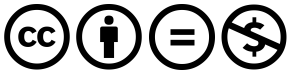
Agile Product Ownership Learning Outcomes



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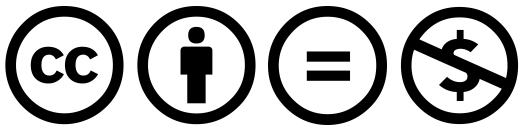

SPECIAL THANKS

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document outlines the Learning Outcomes that must be addressed by accredited training organizations intending to offer ICAgile's Agile Product Ownership certification.

Each LO follows a particular pattern, described below.

0.0.0. Learning Outcome Name

Additional Context, describing why this Learning Outcome is important or what it is intended to impart.

The Learning Outcome purpose, further describing what is expected to be imparted on the learner (e.g. a key point, framework, model, approach, technique, or skill).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. PRODUCT OWNERSHIP AS AN AGILE DISCIPLINE AND CRAFT

1.1. PRODUCT OWNERSHIP MAXIMIZES VALUE

1.1.1. What is Product Ownership

Many organizations lose sight of value in their initiatives. While there are a variety of roles who are in theory tasked with ensuring value is delivered often the responsibility ends up being diluted and neglected.

Introduce the learner to the concept of product ownership as a distinct value-focused discipline which applies at many levels, crosses many initiatives and may be embodied in many roles.

1.1.2. Levels of Product Ownership

Product Ownership occurs at multiple levels. ICAgile uses the term Agile Product Ownership to refer to work done at the level of a single initiative/project/team and Enterprise Product Ownership to apply to a broader enterprise focus.

The term "Agile Product Owner" is used in this document to indicate someone doing the activities of Agile Product Ownership in a specific context - it is a role taken by a team member at a point in time, not a job title.

Distinguish business value analysis at the team level from program and enterprise-level product ownership.

1.1.3. Relating to the Agile Manifesto

Agile is a Mindset, outlined by a set of values in the Agile Manifesto. Agile practitioners should be able to relate their roles to the values and principles of the Agile Manifesto.

Describe how the Agile Manifesto influences the way we undertake Enterprise Product Ownership & Agile Product Ownership on Agile projects. This includes relating product ownership to both the Values and the Principles in the Manifesto.

1.1.4. Value Management in Various Agile “Flavors”

Maximizing value may have specific roles in an Agile context depending on the Agile "flavor" adopted by the organization.

Refresh knowledge gained in Agile Fundamentals about various Agile "flavors" and to describe where Enterprise Product Ownership and Agile Product Ownership fit within them. This context refresh includes how maximizing value relates to the Agile values, principles, practices, mindset, roles, activities and iteration cadences.

1.2. ROLE SCOPE AND DIVERSITY

1.2.1. Role, Not Job Title

Value management ensures the right information is available to the delivery team at the right level of detail at the right time so they can build the right product for the customer.

Understand that the scope of the role of Agile Product Ownership in an Agile organization is to identify the most valuable business needs. This includes differentiating between the most valuable and the less valuable outcomes, and how to communicate valuable outcomes so that the team can deliver the right work.

1.2.2. Adapting the Role to the Context

In an Agile team, there are a variety of people with different skills; be prepared to adapt your role to your context.

Explore how the Agile Product Ownership role and level of engagement can be adapted based on the context of a change initiative and to understand the factors that influence the context.

1.2.3. Bridge, Not Ferry

Real-time multi-party communication is a key part of the interaction of an Agile team. Agile Product Ownership encourages and facilitates communication that adds the most value.

Explore how to actively create and support an environment where open, honest interpersonal communication occurs, focused on the delivery of value.

1.2.4. Keeper of Responsible Decisions

When any team works together in a collaborative context, decisions about the work are made by teams and individuals. In whatever way the team chooses to make those decisions, the Agile Product Owner is often the keeper of responsible decision-making.

Highlight the role of Agile Product Ownership in making responsible team decisions. This includes knowing how teams make decisions, how teams can make good decisions and how those decisions can be recorded in the context of the change initiative.

1.2.5. Big Picture View

Many roles in an Agile project consciously focus on the current iteration of work. Agile Product Ownership must take both long and short term perspectives.

Introduce and apply techniques that enable an understanding of both the big picture view and how the current work aligns with the big picture. This includes communicating the big picture and alignment with the rest of the team.

2. SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS FOR AGILE PRODUCT OWNERSHIP

2.1. THINKING SKILLS

2.1.1. Critical Thinking

A successful Agile Product Owner must be able to think reflectively about their own and others beliefs and actions and be able to use the results of that thinking to adjust their own behaviors.

