Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time

By Jeff Sutherland, JJ Sutherland

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We live in a world that is broken. For those who believe that there *must* be a more agile and efficient way for people to get things done, here from Scrum pioneer Jeff Sutherland is a brilliantly discursive, thought-provoking book about the leadership and management process that is changing the way we live.

In the future, historians may look back on human progress and draw a sharp line designating "*before Scrum*" and "*after Scrum*." Scrum is that ground-breaking. It already drives most of the world's top technology companies. And now it's starting to spread to every domain where leaders wrestle with complex projects.

If you've ever been startled by how fast the world is changing, Scrum is one of the reasons why. Productivity gains of as much as 1200% have been recorded, and there's no more lucid – or *compelling* – explainer of Scrum and its bright promise than Jeff Sutherland, the man who put together the first Scrum team more than twenty years ago.

The thorny problem Jeff began tackling back then boils down to this: people are spectacularly bad at doing things with agility and efficiency. Best laid plans go up in smoke. Teams often work at cross purposes to each other. And when the pressure rises, unhappiness soars. Drawing on his experience as a West Point-educated fighter pilot, biometrics expert, early innovator of ATM technology, and V.P. of engineering or CTO at eleven different technology companies, Jeff began challenging those dysfunctional realities, looking for solutions that would have global impact.

In this book you'll journey to Scrum's front lines where Jeff's system of deep accountability, team interaction, and constant iterative improvement is, among other feats, bringing the FBI into the 21st century, perfecting the design of an affordable 140 mile per hour/100 mile per gallon car, helping NPR report fast-moving action in the Middle East, changing the way pharmacists interact with patients, reducing poverty in the Third World, and even helping people plan their weddings and accomplish weekend chores.

Woven with insights from martial arts, judicial decision making, advanced aerial combat, robotics, and many other disciplines, Scrum is consistently riveting. But the most important reason to read this book is that it may just help you achieve what others consider unachievable – whether it be inventing a trailblazing technology, devising a new system of education, pioneering a way to feed the hungry, or, closer to home, a building a foundation for your family to thrive and prosper.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Full of engaging stories and real-world examples. The project management method known as Scrum may be the most widely deployed productivity tool among high-tech companies. **On a mission to put this tool into the hands of the broader business world for the first time, Jeff Sutherland succeeds brilliantly."**
--Eric Ries, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Lean Startup*

"Engaging, persuasive and extremely practical...*Scrum* provides a simple framework for solving what seem like intractable and complicated work problems. It's hard to make forward progress when you can't see your impediments clearly. Sutherland offers a lens to remedy that. **Amazingly, this book will not only make your life at work and home easier, but also, better and happier."**
--Shawn Achor, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Before Happiness* and *The Happiness Advantage*

"This book contains immense practical value that could be transformative for your company. If you have a project that requires people to accomplish, your first act should be to read and be guided by Scrum."
--Stephen Lundin, *New York Times* **bestselling author of** *Fish: A Remarkable Way to* **Boost** *Morale and Improve Performance*

"Scrum is mandatory reading for any leader, whether they're leading troops on the battlefield or in the marketplace. The challenges of today's world don't permit the luxury of slow, inefficient work. Success requires tremendous speed, enormous productivity, and an unwavering commitment to achieving results. **In other words success requires Scrum."**
--General Barry McCaffrey

"Jeff Sutherland has written the essence of Scrum for the masses. In this easy-to-read book, which is filled with lively stories, apt metaphors, and illuminating quotes, Jeff has converted all the 'tacit knowledge' he has gained -- as a West Point cadet, fighter pilot in Vietnam, Aikido enthusiast, academic, technology expert, and father of Scrum -- into wisdom. **This book elevates Scrum from a fix-it tool to a way of life."**
--Hirotaka Takeuchi, Professor of Management Practice, Harvard Business School

"Jeff Sutherland's book masterfully speaks truth to the political complexities that easily stand in the way of getting a lot of work done in the least amount of time. He lays out a doctrine of simplicity, showing -- with surprising insight -- how to categorize roadblocks, systematize solutions, choose action over prolonged study, and retain the important emotional aspects of work that ground meaningful interactions. **The busy professionals who'll likely be drawn to this book will find not only an effective manual for getting things done but, also, a how-to guide for living a meaningful life."**
--John Maeda, Design Partner, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers

"This extraordinary book shows a new way to simplify your life and work, increase your focus, and get more done in less time than you ever thought possible."
--Brian Tracy, bestselling author of *Eat that Frog* and *Time Power*

"I've used Scrum on projects big and small throughout my software career with great success. It's **the best way I know to manage small teams and no doubt has applications beyond software.** This book cuts through the jargon and pedagogy and gets to the essence of what makes it work."
--Adam Messinger, Chief Technology Officer, Twitter

