# How Agile plus Product Management helps Build the RIGHT Things the RIGHT Way

**Rich Mironov**

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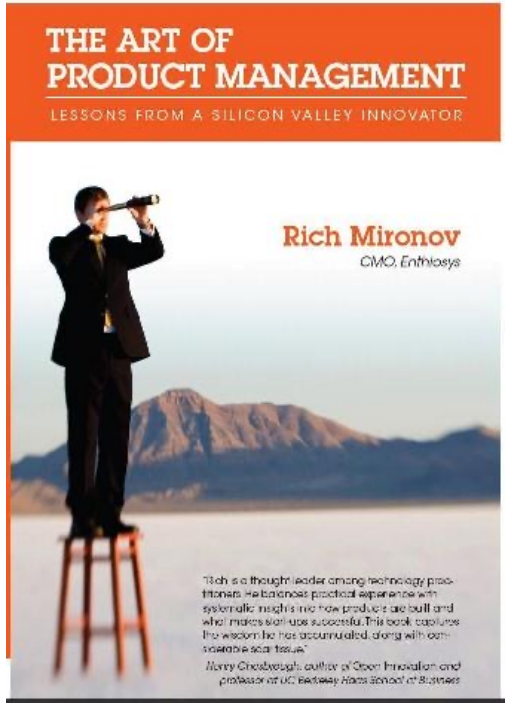
@RichMironov @ProductElev8n

# About Rich Mironov

MIRONOV CONSULTING

- Veteran software pro***duct*** management executive
  - 170 clients, smokejumper VP/CPO
  - *"What do customer segments want (to pay for)?"*
- 6 startups, including as CEO
- Product Camp founder, blogger (2002), Agilist (2005), "The Art of Product Management" (2008)

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# Agenda

- **What does a product manager do?**
- Agile: development as the inner loop
- Product managers and product owners
- Takeaways

# What Does a Product Manager Do?

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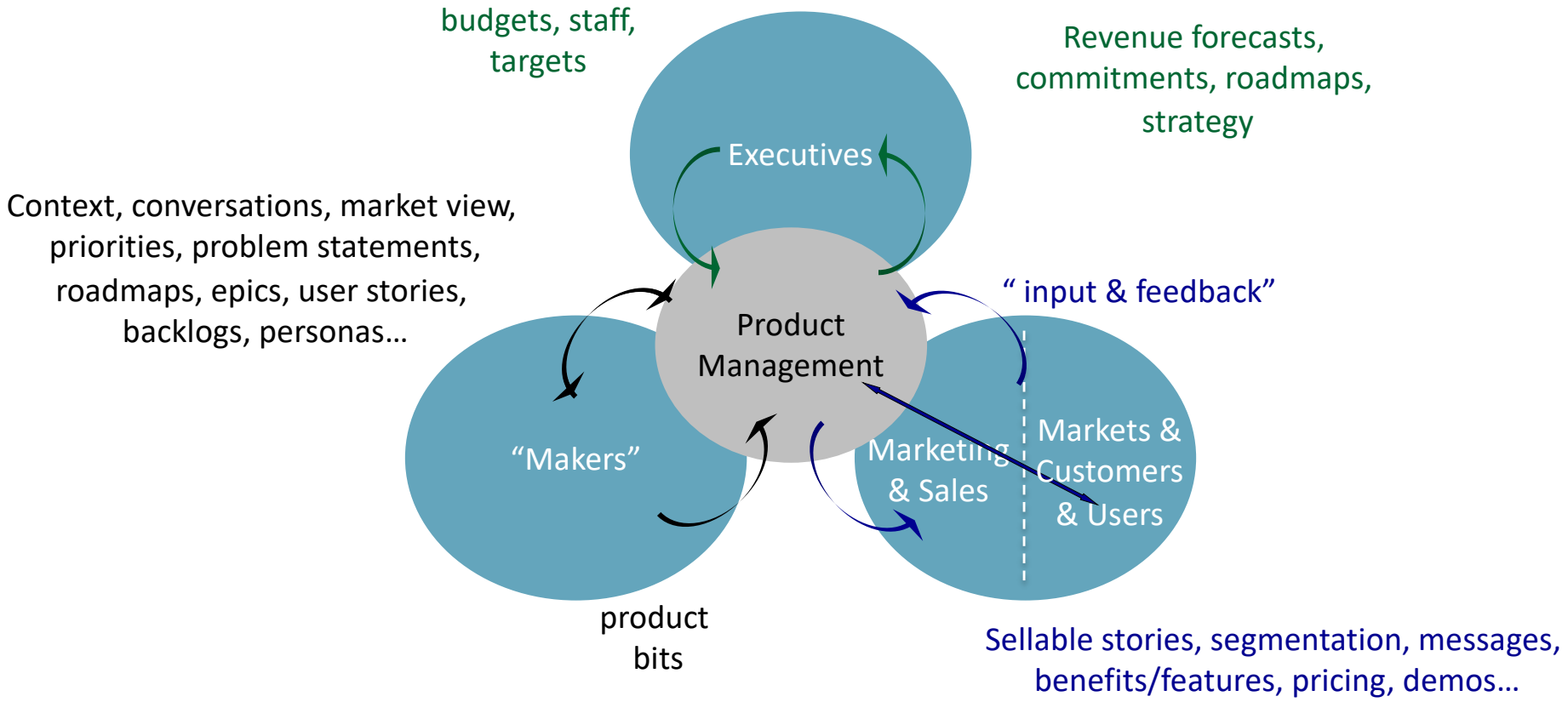
For commercial / revenue software…