Convey theories and concepts on critical thinking, to be willing to challenge assumptions and the assumptions of the people providing information.

2.1.2. Systems Thinking

The behaviors of teams and organizations are affected by systems dynamics. A successful Agile Product Owner understands the interconnectedness of elements we call systems, and the outside effects on teams.

Discuss how to look “beyond the borders” in order to determine the effects of systems on decision making and value realization. This should include analogies and examples to help participants reach the desired learning outcome.

2.1.3. Be Comfortable with Ambiguity

In the Agile context, discovery is iterative, unfolding over time rather than providing detailed, up-front information.

Discuss the just-in-time nature of Agile Product Ownership work. This includes methods for adapting to the iterative nature of the discovery process.

2.1.4. Flexibility of Thinking

The dynamic environment of Agile change initiatives requires the ability to switch thinking modes regularly and often.

Experience various levels of detail across different thinking, listening and communication styles. This could include tools to understand your default styles.

2.2. BEHAVIORS

2.2.1. Ask the Tough Questions

In many collaborative efforts, there may be questions that the team actively avoids examining.

Emphasize that the person(s) doing Agile Product Ownership needs to be prepared to be the conscience of the team, to tackle the "elephant in the room" questions, challenge assumptions and identify critical success factors.

2.2.2. Show, Don’t Tell

To provide maximum value to Agile team, the Agile Product Ownership requires effective communication.

Discuss how to be an integral part of the team. This includes engaging in real-time conversations, providing concrete examples, not relying on written communication but supporting face-to-face conversations with written information or models when needed, with a focus on minimalist, just enough (but not too little) written information.

2.2.3. Collaboration & Cooperation

Agile environments are characterized by collaboration and cooperation. Agile Product Ownership fosters collaboration and cooperation in the organization.

Emphasize the value of being collaborative and cooperative, and inspire others to be that way also. This should include specific strategies and techniques for encouraging collaboration and cooperation.

2.2.4. Flexibility in Communication

Different people have different preferred communications styles. The Agile Product Owner must be able to adjust their communication style as appropriate.

Experience how different people's communication styles influence and change the way the Agile Product Owner communicates with them. This includes face-to-face, verbal and written communication styles.

2.2.5. Influence, Not Power

The Agile Product Owner typically has limited positional authority. However, people in the role needs to be influential in order to motivate change.

Contrast influence and power and provide advice on exercising influence without authority. This could include discussions on motivation factors, understanding that people respond to incentives, etc.

2.2.6. Give the Bad News Early and Often

One of the tenets of Agile is fast failure. Fast failure requires the ability to disseminate bad news quickly and effectively. Bad news delivered well improves relationships and increases trust.

Explain the concept of 'Fast Failure' and how to communicate bad news in a way that builds relationships.

2.2.7. Standing up for the Value

Agile Product Ownership actively focuses on delivery of maximum value and has the courage to challenge any activity that risks reducing the value delivered.

Identify activities that risk reducing the value delivered and how to challenge those activities in a productive way.

3. SEEKING VALUE

3.1. DETERMINING VALUE IN THE INITIATIVE

3.1.1. Defining Value

The definition of "value" varies depending on the organization. For example, value in a not-for-profit organization might emphasize social or environmental outcomes whereas value in a financial organization might emphasize measures of profit.

Discuss different meanings of "value" in different contexts and to understand how that value may change over time. This should include frameworks for value identification (such as the IIBA core concept model)

3.1.2. Determining Planned Value

Organizations undertake change initiatives to deliver business value, whether that change is revenue increase, cost reduction or delivery of other outcomes such as increased social good. Planned value must be established prior to embarking on a change initiative.

Define planned value and emphasize that it must be aligned on before commencing a change initiative. When the unexpected happens Agile Product Ownership entails evaluating the effect against the planned value.

3.1.3. Defining Scope

The scope of an initiative isn't always clear. Without clear scope, change initiatives can lose focus on value-delivery.

Provide the learner with methods for relating the scope of a project to an organization's goals, and how to communicate scope change during the life of a change initiative. Scope changes over time; Agile Product Ownership actively manages and communicates these changes. This should cover a variety of tools, such as context diagrams and in/out lists to provide explicit and clear borders to the change initiative.

3.1.4. Identifying Measurable Outcomes & Goals

An initiative must have defined goals and outcomes which are expressed in measurable format.

Enable the learner to express both tangible and intangible goals and outcomes in clear measurable terms.

3.1.5. Creating Delivery Roadmap

Most initiatives extend beyond a single release. Where the size of the initiative spans a period of months or years there is a need to provide visibility into the intended future direction of the product.

