

Dublin is an old city and, like most old cities, people take a quick look at the map and think it's easy to navigate. There's the Castle, the Spire and the Liffey running through it. Easy. But with most old cities it doesn't take long before you're walking down ancient winding streets, with buildings looming over you blocking out any landmarks to work out where you are.

Adopting a new framework like Scrum can feel like that. You can explain the principles of Agile and Scrum in a few minutes and it seems obvious about how to adopt it. But, once you've been doing it for a while, you can quickly find yourself up one of those dark alleyways: your perspective quickly changes.

The three talks I attended today had that in common: perspective.

## INTERACTING INDIVIDUALS

The introductory keynote speech was given by Tobias Mayer and was entitled 'Interacting Individuals'. Everyone had filed in and by nine o'clock were sitting full of Irish breakfast and possibly a touch of aspirin.

But Tobias didn't muck about. First thing he did was get people standing up and interacting, because he wanted to attendees to do something very important: language and how to use it. With each other.

In Scrum, a lot of language is used to define how we should undertake the process and how to treat each other. Even the basic Scrum values use words like 'openness' and 'respect'. But what did these words actually mean? In groups of four we wrote down a few of our own values and discussed them. I wrote down 'trust': on discussion, we found that it's just a subset of respect, or at least linked to it. Or one bred another. It didn't matter. What we gained was a new perspective on how to think about these words in the context of interacting with others, as their understanding may not be the same as ours. The finale of the keynote was to ask us to write down our own intentions as to what we would get from the Global Scrum Gathering. That was easy. I want to see exactly where those alleyways fit.

## GREAT SCRUMMASTER

One large coffee later and I attended Zuzi Sochova's talk 'Great ScrumMaster' based on her book called...er 'Great ScrumMaster'. Zuzi had pulled her focus right back on how a Scrum Master fits into the world, almost taking an anthropological point of view. In an almost post-modern deconstruction, she sees a Scrum Master as existing in an internal dimension built from building blocks such as State of Mind, Leadership,

Metaskills and Learning and an external dimension as a node between team relationships, inter-team interactions and the organisation. In summing up what these states are, she made the point that the most important trait a Scrum Master can have is to look from high above those levels and zoom in, making decisions and coaching to enable the team ultimately to solve problems for itself - an important skill necessary in any organisation adopting a Scrum framework.

## DEBUNKING THE PRODUCT OWNER ROLE

Roman Pichler gave a talk on 'Debunking the Product Owner Role'. This sounds like an attack on that particular vocation but, much like Tobias Mayer's talk concerning individuals, he was trying to get attendees to think about elements of Scrum rather than just rushing to adopt them. Scrum can be followed in an almost cultish way if, ironically, the framework is not inspected and adapted to your own company's needs. Here Roman asked us to think about the 'thou shalt have one Product Owner per team' commandment by looking, again, at what the words defining a Product Owner's role really meant.

### **Words such as 'product' and 'value'**

For instance, if a product can be broken down into elements such as 'features' (a product capability with which people can interact) and 'components' (architectural building blocks), shouldn't there be feature owners and component owners? If value can be split into strategic measures and tactical, should there be different 'flavours' of product owners accordingly? Again, this is really thinking about a different perspective for a role that can easily be adopted by assumption rather than examination.

So, did Day One of GSG help me get out of any of the unmapped alleyways of Scrum that I occasionally find myself in after a year of Scrum Mastering?

Well not yet but, if today's anything to go by, it looks like I'll have some pretty good guides to help me make it to the right path.