Scrum a Smart Travel Companion - Verheyen

In the last 20 years Scrum has proven itself to be the market standard framework for organizations working Agile. Despite this tremendous success many organizations still find themselves in the middle of an Agile transition. The Scrum beginner and professional both have an ongoing need for a short descriptive overview of the framework. For both target audiences the book "SCRUM a pocket guide – A Smart Travel Companion" is a useful tool in the world of Scrum.

The first version of this book appeared in 2013. Now, six years later the second edition has arrived. It has been polished a little bit and the cover also has had a makeover. The overall appearance is a bit larger in the second edition, but this makes the reading easier and holding the book handier. Verheyen is still affiliated with scrum.org and very active in the Scrum field. He is a well-known trainer, author and consultant.In roughly 90 pages he directs the reader in four distinct chapters from the root of scrum to the rules of the game itself, followed by the application of the latter. The book concludes with a short consideration on the future state of scrum.

Chapters:
1. The Agile paradigm
2. Scrum
3. Tactics for a purpose
4. The future state of Scrum

The need of leaving behind the old way of working is combined with the start of Agile thinking in chapter one. Without rambling Verheyen paints a clear picture of the biggest challenges and problems when transitioning into an Agile way of working. Especially the firm statements on Agility not being an end-state are refreshing.

In chapter 2 the author positions Scrum as a game with the intent to maintain control over the software delivery process in complex environments. As with other games, ground rules are in place to be followed by all participants. Whilst the rules aren't many, it requires a great deal of discipline of the players to adhere to them. The reward of the rules and discipline is an unleashed flow of motivation, self-steering and problem-solving capabilities within Scrum teams.

Practical – and for many readers possible an eyeopener – are the examples in chapter 3 covering mandatory rules versus possible usage of good practices. The team's freedom to choose and experiment with these practices provides insights in the power and adaptability of Scrum. Even the more seasoned Scrum professionals sometimes assumes that certain topics are prescribed and must be followed. Just because they have seen these in other teams or organizations. Verheyen meticulously explains the placement of the boundaries of the rules next to the fields of options and practices in the game.

At the end of chapter 3 a few paragraphs are dedicated to the scaling of Scrum in larger setups, like for multiple teams or products. Surprisingly common scaling frameworks like DAD, SAFe

and LeSS are absent. Even Nexus Scrum.org's own initiative to join the scaling frameworks is still not mentioned. Although the ideas and patterns described are almost identical to that of Nexus. Perhaps this was a conscious decision. A choice that does keep the focus solely on Scrum.

In the final chapter he provides a short perspective on the evolution of Scrum in organizations in the – near – future. Upstream, as he describes, Scrum has the potential to rise above development teams and come in use within management, product development and eventually in entire organizations.

Conclusion

The book is a swift read and on occasion touches other Agile frameworks. The true value of the book is its strong focus on the rules of Scrum. Due to the concise writing it is very suited for both the beginning Scrum enthusiast as well as the more experienced professional or manager who is looking to refresh the knowledge at his fingertips. The book has been around a few years already, yet it is still one of the first books I would recommend for people diving into Scrum! You can finish it easily on a slow night and provides enough thoughts to bring to the job the next day.