Referee script: Improving Bluesville read out the italics to the teams

Improving Bluesville

You all live in a small town called Bluesville. It has some wealthy and some more deprived areas. Rich home owners live close to unemployed families relying on benefits. There has been underinvestment in the town for many years, and what was once considered a desirable place to live now has a reputation for crime, vandalism and drugs. Residents avoid the park, lake and canal due to the litter, graffiti and not feeling safe.

Spandana, the lead singer of the world famous rock group of the same name, who grew up in the Bluesville council estate has given the town £1M to "make it a better place for everyone who lives there". She has set a 12 month challenge and will give another £1M each year that improvements are demonstrated when she makes her annual visit.

You have been chosen to spend this money to make Bluesville better, and ensure the money keeps coming each year. You are using a Scaled Agile approach to deliver the benefits from this investment. You have assembled a team of spokespersons from the local community, and have split yourself into a strategic leadership team and a delivery team.

First you must choose your roles. Please split into three teams. One will be the community spokespersons (no more than 3 people and from now on called the 'product owners'), one will be the strategic leadership team and one will be the delivery team. **Let teams assemble**

Setting the vision

Deal out half the user cards between the product owners
The product owners have held their first of three workshops with local residents and have distilled their needs into a set of user cards. The product owners have 2 minutes to read through the user cards you have been given and create your own individual 20 word statement of 'what a better Bluesville feels like' and to each pick one of your user cards that you think is most important to the residents right now.

Hand out the epic cards to the strategic leadership team
*While the product owners are thinking, the strategic leadership team should review the options you have for what could be delivered. Each epic card represents a big chunk of work, made up of eight small pieces of work described on feature cards. Spread all your epic cards in **BACKLOG** on the epic board.*

Hand out the feature cards to the delivery team
*While the product owners and strategic leadership team are thinking, the delivery team should review the options you have for what you could deliver. Each group of eight feature cards represents the totality of what could be achieved for each epic. Sort your feature cards into epics and place them face down on the **BACKLOG** on the feature board and wait for direction.*

Ask the product owners to read out their individual 'what a better Bluesville feels like' statements and hand over all but one of their chosen user cards (ie asking the product owners to compromise – if there are 3 product owners then only hand over 2 user cards) to the strategic leadership team, reading them out for all to hear.

Now you know what you want to achieve, it's time for a reality check. You have 12 months, broken into four 3-month Programme Increments (PIs).

Each PI is 3 months long and formed of 6 two-week sprints. The 6th sprint is to be used for planning the next PI, so in effect, you have 5 sprints for delivery in each PI.

Each feature is given a 'story point' rating. The higher the number the more effort it will take to deliver it. You have a maximum delivery capacity of 12 points per sprint; 60 points per PI. The amount you can actually deliver each sprint is dictated by throwing a pair of dice.

To everyone: *You will need to demonstrate some real world impact at the end of each PI. Also the product owners will provide more clarity on what the community is thinking in time for each PI planning sprint. Don't forget the Spandana visit in 12 months!*

To the strategic leadership team: *Based on your current understanding of the community needs (ie the user cards), choose the three epics (large chunks of work) you want to focus on during the first thee months (PI – Programme Increment). Move these cards to the **TO DO** column of the epic board.*

Give the team 2 minutes to prioritise their epic cards

To the delivery team: *Choose a scrum leader whose job is to make sure you play by the rules, focus and coordinate you and make sure you get the things done that have been prioritised* **(let them choose their scrum lead)***. Once you have seen the epics prioritised by the strategic leadership team, find the features that relate to these epics, and select only those you wish to tackle in the first 3 months (PI), noting a maximum capacity of 60 story points per PI and spread them face up in the **TO DO THIS PI** column of the features board*

Give them 3 minutes to prioritise their feature cards

PI (Programme Increment) 1

<PING> Let's start PI 1. It's all up to the delivery team now. Everyone else can watch and see how they get on with what you have prioritised for them.

*Put a token on Sprint 1. Hold your first **sprint planning** session to agree which feature(s) to prioritise this sprint. Throw the pair of dice to see how many story points you achieved. Take this number of tokens out of the **TOKEN POOL**. Place the tokens on the feature(s) you agreed to prioritise. If you have partially completed a feature, move it to **IN PROGRESS**. You can have several features **IN PROGRESS** at any one time and you don't have to complete a feature before you start another one.*

*If you have fully completed a feature, move the card to **DONE**, honk your horn and return the tokens to the **TOKEN POOL**.*

Give the teams 1-2 minutes for the first Sprint

<PING> It is now Sprint 2. Move your token forward one sprint. Agree what you will prioritise this sprint, roll both dice, allocate your tokens and move the cards.