- Drives delivery and market acceptance of whole products
- Targets market segments, not individual customers/buyers/users
- Defines and measures success
- Resolves inevitable competing priorities

For strategic internal development…

- Aligns funding, acceptance and adoption for measurable business outcomes
- Resolves inevitable competing priorities

# What Does a Product Manager Do?



# Good Idea Train

- Arrives every day with hundreds of good ideas
  - From customers, sales, support, execs, engineers, analysts…
- Universalized from single instances
  - “Everyone needs…”

# Product Management: Inherently Political

- Engineering demand **always >>** supply
- Exclusive OR trade-offs, but AND demands
- Stakeholders incented to disagree
  - Sales teams, executives, business unit heads, user representatives, auditors…
  - Each has long list of wants/features/fixes
- Product goal is healthy product, real end user impact, financial results

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***There's nothing more wasteful than brilliantly engineering a product that doesn't sell, or a project that doesn't deliver measurable improvement.***

***- Rich Mironov***

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*“Customers are experts in what they want to achieve, not how to achieve it.”*

**- Alex Osterwalder**

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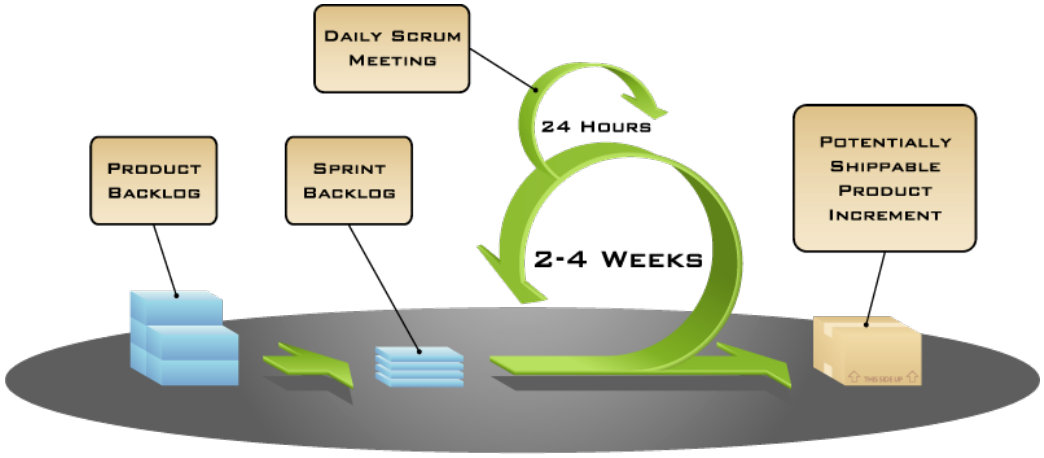
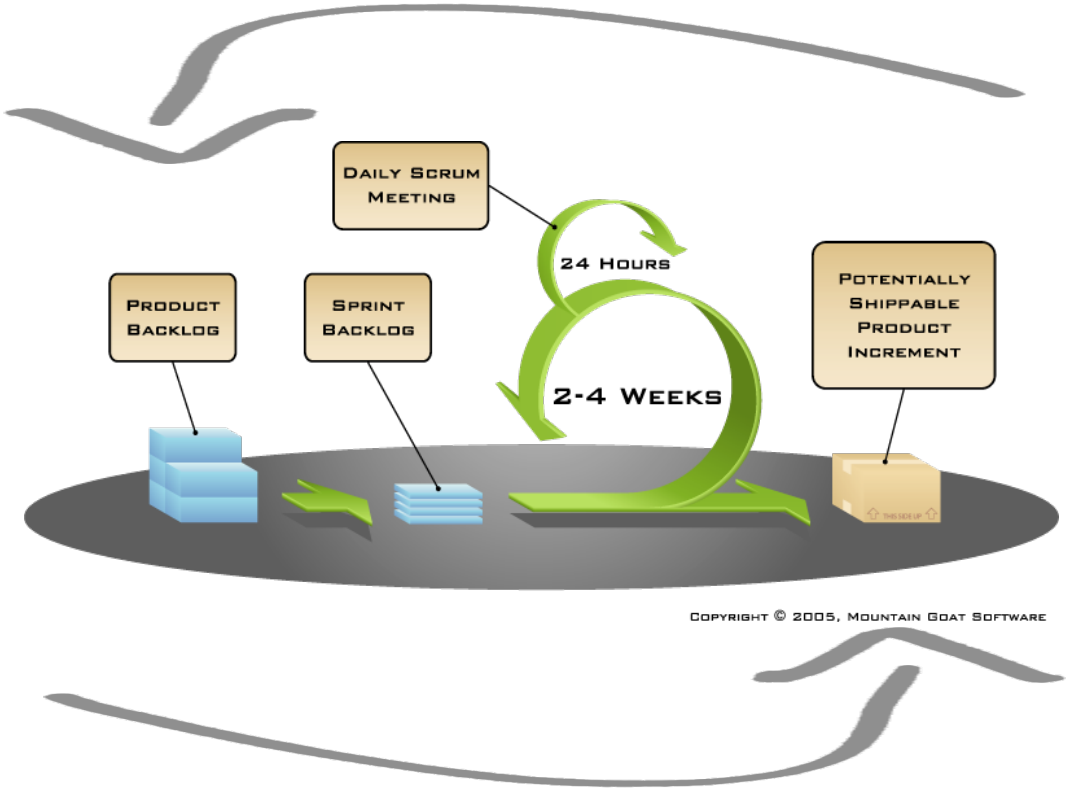
# Agile Development (Inner Loop)




From Mike Cohn

# Product Management (Outer Loop)

- Customers
- Markets
- Biz Models
- Strategy
- Portfolios
- Pricing
- Funding




- Customers
- Sales
- Marketing
- Onboarding
- Support
- Upgrades
- EOL/EOS

# Rich's Markers for Strong Agile Organizations

1. Stable, whole teams tied to external customer value streams
2. Product manager *and* team learn directly from end users ***(not proxies)***
3. Whole team works on problems *as well as* solutions
4. Objectives are end user behavioral changes (not delivery dates)
5. Frequent process retrospectives and experiments:
   team picks tools and processes that fit situation
6. Automated test suite, everyone writes tests
7. Trust

