

“Sprint Day” Checklist - An Example

This article shares an **example** calendar and checklist of practices one team used in reviewing, retrospecting and planning sprints. It's not a “best practice”¹, just a sharing of tips for you to use to generate some ideas for your own process.

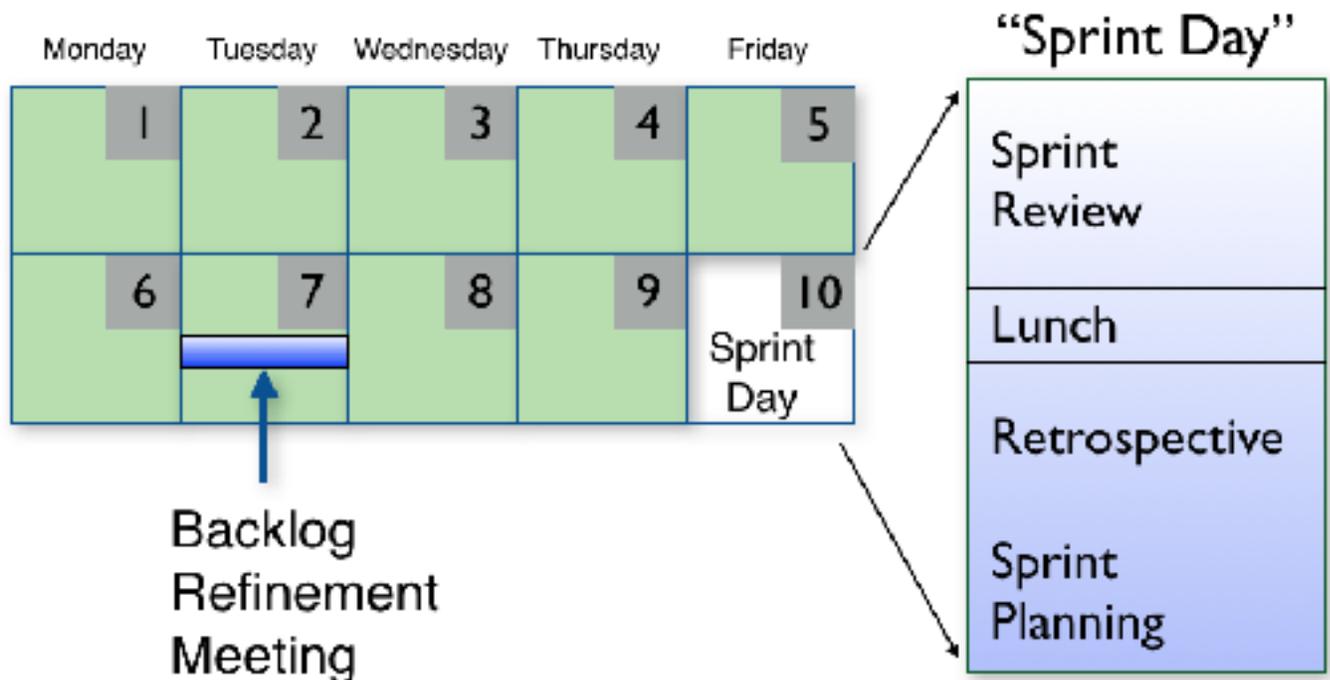
Teams often struggle trying to find a balance between the effectiveness of Scrum meetings and their duration. Too long, and the meetings become boring and wasteful. Too short and they lose purpose and miss details.

After four years of experience, this team hit a nice balance. They had two or three-week sprints and spent a day in the meetings. The example, describes the breakdown of the this day, called the “Sprint Day”. In addition, the team held a backlog refinement meeting several days before the sprint day, which prepared the product backlog for sprint planning.

Note: the practices described are slightly different from the current definition of scrum as contained in the Scrum Guide:

<http://www.scrumguides.org/scrum-guide.html>

The calendar for a typical sprint looked like this:



Below are brief logistics, and other details of how each meeting ran.

¹ There are no such things as “best practices” in agile. We’re always seeking “better practices”
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Sprint Review

- **Goal:** Demonstrate the progress made over the last sprint.
- **Attendees:** Stakeholders, Scrum Teams (everyone possible).
- **When:** The morning after the end of sprint development
- **What:** Each team presents a demo of what they have completed in the last sprint.
How long: Generally an hour.
- **Scaling notes:** For large-scale groups, a single page summary sheet describing the original goal forecast, what was completed and major impediments encountered, would be passed out to the stakeholders at the start. Each team would be time-boxed to 5-10 minutes of demo time. If deeper conversations need to occur between the stakeholders and team, they would be held after this meeting.
- **Roles:**
 - Product Owner
 - Be honest with feedback to the team.
 - Did the sprint results match the vision of what was discussed with the teams two weeks ago?
 - If stories were dropped, were they the lowest priority stories?
 - What surprised you?
 - What improvements to the definition of done would improve results?
 - Ask for stakeholder feedback.
 - Scrum Masters
 - Encourage team members to demonstrate the accomplishments
 - Was it a quick plug-n-play meeting to show off the new features?
 - Development Team
 - Be prepared to raise questions about the vision of the product.
- **Questions for the Retrospective**
 - How can the meeting be improved (gather feedback from the others)?
 - Delays from equipment setup, etc?
 - Facilitation issues?
 - Too much preparation time?
 - How long did it take between ending work on the sprint goal and giving the review? How can this time be reduced?
- **Checklist**
 - Features (stories) that meet the *Definition of Done* are officially removed from the product backlog following this meeting.

