



Evolve Agility

8 TOP TIPS

FOR TEAM
COLLABORATION

KEY STRATEGIES TO TAKE
YOUR TEAM COMMUNICATION
TO THE NEXT LEVEL



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**“The single biggest problem in
communication is the illusion that
it has taken place.”**

– George Bernard Shaw



It's an exciting – and challenging – time to serve as a Scrum team leader.

By providing simple structure and best practices, Scrum has proven to help teams tackle complex projects with confidence. But too many Scrum organizations struggle to overcome communication hurdles that slow progress and stall collaboration.

As the servant leader, a Scrum Master's first priority is to empower teams in the face of expedited change requests and sprawling sprint deliverables. However, the toughest team challenges are often the result of learned behaviors and entrenched thinking.

A great Scrum Master serves as a facilitator, guiding better decision making by opening new lines of communication to discuss differences in opinion and share ideas. Without an effective leader supporting free-flowing communication, Scrum teams are far less likely to collaborate successfully.

Done right, effective communication empowers your team with fail proof strategies to overcome all hurdles, rise above them, and deliver their best work.

Here, we present the eight key communication strategies to elevate your Scrum team collaboration.



1

PARAPHRASING

2

TRACKING

3

DRAWING
PEOPLE OUT

4

ENCOURAGING

5

BALANCING

6

VALIDATING

7

LINKING

8

SUMMARIZING

PARAPHRASING

One of the most essential communication skills is active listening — and paraphrasing offers a straightforward approach to demonstrate that a speaker has been heard.



WHY IT MATTERS

Paraphrasing helps signal to team members that their input is not only heard but understood. It also gives speakers a unique perspective to hear **exactly** how their ideas are being heard. This allows for quick correction and clarification to accelerate conversations.

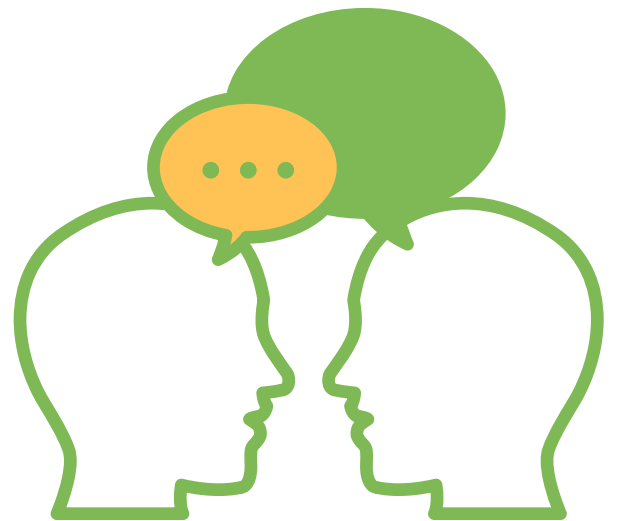


HOW IT WORKS

Adopt these phrases as you recap what you've just heard:

- “It sounds like you’re saying...”
- “Would you agree that...”

After you've provided your paraphrase, make sure to ask, “Did I get it?” to close the loop on the communication.



TRACKING

Teams often need to track multiple, concurrent lines of thought during discussions. By tracking, leaders can let individual team members focus on their input and ensure they don't miss the fuller context.



WHY IT MATTERS

People often – either consciously or subconsciously – demand preference of attention to their particular issue of interest, deeming it worthy of everyone's main focus. Tracking keeps all conversation threads connected and builds deeper contextual clarity.



HOW IT WORKS

- **Step One:** Inform the team that you will now step back and summarize the conversation thus far.
- **Step Two:** Name the different ongoing discussion threads.
- **Step Three:** Check the group for accuracy
- **Step Four:** Invite the group to continue the discussion, repeating as necessary.

Evolve Agility is an industry leader in Scrum training and certification.

With in-person and virtual workshops, Evolve is empowering leaders to grow their skills and lead powerfully productive teams.

DRAWING PEOPLE OUT

Sometimes an idea needs to be developed or refined — and the best Scrum Masters take initiative to create conversations that eliminate ambiguity and promote transparency.



WHY IT MATTERS

As a communication exercise, drawing people out helps people articulate ideas they may be struggling to convey.

It can also help in cases where someone thinks their idea is clear but it is actually vague or confusing to the larger team.



HOW IT WORKS

Use paraphrasing to build a foundation, and then ask clarifying, open-ended questions, such as:

- “Can you say more on that?”
- “Do you have an example for us?”
- “How is that working for you?”

ENCOURAGING

Pretty simple, right?

Encouragement is a great way to coax valuable feedback and insight from all your team contributors — but are you adequately creating opportunities for people to participate that doesn't put anyone on the spot.



WHY IT MATTERS

You will certainly work with colleagues with great ideas. And, as a leader, it's your job to unearth quality input from every contributor. This can be harder to achieve in some people than others, whether due to introversion, uncertainty, or (gasp!) indifference.



HOW IT WORKS

To open the door for better communication, restate the objective you're discussing and encourage an increase in engagement, using phrases such as:

- “Who else has an idea?”
- “What do others think?”
- “Is this discussion raising questions for anyone?”



"The Evolve Agility certification course incorporated an excellent hands-on approach to learn all about scrum methodology.