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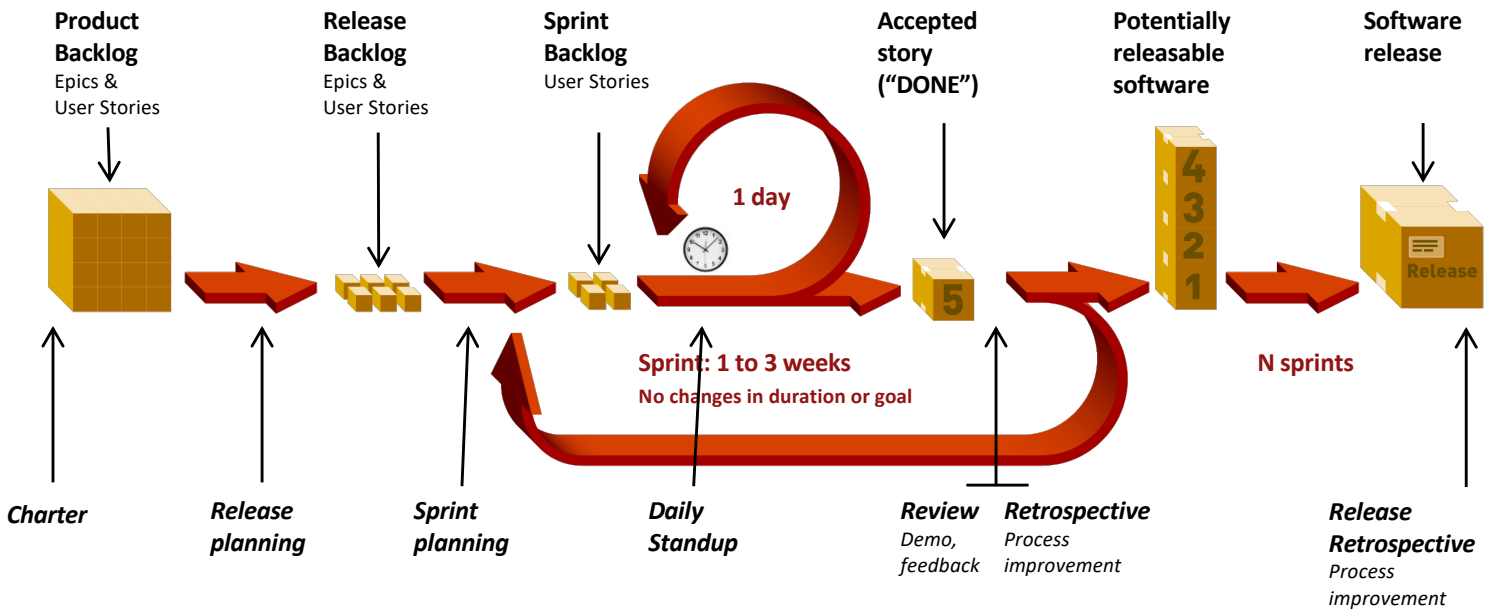
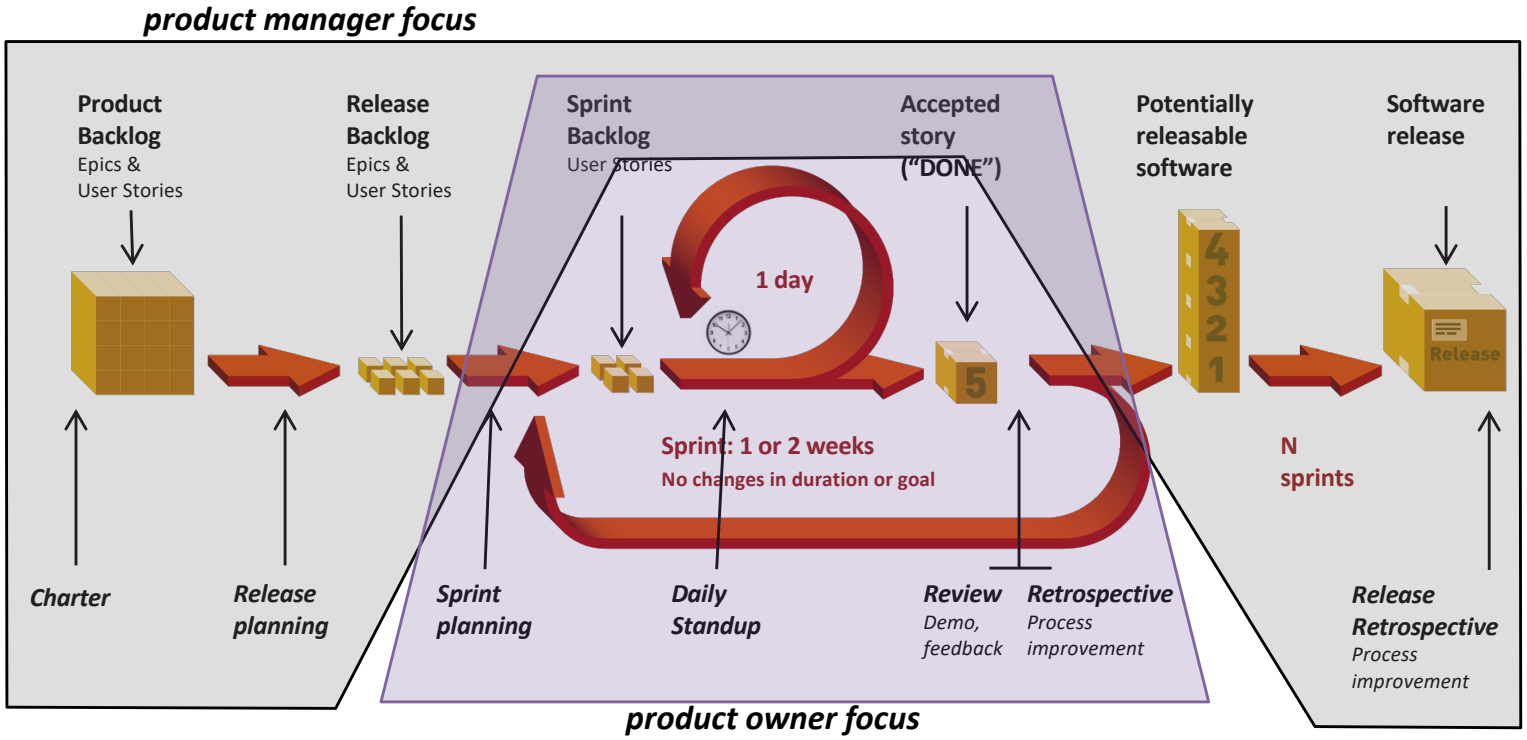