 "Engaging…Sutherland tackles the problem of the perennially late, over-budget project—and actually shows how to solve it. His fascinating examples of rescued projects will change the way you think and act."
--Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap, authors of *Deep Smarts: How to Cultivate and Transfer Enduring Business Wisdom*

"Jeff Sutherland is *the* master of creating high-performing teams. The subtitle of this book understates Scrum's impact. If you don't get three times the results in one-third the time, you aren't doing it right!"
--Scott Maxwell, Founder & Senior Managing Director, OpenView Venture Partners

"Jeff Sutherland used the common-sense but seldom-applied principles of the quality movement, user-centered design, and lean development to come up with a process that dramatically increases productivity while reducing employees' frustrations with the typical corporate nonsense. **This book is the best description I've seen of how this process can work across many industries. Senior leaders should not just read the book—they should do what Sutherland recommends."**
--Jeffrey Pfeffer, Professor, Stanford Business School and c-author of *The Knowing-Doing Gap*

"Groundbreaking…Will upend people's assumptions about how productive they can actually be…Here Jeff Sutherland discloses to the non-tech world the elegantly simple process that programmers and Web developers have been using since he invented Scrum, showing how a small, empowered, and dedicated team can deliver significantly higher quality work at a faster pace through introspection, iteration, and adaptation."
--Michael Mangi, Senior V.P. of Interactive Technology, Social@Ogilvy

"As a warrior-citizen of the United States Army Reserve, co-founder of a software startup, and harried father of teens, I found myself instantly drawn to this eye-opening guide, which suggests how we can balance our vital roles with discipline and joyful diligence. Sutherland's secret to surmounting professional and personal obstacles is approaching tasks with deliberate attention and a resilient mindset. **This book will change the way you do *everything*. Even better, it will help you feel good in the process. Just read it, and get more done."**
-Arnold V. Strong, CEO of BrightNeighbor.com, and Colonel, US Army Reserve

"This deceptively simple system is the most powerful way I've seen to improve the effectiveness of any team. I started using it with my business and family halfway through reading the book."
-Leo Babauta, creator of Zen Habits

About the Author
Jeff Sutherland is currently the CEO of Scrum, Inc. and Senior Adviser to OpenView Venture Partners where he coaches venture-funded companies. One of the original signers of the Agile Manifesto and a father of the Scrum movement, he travels the world conducting training and speaking. You can find him at

www.scruminc.com.

J.J. Sutherland spent most of his career covering wars, conflicts, revolutions, disasters and terrorist attacks for NPR. More recently, he has been writing, teaching, and consulting with corporations and non-profits on how to use Scrum. His work has been recognized with Peabody, DuPont, Overseas Press Club, Associated Press and Edward R. Murrow awards.

CHAPTER ONE

The Way the World Works Is Broken

Jeff Johnson was pretty sure it wasn't going to be a good day. On March 3, 2010, the Federal Bureau of Investigation killed its biggest and most ambitious modernization project--the one that was supposed to prevent another 9/11 but that had devolved into one of the biggest software debacles of all time. For more than a decade the FBI had been trying to update its computer system, and it looked as if they would fail. Again. And now it was his baby.

He'd shown up at the FBI seven months earlier, lured there by the new Chief Information Officer, Chad Fulgham, whom he'd worked with at Lehman Brothers. Jeff was Assistant Director of the IT Engineering Division. He had an office on the top floor of the J. Edgar Hoover Building in downtown Washington, D.C. It was a big office. It even had a view of the Washington Monument. Little did Jeff know he'd end up in a windowless cinder-block office in the basement for much of the next two years, trying to fix something that everyone believed to be unfixable.

"It was not an easy decision," Jeff says. He and his boss had decided to declare defeat and kill a program that had already taken nearly a decade and cost hundreds of millions of dollars. By that point, it made more sense to bring the project in-house and do it themselves. "But it needed to be done and done well."

The project was the long-awaited computer system that would bring the FBI into the modern age. In 2010--the era of Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, and Google--the FBI was still filing most of its reports on paper. The system the Bureau used was called the Automated Case Support system. It ran on gigantic mainframe computers that had been state of the art sometime in the eighties. Many special agents didn't even use it. It was just too cumbersome and too slow in an era of terror attacks and swift-moving criminals.

When an FBI agent wanted to do something--anything, really--from paying an informant to pursuing a terrorist to filing a report on a bank robber, the process wasn't that different from what it had been thirty years earlier. Johnson describes it this way: "You would write up a document in a word processor and print out three copies. One would be sent up the approval chain. One would be stored locally in case that one got lost. And with the third you'd take a red pen--I'm not kidding, a red pen--and circle the key words for input into the database. You'd index your own report."