Provide the learner with skills for building a product roadmap, and the knowledge of factors what can influence the elements of a roadmap.

3.2. COMMUNICATING VALUE

3.2.1. Articulate Value Proposition at the Initiative Level

As each person involved in an Agile team has his/her own focus and specialty, Agile Product Ownership involves consistently articulating the value proposition to help focus the team on delivery of value.

Explain strategies to create a shared understanding of the value context in the minds of all involved in an Agile project. This learning could include tools such as project sliders, scope matrices, elevator statements, vision boxes, etc.

3.2.2. Holder of the Value Context

The Agile Product Owner is the holder of the value context, operating in the best interests of the organization.

Explain that the value context relates to an organization's strategic direction – namely its vision, mission and objectives. The Agile Product Owner constantly reviews the work being done within the change initiative to ensure it remains true to this strategic direction. Additionally, the Agile Product Owner should understand that if the vision and scope change, the team is able to stop and re-evaluate the remaining work to determine if there is still value in the initiative.

4. THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

4.1. UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDERS

4.1.1. Stakeholder Analysis

Gaining an understanding of stakeholder needs and communication styles can help the Agile Product Owner function as a bridge between stakeholders and the team.

Show frameworks to help build an understanding of the stakeholders affected by a change initiative; to articulate who the stakeholders are, what their needs are and how the initiative may impact them either positively or negatively. In addition, discuss strategies for communicating appropriately in different stakeholder contexts.

4.1.2. Think Like a Customer

Thinking like a customer is a key component of Agile Product Ownership. The customer is the primary person who gets value from the product we are building and is generally a buyer of the product.

Discuss the Agile feedback cycle, demonstrating that as product delivery progresses, the customer and team understanding of the needs will evolve. Emphasize the importance of this evolution in understanding on the definition of the team's work going forward.

4.1.3. User Needs and Habits

Understanding a user's motivations, needs and wants provides insight into delivering the right solution. By using this insight Agile Product Ownership balances the needs of the business and users to maximize the value to the customer.

Convey lightweight UX techniques that can provide a way to understand users. These can include personas, user journeys, storyboarding (for flow) and lo-fi prototypes/mockups.

4.1.4. Bridge Understanding Gaps

People come to projects with different backgrounds, experiences and expectations. These differences can impede communication and understanding. .

Offer methods for surfacing concerns and facilitating conversations with the goal of attaining shared understanding.

4.2. ANALYZE TO DETERMINE VALUE

4.2.1. Amount of Context Needed

The amount of context required at any stage of a change initiative will vary depending on the organization, the initiative, the people and other factors.

Determine the minimum amount of analysis and set of documentation needed for the right value decisions at any point in time.

4.2.2. Type of Context Needed

Not just the amount of context but the type of information it provides is important in making decisions.

Discover which set of factors around a change initiative can be important and need to be understood to make effective decisions. This could include drivers for change or the basis for competition. It could also include tools such as SWOT, Market/Competitive Analysis, Balanced Scorecard, Organizational Factors, Product Management or the Purpose Alignment Model.

4.2.3. Maintaining Value In the Initiative

The Agile approach is distinct in that value is continuously assessed and prioritized to ensure that the most valuable work is delivered at any point in time, always using the customer's perspective. It is also imperative to question the purpose behind requirements, challenging those requirements that do not support the business goals.

Demonstrate the art of maximizing the amount of work not done, something essential to deliver valuable products early and continuously. This includes practicing techniques such as Business Value Definition, Kano Analysis, MoSCoW prioritization, or relative estimation using story points and value points.

4.2.4. Knowing the Constraints

Change initiatives must deliver value within certain constraints.

Classify variety of types of constraints (e.g., organizational, legal, social, regulatory, environmental, human, etc.) in which an initiative may be undertaken.

4.2.5. Identifying Initiative Risks

Many ventures cannot exist without Risk. However, organizations can only make informed decisions about Risk if they understand the nature of the risks they are accepting.

Distinguish methods for eliciting, measuring, analyzing, understanding and communicating risks, including establishing how known risks can be mitigated and management of new risks as they emerge. The learner should understand the Agile Risk Management approach including Risk Adjusted Backlog, Risk Burn-Down Charts, Risk Census, Risk-based spike and other techniques.

4.3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

4.3.1. Defining Quality

How qualities are described can affect our understanding of them.

Define and communicate a shared understanding of quality in a way that provides meaningful targets and standards for the delivery activities.

4.3.2. Quality Tradeoffs

Quality has an inherent cost associated with it. You can't have everything - some quality aspects degrade other aspects of quality.