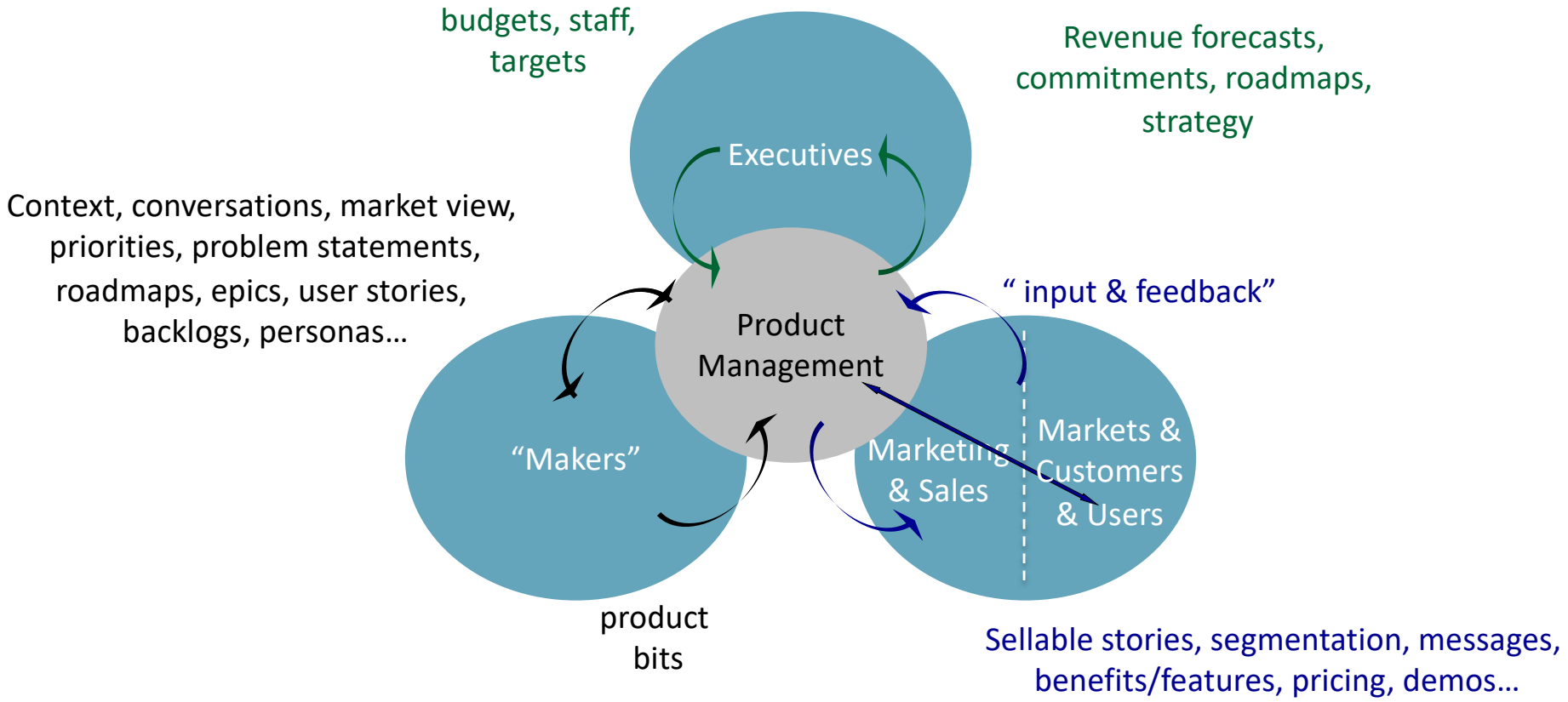
# Generic Agile/Scrum Cycle