I would strongly recommend this training course for anyone who is interested in learning how to apply Agile concepts in the real world."

— MADHU SUBRAMANIAN

BALANCING

To help your groups broaden their discussions and resolve impediments more rapidly, it's important for leaders to include other perspectives that may not yet have been expressed.



WHY IT MATTERS

When a group appears caught between two polarized positions, balancing often reveals alternative positions or amenable compromises. This can often alleviate friction and resolve disputes more amicably.



HOW IT WORKS

Balancing effectively uses questions that invite team members to challenge the status quo:

- “Are there other ways to look at this issue?”
- “Does everyone agree with this perspective?”
- “So we have heard where three people stand on this -- does anyone else have a different position?”

VALIDATING

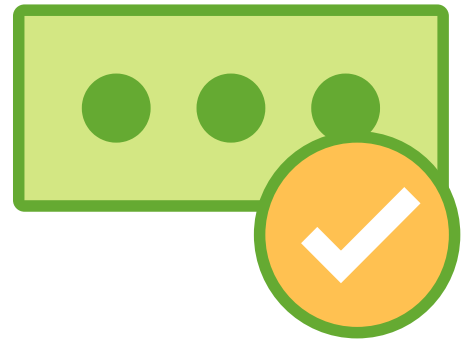
A Scrum Master is skilled at recognizing all divergent opinions within a group without giving particular preference to any one view. Being a leader is often about hearing all perspectives and being unbiased.



WHY IT MATTERS

By validating, leaders can legitimize a speaker's opinion or feelings without declaring them "correct."

Validating gives voice to every opinion without agreeing (necessarily) with what it asserts.



HOW IT WORKS

- Step One: Paraphrase or draw out a person's perspective
- Step Two: Ask yourself, "Does this person need extra support?"
- Step Three: Offer support by acknowledging what the person said:
 - "I see what you're saying."
 - "I know how that feels"
 - "I can see how you got there."

LINKING

Not every perspective will feel apt to every conversation, but a good facilitator must master the difficult skill of linking conversations across your team to unearth the full relevance of what was said.



WHY IT MATTERS

Instead of discarding a tangential statement from a team member, linking helps capture the full relevance of the statement to determine if a valuable insight can be uncovered or if it can be placed on the parking lot.



HOW IT WORKS

- Step One: Ask for linkage
 - “How does your idea link up with...[our topic]?”
 - “Can someone help us make the connection?”
- Step Two: If linkage to current topic isn’t achieved, move the idea to the parking lot.



SUMMARIZING

No more death by discussion! At some point, great leaders know when to wrap a conversation and move on. Summarizing is the bridge from one conversation to the next top priority.



WHY IT MATTERS

Bringing an interesting topic to a close is a skill. Summarizing in a manner that is succinct and clear helps teams feel ready to move forward with a better understanding of the main themes of a conversation.



HOW IT WORKS

- Step One: Restate the question that started the conversation.
- Step Two: Indicate the number of key themes. “We talked about three main things...”
- Step Three: Summarize each theme by highlighting one or two key points.
- Step Four: Bridge to the next topic. “Moving from that, I’d now like to discuss...”

COMMUNICATION IS KEY FOR POWERFUL SCRUM COLLABORATION

Ultimately, the success of any Scrum team comes down to the effectiveness of team collaboration. And the only path to optimizing team collaboration is through communication.

A mindful Scrum leader will always be striving to improve their skills to best guide their team— developing better communication strategies is no different.

Here's a recap of the eight communication strategies every Scrum leader should master:

PARAPHRASING — “IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE SAYING...”

DRAWING PEOPLE OUT — “TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT.”

TRACKING — “HERE'S WHAT I'M HEARING SO FAR.”

ENCOURAGING — “WHO ELSE HAS AN IDEA THAT WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM?”

BALANCING — “ARE THERE OTHER WAYS TO LOOK AT THIS ISSUE?”

VALIDATING — “I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.”

LINKING — “HELP ME UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR IDEA LINKS UP WITH THIS TOPIC.”

SUMMARIZING — “BEFORE WE WRAP THIS UP, HERE'S WHAT WE DISCUSSED...”

WANT TO LEARN THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO LEAD BETTER TEAMS?

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**[https://www.evolveagility.com/
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COURSE CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Scrum Master®
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Advanced Certified Scrum Master®
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Certified Agile Leadership



"Even though we had to go virtual because of COVID-19, I was impressed with the ability to bring a remote class into such an engaging state between different people across such great distances. I would definitely sign up for another Evolve Agility class"

-- Leon Weiss, Product Manager

MEET OUR INSTRUCTOR



DHAVAL PANCHAL

Experienced Executive, Coach, and Trainer
 Certified Scrum Trainer [CST]
 Certified Enterprise Coach [CEC]
 Certified Agile Leadership Educator [CAL-E]



"Dhaval created a small, intimate workshop that was very effective for teaching. I was engaged the entire time and things just click the way he explains them."

– Lisa Oechsel

"Dhaval was extremely articulate and knew what he was talking about. I wish we had him on our team!"

– Adam Brents

"I loved the interactive teaching methods and activities. Dhaval was a great teacher. I learned a lot from his real world examples and he's pretty funny."

– Kira Home

THANK YOU FOR READING

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Scrum or Agile training?

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you reach all your personal
and organizational goals.

Contact us today!

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