The “ScrumAnd” Stance
(requires though and discipline)

by Gunther Verheyen
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“Yes, but” comes in many guises. Try organizing a party in a “Yes, but...” atmosphere. The result is probably a zillion obstacles, but no party. Try moving through a door with your eyes stubbornly fixated on the door frame. People seemingly can become deeply obsessed with frames-as-obstacles. Try benefiting from Scrum in a “Yes, but...” environment, where the primary response is to raise concerns and hindrances, where the conversation is all about obstacles, and that what cannot be done.

Imagine adopting Scrum from a “Yes, and” stance

“Yes, but” is a tempting stance, offering the illusion of safety. Shifting to “Yes, and” requires thought and discipline. It requires thought and discipline to consciously look for possibilities and opportunities first, no matter how small. This does not preclude awareness of problems and obstacles, but the focal point shifts radically. Check if the door is open. Look at the doorway. Trust the door frame to hold if you pass. The frame is not the key top opening the door.

Scrum did more than just gain a critical mass to build on. Since Scrum’s inception in 1995 and the definition of ‘Agile’ as a set of values and principles in 2001, Scrum gradually became the most preferred way for people, teams and organizations worldwide to become more Agile. Agile crossed the chasm (2005-2006) and by now the 3rd Scrum Wave has risen.

Zeitgeist. Inclusive language and an inclusive stance are more helpful today. “ScrumAnd” is today’s way forward to help people increase the benefits of Scrum.

“ScrumAnd” starts and ends with... Scrum

Scrum is a simple, yet cohesive framework. In a nutshell:

A Scrum Master fosters an environment of Scrum where:

1. A Product Owner assures there is a Product Backlog, an ordered list of work deemed necessary to optimize the value a product delivers.

2. A Development Team pulls work from the ordered Product Backlog in a time-boxed Sprint against an overarching Sprint Goal.

3. On a daily basis the Development Team optimizes its work to create a releasable version of product, no later than by the end the Sprint.

4. All players involved figure out what to work on next and how to best organize as from the next Sprint.

Repeat.
Although crucial to optimize the benefits realized, observation shows how difficult it is to keep Scrum cohesive. There are no practices that can be left out or cut out without harmfully breaking the cohesion (covering up dysfunctions or other ways of undermining important benefits). There is no such thing as individual Scrum practices. Observation shows how difficult it is to keep Scrum lightweight and nimble. There is no need to aggravate Scrum. The “And” in “ScrumAnd” is not the next excuse to stack practices, rules or roles on top of Scrum. Instead, Scrum can wrap many practices, as tactics to apply the overarching rules, principles and values. Such are inclusive practices. Inclusive practices are needed and even make out a specific manifestation of Scrum. When inclusive practices are applied well, the resultant system is still cohesive and recognizably… Scrum. “ScrumAnd” is more about the overarching rules, principles and values than about inclusive practices.

“ScrumAnd” starts, and ends, with Scrum. Many roles and domains exist that may not be covered by Scrum, for which Scrum has no rules, events and artefacts in place. Practices in such domains can help an organization get more out of Scrum. They are complementary practices. Complementary practices don’t change your manifestation of Scrum. The “And” in “ScrumAnd” is not about complementary practices.

“ScrumAnd” is about how to get more out of Scrum, how to be more effective in employing Scrum, and gain agility.

The syntax of “ScrumAnd” -if any- might look like:

\[
\text{ScrumAnd (syntax)}
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“YES, we [current use of Scrum], AND [strategy to evolve]."

Illustrations of “ScrumAnd”

- “YES, we have a Product Owner, AND a dedicated, full-time Product Owner, acting from a business perspective, with a mandate, and clear decision authority increases our agility in terms of customer proximity.”

- “YES, we have a Product Backlog, AND going from using it merely as an inventory of exhaustive specifications to experiencing it as a collaborative instrument that helps us focus on what is really important and valuable increases our agility in terms of our ability to deal with unpredictability.”
“YES, we have a definition of Done, AND expanding it beyond producing only coded, tested or even integrated work to creating releasable and valuable Increments increases our agility in terms of our ability to deliver actual value (and close the feedback loop with the customer base).”

The illustrations of “ScrumAnd” are just that, illustrations, representations of what might work, like some earlier illustrations. There are no universal definitions, labels or boundaries, not within an individual “ScrumAnd”, nor across several of them.

And then complexity comes into play

“ScrumAnd” illustrations can be created for all elements of the Scrum framework. The implied “ScrumAnd” stance shifts the mind to the exploration of options and possibilities, patterns of improvements, away from the frame (Scrum) or obstacles only.

And then complexity comes into play. There is a “ScrumAnd” in understanding and employing “ScrumAnd”. “ScrumAnd” is not for judging or assessing, it is more than a simplistic model of linear progression, more than phases, maturity or other levels. Inspection without adaptation is pointless anyhow, to start with. Despite the possible creation of individual “ScrumAnd” representations, the topics they target are necessarily connected, matched, intertwined. They reinforce or diminish each other without clear cause-effect relationships.

Complexity kicks in even more. One “ScrumAnd” may not result in improved agility through Scrum. Improvement requires concurrency and comes in Increments too. Reversely, increased agility through Scrum cannot be attributed to one “ScrumAnd” alone. “ScrumAnd” abides by the sfumato principle, the reality that reality has layers and shades of gradual progression, shadows rather than cold delineations, monochromatic color areas and binary separations.

Download the "ScrumAnd" poster.
About

Gunther Verheyen ([gunther.verheyen@mac.com](mailto:gunther.verheyen@mac.com)) is a longtime Scrum practitioner (2003). After a standing career as a consultant, he became partner to Ken Schwaber and Director of the Professional Scrum series at Scrum.org (2013-2016). Gunther nowadays engages with people and organizations as an independent Scrum Caretaker.


Gunther left consulting in 2013 to found Ullizee-Inc and partner exclusively with Ken Schwaber, Scrum co-creator. He represented Ken and his organization Scrum.org in Europe, shepherded the ‘Professional Scrum’ series and guided Scrum.org’s global network of Professional Scrum Trainers. Gunther is co-creator to Agility Path, EBMgt™ (Evidence-Based Managing of Software) and the Nexus framework for Scaled Professional Scrum.

As from 2016 Gunther is continuing his journey as an independent Scrum Caretaker; a connector, writer, speaker, humanizer. His services build on 15 years of experience, ideas, beliefs and observations of Scrum, as expressed in “re.vers.ify”, an act of people re-imagining their Scrum to re-emerge their organization.

In 2013 Gunther published his much-praised book “Scrum – A Pocket Guide”, by Ken Schwaber recommended as ‘the best description of Scrum currently available’ and ‘extraordinarily competent’. In 2016 the Dutch translation was published as “Scrum Wegwijzer“. In 2017 the German translation was released as “Scrum Taschenbuch”. An Italian translation (“Scrum - La guida tascabile”) is scheduled for 2018.

When not travelling for Scrum and humanizing the workplace, Gunther lives and works in Antwerp (Belgium).