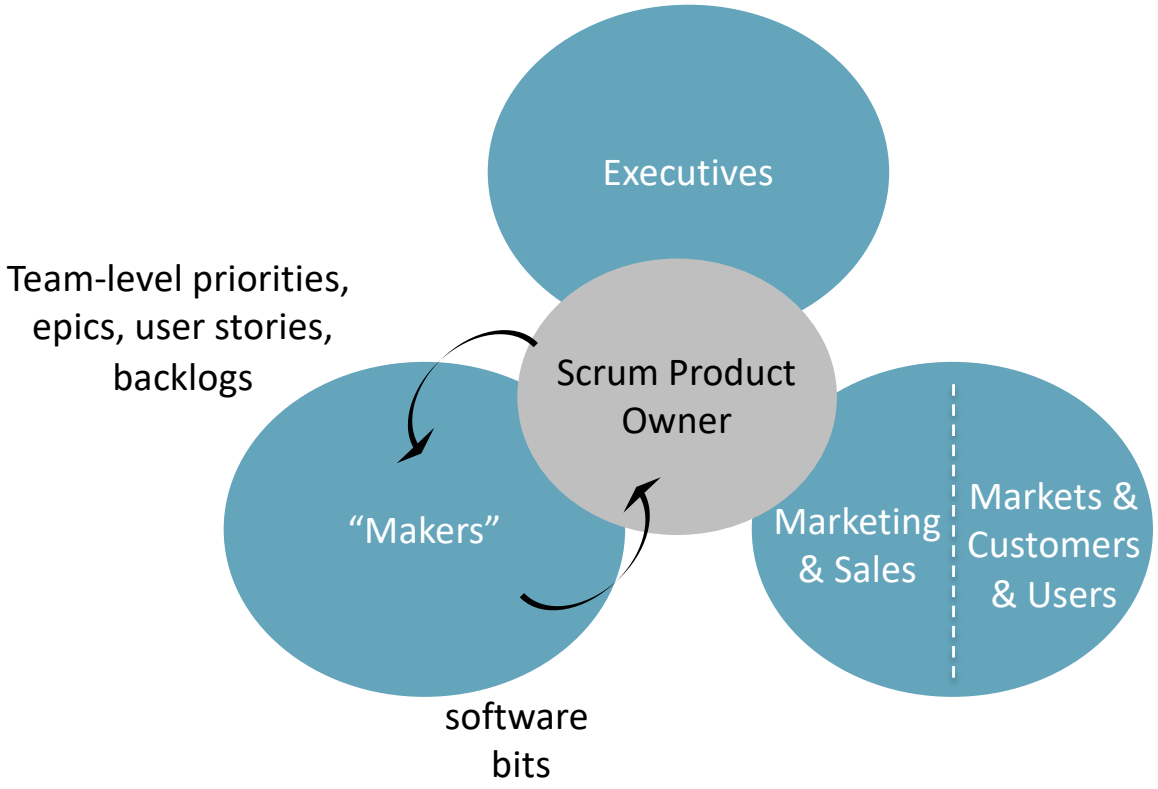
# (Narrow) Scrum View of Product Owners



# What Does a Product Manager Do?



# ‘small p’ Product Owner