Recognize that quality goals also have to be articulated and ranked

4.3.3. Some Up-front Analysis may be Needed

Although Agile projects are developed iteratively using minimal up-front planning and design, there are circumstances when up-front thought is desirable.

Help the team identify the aspects of an initiative that require some up-front thought. Aspects of an initiative that could require up-front thought include identifying and articulating the minimal viable product as well as the architecturally significant non-functional requirements (i.e., those requirements that are very expensive or difficult to refactor later in the initiative).

4.3.4. Modeling to Understand

Innovation is the craft of the exploration of needs and solutions. Fostering an innovative and enquiring mindset will help the Agile Product Owner to avoid dropping straight into implementation.

Apply creativity and innovation to explore problems and help identify solutions. This includes methods and tools ranging from interviews and workshops to surveys and ethnographic observations. This LO can also include concepts such as Lean Startup and specific tools for innovation and brainstorming.

4.3.5. Communicate Using Examples

In order to elicit and validate product needs, it is useful for Agile Product Ownership to use real customer examples to communicate with the team,

including the customer. Real examples serve to bridge understanding of the needs and how they see the change initiative serving a future state need. Analysis models can be concurrently developed and elaborated using these same examples. Models may be useful for the team but examples are more concrete for the customer.

Demonstrate how to alternate between examples and analysis models to explore the multiple dimensions of a product need, including user role, user actions, data and business rules, for example. This is a continuous practice that builds a shared team understanding of product needs useful for both planning and delivery. This includes techniques such as Behavior Driven Development, Specification by Example and the concepts of Domain Specific Languages.

4.3.6. Just Enough Modeling

There are a vast range of modeling approaches which can be used in expressing solution options.

Recognize that there are many modeling approaches, but the selection of what models to use will be driven by the initiative and organizational context

5. THE CONTINUOUS DISCOVERY OF VALUE

5.1. MANAGING ARTIFACTS

5.1.1. Gathering Artifacts

Artifacts enable the flow of information and value.

Identify types of artifacts and list sources Agile Product Ownership can use to gather information. These could include artifacts such as User Stories, Compliance Documents, Use Cases, Story Maps and many others.

5.1.2. Managing Artifact Change

Artifacts decay and become misleading as the organization learns more about the problem and the solution.

Express ways to keep artifacts current. This includes incorporating change into artifacts as appropriate, into the value decision making context, and into the understanding of all stakeholders.

5.1.3. Long-Lived Artifacts

Some artifacts are long-lived and should be treated differently from continually updated artifacts.

Distinguish artifacts that are long-lived, such as compliance-related artifacts, and how to deal with them.

5.2. ENABLING VALUABLE DELIVERY

5.2.1. Defining Done at Multiple Levels

The Agile Team must agree on what constitutes the delivery of value at every level of the change initiative.

Analyze what “Done” means at each level of the change initiative, and gain experience defining “Done” at several levels of detail, including the lowest.

5.2.2. Progressive Elaboration

An Agile environment has incremental delivery and planning with multiple horizons. Agile Product Ownership supports the incremental delivery process by doing just enough, just in time.

Experience incremental planning, delivery and progressive elaboration of requirements, while focusing on maximizing value.

5.2.3. Understanding What is Doable

Agile change initiatives typically work across multiple horizons. In order to set the team up for success the Agile Product Ownership understands what is doable – both in team capability sense and in having clear acceptance criteria.

Experience the effects of unclear acceptance criteria and the effect on velocity/ throughput of overloading a team. Understand how to make recommendations for change as a result of attempting to do what is not doable.

5.2.4. Assessing and Validating Delivered Value

With every incremental delivery Agile Product Ownership assess how much of the planned value has been delivered and use that information to influence future planning.

Assess the delivery against the acceptance criteria.

5.2.5. Slicing and Chopping

Often “things to build” are too big to build in one iteration. Agile Product Ownership requires breaking these things into chunks that are of an appropriate size for the development team.

Experience breaking up “things to build” into small, bite-sized chunks. These chunks need to be explicitly focused on cross-cutting value delivery rather than technical tasks – each chunk should deliver visible value to a stakeholder. This could include techniques for user story decomposition.

5.2.6. Adapting Based on Feedback and Knowing When to Stop

Just because we started with a plan does not mean that we need to deliver every element of that plan. Agile Product Ownership entails constantly assessing delivered value against the needed (rather than planned) value and making decisions regarding the remaining work, new work and stopping the initiative

Recognize the true nature of adaptive development, where what was planned is purely a guideline and feedback from the actual delivered results are used to adapt the plan, add or remove items in the backlog and stop the delivery when adequate value has been delivered.