

## Agile developers

The team members within the Development Team are comprised of individuals with responsibilities including but not limited to product development. The team takes cross-functional responsibilities necessary to transform an idea or a requirement into a tangible product for the end-users. The required skills might be wrapped up in one or more dev team members:

- Product designer
- Writer

- Programmer
- Tester
- UX specialist

Not every member may be an engineer but may be a part of the team if their skills are required for the project to proceed at the required pace.

In addition to the skills facilitating product development, the team members should also have soft skills that enable them to self-organize and get the work done. This means that when an issue occurs, the team is both capable and empowered to take corrective actions.

The key responsibilities of the Development Team is to perform work sprints as per the requirements provided by the Product Owner and coordinated by the Scrum Master. A regular standup meeting called the Daily Scrum is followed to communicate project progress with the peers and the Scrum Master. This activity ensures transparency and allows the Development Team to incorporate the changes as necessary in future sprints based on feedback from the Product Owner.

# Stakeholders

The **Stakeholder** position may not be directly involved in the product development process but is used to represent a range of key roles that impact the decisions and work of the Scrum team. The stakeholder may be:

- The end user of the product
- Business executives
- Production support staff
- Investors
- External auditors
- Scrum team members from associated projects and teams

Input from the Stakeholders is key to direct the progress of the project in different directions to align product development with business goals, end-user expectations as well as addressing challenges facing the Scrum Development Team.

# Agile project managers

The Agile project manager role brings project management skills and practices to Agile projects. Rather than focus on sticking to rigid plans and schedules, Agile project managers focus on promoting effective collaboration and facilitating quick adaptation to serve customer needs and deliver value.

Typical responsibilities include:

- Defining the deliverables that bring value to customers
- Planning each development sprint
- Keeping everyone on target through daily stand-ups and regular re-alignment around changing priorities
- Assuring team members are aligned around Agile principles
- Supporting the team by removing obstacles and helping members self-organize and collaborate

- Connecting stakeholders with team members and making sure communication is both smooth and clear
- Tracking and measuring progress

Agile project managers need to have mastery of Scrum and other Agile frameworks. They have to be comfortable managing through constant change in dynamic environments, where priorities constantly shift. As leaders, they encourage cooperation, keeping communication open and working to identify and solve problems quickly.

## Agile integrator

Agile integrators keep it all together. People in this role ensure everything meshes, from collaboration within and between teams, to systems, to staying aligned around business objectives—all within the Agile framework. They implement Agile practices throughout an organization and ensure that external teams and systems seamlessly integrate. The role is particularly vital in complex projects, projects involving many teams, and where systems are complicated.

Implementing an Agile framework at scale requires an Agile integrator to have numerous skills, such as:

- Proficiency with a variety of technologies and Agile tool sets
- Exceptional communication skills
- The ability to identify and solve problems quickly
- Leadership for keeping teams focused, motivated, and aligned around Agile principles
- Skill in shifting teams and processes as needs and circumstances change

The role of Agile integrator is similar to that of an Agile project manager. The roles have significant overlapping responsibilities, making a dual role feasible for smaller organizations and projects that are not particularly complex. That said, there are nuances between the two.

Agile integrators have a broader scope of responsibility in most organizations, while Agile project managers are tasked to specific projects. An Agile integrator is more involved in making sure everything works together, while the project manager is focused on outcomes. Agile integrators also need more extensive technical knowledge with expertise in integration platforms and DevOps tools.

## Additional Agile roles for larger Scrum projects

In addition to these typical roles of the Scrum team, large enterprises working on large projects may include more roles into the Scrum teams. These can include:

- **Technical and domain experts** with the knowledge of technology as well as a wide variety of stakeholder requirements or expectations.
- **An independent testing and audit team** may join the Scrum team members and work throughout the product development lifecycle.
- **An Architect Owner** may be required for architectural envisioning, planning and decision making.

In summary, the roles in the Agile methodology and specifically the Scrum framework should be seen from the perspective of responsibilities. These roles don't reflect job titles and should not be

treated as such. The Scrum responsibilities should be distributed among existing team members assigned with the tasks to follow project management activities as well as technical issues using the Agile principles.

## Agile ceremonies

The term "Agile ceremonies" refers to the vital meetings that take place within Agile frameworks. Ceremonies are formal, structured meetings for planning, testing, inspecting, and staying aligned.

Typical Agile ceremonies include:

- **Sprint planning:** Meetings for setting goals, milestones, and schedules, along with team roles and responsibilities. It is also an opportunity to identify potential problems and roadblocks, and develop work-arounds.
- **Daily stand-up:** Sometimes called a daily scrum, this 15-minute meeting covers what was done the day before, what needs to happen today, and surfaces issues that could stop progress.
- **Sprint review:** At the end of a sprint, team members and stakeholders take a comprehensive look at the work and share feedback about the process and deliverables.
- **Backlog resolution:** Some frameworks include this additional ceremony to look at unfinished work or unsolved problems.
- **Sprint retrospective meeting:** This meeting is a formalized, comprehensive look at what worked, what didn't work, and what problems came up during the sprint that need solving. Attendees can brainstorm solutions and improvements. The outcome of this review contributes improvements that benefit the next sprint.

## Agile roles and responsibilities matrix

Each Agile team member works in harmony with the others for the open communication and smooth collaboration necessary for flexible and agile delivery. Familiarity with the Responsibility, Accountability, Consulting Source for Expertise, and Informed Parties (RACI) Matrix for the project ensures that all team members understand the overall process, responsibilities, and status.

## Impact of Agile on businesses

The adoption of Agile practices is transforming how businesses operate, making them more responsive and efficient while innovating and pleasing customers in a fast-changing and highly competitive world.

On the organization or business side, benefits include:

- Better ability to respond to changing market and customer needs, and to the opportunities technological advances provide
- True customer-centric development that ensures that outputs precisely serve customer wants and needs
- Faster development cycles, which mean that products and improvements make it to market quickly
- More productive, efficient, and innovative teams due to collaboration
- Reduced risk of costly delays or products that fail to meet expectations

- An enduring and differentiating competitive advantage

Individuals benefit as much as their organizations. Individual team members are empowered with a sense of ownership regarding their roles, their output, and decision making. With clear goals and priorities, and an open and collaborative culture, employees know what is expected, learn from each other, and build strong relationships. That, in turn, fosters continuous learning and skill building for a rewarding career with less stress and risk of burnout.

## Related reading

- BMC DevOps Blog
- Top Agile Certifications
- What Is Sprint Zero?
- Scrum vs Kanban: Comparing Agile Methodologies
- The Scale Agile Framework (SAFe): What To Know & How To Start
- Managing IT as a Product, Not a Project