# Handoffs Are the Enemy of Insight

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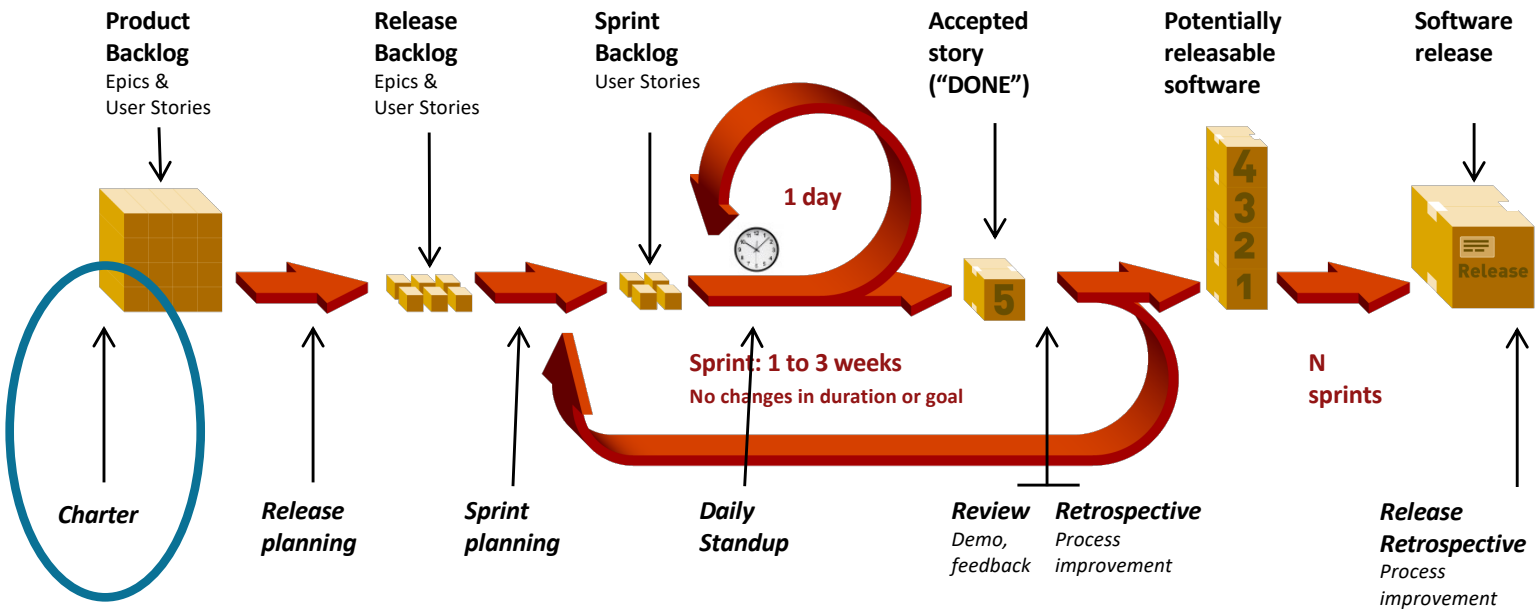
Every handoff loses context