Move the teams forward one Sprint every 30-60 seconds using the <PING> to keep the game moving until the end of the first PI.

*Congratulations on completing your first PI. Time for a quick **user demo**. Talk the product owners and strategic leadership team through what has been delivered and ask for their feedback. How pleased (or not) are they?*

*Time for a quick **retrospective**. Did you complete all your planned features? How happy are your product owners? What real world impact are you able to have now? How many story points did you achieve out of 60? How was the conversation between the three teams?*

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PI 2

Let's plan PI 2. Your product owners have held another community event.
Deal out half the remaining user cards to the product owners.
If the product owners want to ask the strategic leadership team to take on more work, hand over up to one more user card each to the strategic leadership team (up to a maximum of 1 less than the number of product owners).

Strategic leadership team – review your epic board. Move the epics to IN PROGRESS if you have started work on them. If you feel you have completed enough of the features in the epic then move the epic to DONE (you don't have to complete all the features in each epic if the product owners don't feel it necessary to do this to deliver the objectives on the user cards). If you change your mind about the importance of an epic then move it back to the backlog. If you wish to focus on another epic then move it from BACKLOG to TO DO. You can only have thee epics IN PROGRESS at any one time.

Delivery team – review your features board and the latest direction from the strategic leadership team. Add any new features you want to deliver to the TO DO THIS PI column. You may have some left over features IN PROGRESS or some you haven't even started. If you still want to complete them, leave them where they are. If you no longer want to complete them then discard the cards to the BACKLOG returning any tokens to the TOKEN POOL. Place any completed features face down on DONE HISTORY.

Move the teams forward sprint by sprint until the end of PI 2

User demo and retrospective time. Did you achieve all you planned for this PI? What real world impact are you having? How is the dynamic between the three teams?

PI 3

Let's plan the third PI.
Deal the remaining user cards to the product owners.
The product owners have had a final workshop. Plan as before.
Move the teams forward sprint by sprint until the end of the PI.

Retrospective time. Did you achieve all you planned for this PI? What real world impact are you having?

PI 4

This is your last PI. Remember the Spandana visit in the last sprint and be prepared to demonstrate the better Bluesville.

Move the teams forward sprint by sprint until the end of PI 4. Give no mercy for pleas of extra time. Ask for one final user demo summarising everything that has been made better!

Group discussion part 1

- *Did you deliver enough features to achieve the aim of each epic and keep your product owners happy?*
- *How did you adapt as the community thinking evolved?*
- *How did it feel letting some people down and not trying to do everything?*
- *What did you learn about using the sprint approach, your ability to plan in advance, prioritise and estimate what you can achieve*
- *How would you change your approach if you played this game again*

A tiny bit of theory

This is the basis of all agile leadership. You have practised the fundamental 'ceremonies': PI planning, end of PI retrospectives and sprint planning. (You need to play the garden version of Scrumples! to practise sprint delivery). You have practised two fundamental roles: product owner (the people most passionate about delivering the wishes on the user cards) and the scrum leader (the person organising your team). You have practised the fundamental tool for driving progress: the Kanban. And above all you have practised prioritising and setting realistic objectives.

Group discussion part 2

- *Where could you use this approach in your day-job and who would perform each role?*
- *How could this approach help you set realistic objectives?*
- *What do you need to do to try using this approach?*
- *How will you know if this approach is making things better?*

Final word

Who feels comfortable refereeing a game and passing the knowledge on to another team?

Referee tips
- To keep all teams busy, hand out the next set of user cards while the delivery team is still delivering to encourage the strategic thinking to always be one PI ahead of the delivery activity
- If time is short, assume that PI 3 and PI 4 will deliver 36 story points so no need to roll the dice – the important lessons are in the strategic prioritisation not the dice rolling or horn honking (although this is the fun part)
- You may need to add in scenario colour – eg Spandana is on tour and can't be contacted, Mrs McGiggins, whose nephew works for the local paper is not happy that her idea (pick a user card at random) has not been prioritised and is feeling discriminated against. Anything you can do to increase pressure and conflict to practise strategic prioritisation.
- Observer role – note individual and team behaviours and dynamics and feed back at the end (players may well show their natural working approach and this game is a safe place to feed back what you observe – both helpful & unhelpful behaviours). If there are lots of players, you could ask one of them to act as an observer.