Sprint Retrospective

- **Goal:** To allow the development team to alter their process in order to achieve higher levels of productivity and work satisfaction.
- **Attendees:** The Scrum Team (Development Team, SM & PO) and anyone invited by the development team.
- **When:** After the sprint review. Usually after lunch.
- **What:** The developers discuss how they worked together over the previous sprint, including the effectiveness of changes identified in the last retrospective, and generate a small list of practice improvements to experiment with over the coming sprint.
- **How long:** Variable (30 minutes to two hours)
- **Roles**
 - Development Team
 - What were the surprises you encountered during the sprint between what you planned and what actually happened?
 - How can you improve planning, estimation and metrics to better forecast and track what we can accomplish, while minimizing the overhead of planning, estimation and tracking?
 - Product Owner
 - Remember that this is a meeting about "how" the sprint was executed by the team, not "what" was delivered to you.
 - Focus on what you can do to help them improve workflow and their work environment.
 - Scrum Master
 - Start by recapping the decisions made in the last retrospective
 - Facilitate respectful conversation
 - Minimize interruptions
 - No phones
 - Park longer discussions
 - Recap what you hear
 - Capture and post decisions
 - Ensure that what is said stays with the team alone
 - This is a key time to practice coaching and facilitation
 - Mainly ask questions
 - Practice the silent count to 10 waiting for answers
 - Focus on what you can do to help them improve workflow and their work environment.
 - **Checklist**
 - A list of practices to start, stop or continue over the coming sprint.

Backlog Refinement

- **Goal:** To adjust the plan, as contained in the product backlog, to reflect the reality of development, as expressed by the emerging product and to refine that plan so the development team can best plan the coming sprints.
- **Attendees:** Ideally each Scrum team participates in refining the backlog. If that is not possible, the PO, SM and leads will conduct this meeting.
- **When:** Several days before the end of the current sprint, when it's clear what the team will deliver.
- **What:** The attendees will discuss the recently completed (or just about to complete) sprint, the current build, refine the product backlog and select the next set of user stories that the team is forecast to complete in the coming sprint. Refinement includes adding and splitting high priority epics (stories too large to fit into sprints) to ensure that there are approximately two sprints worth of sprint-sized stories available to the team and that each of these stories meets the *Definition of Ready* which means:
 - A definition of done identified
 - A set of acceptance criteria unique to the story are captured.
 - Each story in the sprint goal is independent, negotiable, valuable, estimable, small & testable
 - Any dependencies are identified and accounted for.
- **How long:** Generally an hour for each week of sprint.

Sprint Planning

- **Goal:** For the team to create a plan for completing a set of features over the next sprint.
- **Attendees:** The Scrum Team (Developers, SM & PO)
- **When:** After the retrospective
- **What:** The product owner presents the sprint goal, which is a forecast of what they believe the development team might be able to deliver by the end of the sprint. This goal contains a number of product backlog items (user stories), which approximates the capacity of what the team has accomplished in past sprints. Developers extract one story at a time from the goal, discuss the design issues, create a plan to accomplish the story by the end of the sprint and add the plan details to the sprint backlog. They continue doing this with further stories in the goal until they feel they have maxed the capacity of the sprint backlog. Often, they'll need to swap or drop stories from the goal based on this capacity and what planning reveals.
- **How long:** Generally an hour for each week of sprint.
- **Checklist**
 - Preparation
 - A sprint goal (collection of stories that meet the definition of ready) has been identified.
 - The product owner is attending.
 - The product backlog is visible.
 - Any domain experts needed to help are invited.
 - Anything unique about the capacity of the team or schedule (holidays, vacations, etc) are identified.
 - Any changes to the team are already made (e.g. new members joining).
 - Execution
 1. The story, acceptance criteria and definition of done are read for the highest priority story not planned from the goal.
 2. Design discussion occurs.
 3. Team plans the work to complete the story
 4. The plan is placed on the sprint backlog.
 5. If the plan exceeds the sprint backlog capacity, the team can choose to split the story or find a smaller story to plan instead.
 6. If there is sufficient room left in the sprint backlog, return to step 1.
 - End
 - The team commits to meeting the revised goal the best they can with the product owner.