- "**Proxies**" is a four-letter word
- Specs always incomplete or incorrect
- Second-hand information: sparse, biased, context-light, full of hidden assumptions
- User stories should be conversation starters (by design)

# Commercial Product Failures



# IMHO, Scrum-Defined Product Owners Are Set Up to Fail

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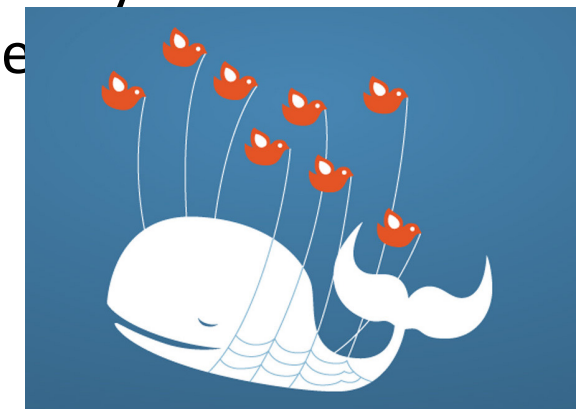
- Write and accept all stories, prioritize team-level backlog
- Must be available to team ***at all times***

BUT

- Proxies and stakeholders interpret user need
- No time, training or reward for direct end user discovery
- Focus on team-level productivity, not end user value
- Assigned after project defined, funded, scheduled



**Product owner is a partial role, not a job**

# In My Product Organizations…

- "Product owner" work is ***half*** of ***every*** product manager's job
  - Shared long-term success with one development team
- Discovery/validation is ***half*** of ***every*** product manager's job
  - Learning, Jobs To Be Done, product strategy, economics
  - Help market/sell/deliver real end user value
- Every product manager manages overwhelming demand, unaligned stakeholders, painful trade-offs
  - Responsible for getting **RIGHT** things done

# Takeaways

1. Product management focuses on building RIGHT things
   - True end user value/impact given inevitable prioritization conflicts
   - Measured on outcomes, not delivery dates
2. Agile (maker/dev) team focuses on building things RIGHT
   - Assumes audience, external value metrics, product/market strategy, semi-stable prioritization
3. Biggest source of waste: low-value deliverables
4. IMHO, scrum product owner definition fatally flawed
5. We work together to ship successful software!

# Rich Mironov

Mironov Consulting
www.mironov.com
+1-650-315-7394
rich@mironov.com
@richmironov