When a request was approved, that paper copy would drift down from upstairs with a number on it. A number written on a piece of paper is how the FBI kept track of all its case files. This method was so antiquated and porous that it was blamed in part for the Bureau's failure to "connect the dots" that showed various Al Qaeda activists entering the country in the weeks and months before 9/11. One office was suspicious of one person. Another wondered why so many suspicious foreigners were getting flight training. Another had someone on a watch list but never told anyone else. No one in the Bureau ever put it all together.

The 9/11 Commission drilled down after the attack and tried to discover the core reason it was allowed to happen. Analysts, said the Commission, couldn't get access to the very information they were supposed to analyze. "The poor state of the FBI's information systems," reads the report, "meant that such access depended in large part on an analyst's personal relationships with individuals in the operational units or squads where the information resided."

Before 9/11, the FBI had never completed an assessment of the overall terrorism threat to the United States. There were a lot of reasons for this, from focus on career advancement to a lack of information sharing. But the report singled out lack of technological sophistication as perhaps the key reason the Bureau failed so dramatically in the days leading up to 9/11. "The FBI's information systems were woefully inadequate," the Commission's report concludes. "The FBI lacked the ability to know what it knew: there was no effective mechanism for capturing or sharing its institutional knowledge."

When senators started asking the Bureau some uncomfortable questions, the FBI basically said, "Don't worry, we have a modernization plan already in the works." The plan was called the Virtual Case File (VCF) system, and it was supposed to change everything. Not letting any crisis go to waste, officials said they only needed another $70 million on top of the $100 million already budgeted for the plan. If you go back and read press reports on VCF at the time, you'll notice that the words revolutionary and transformation are used liberally.

Three years later, the program was killed. It didn't work. Not even a little bit. The FBI had spent $170 million in taxpayer money to buy a computer system that would never be used--not a single line of code, or application, or mouse click. The whole thing was an unmitigated disaster. And this wasn't simply IBM or Microsoft making a mistake. People's lives were, quite literally, on the line. As Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, then the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, told the Washington Post at the time:

We had information that could have stopped 9/11. It was sitting there and was not acted upon.?.?.?. I haven't seen them correct the problems.?.?.?. We might be in the 22nd century before we get the 21st-century technology.1

It is rather telling that many of the people who were at the FBI when the Virtual Case File disaster happened aren't there anymore.

In 2005 the FBI announced a new program, Sentinel. This time it would work. This time they'd put in the right safeguards, the right budget procedures, the right controls. They'd learned their lesson. The price tag? A mere $451 million. And it would be fully operational by 2009.

What could possibly go wrong? In March of 2010 the answer landed on Jeff Johnson's desk. Lockheed Martin, the contractor hired to make the Sentinel system, had already spent $405 million. They'd developed only half of the project, and it was already a year late. An independent analysis estimated it would take another six to eight years to finish the project, and the taxpayers would have to throw in at least another $350 million.

Finding some way around that was Johnson's problem.

What went wrong and how the situation got fixed are why I'm writing this book. It wasn't that these weren't smart people. It wasn't that the Bureau didn't have the right personnel in place, or even the right technology. It wasn't about a work ethic or the right supply of competitive juices.

It was because of the way people were working. The way most people work. The way we all think work has to be done, because that's the way we were taught to do it.

When you hear what happened, it sounds at first as if it makes sense: the people at Lockheed sat down before they bid on the contract, looked at the requirements, and started planning how to build a system that would do all that. They had lots of intelligent people working for months, figuring out what needed to be done. Then they spent more months planning how to do it. They produced beautiful charts with everything that needed to be accomplished and the time it would take to complete each and every task. Then, with careful color selection, they showed each piece of the project cascading down to the next like a waterfall.

These charts are called Gantt charts, after Henry Gantt, who developed them. With the advent of personal computers in the 1980s making it easy to create these intricate charts--and to make them really complex--they have become works of art. Every single step in a project is laid out in detail. Every milestone. Every delivery date. These charts truly are impressive to behold. The only problem with them is that they are always, always wrong.

Henry Gantt invented his famous charts around 1910. They were first used in World War I by General William Crozier, who was the Chief of Ordnance for the US Army. Anyone who has studied that war knows that efficient organizational capability was not exactly a salient feature. Why a World War I artifact has become the de facto tool used in twenty-first-century project management has never been quite clear to me. We gave up on trench warfare, but somehow the ideas that organized it are still popular.

It's just so tempting: all the work needed to be done on a massive project laid out for everyone to see. I've visited many companies that have people whose only job is to update that Gantt chart every day. The trouble is, once that beautifully elegant plan meets reality, it falls apart. But instead of scrapping the plan, or the way they think about the plan, managers instead hire people to make it look as if the plan is working. Essentially, they're paying people to lie to them.

This unfortunate pattern echoes those reports the Soviet politburo was getting in the 1980s just before the total collapse of the USSR. A complete mirage. Now as then, the reports become more important than the reality they're supposed to describe, and if there's a discrepancy, reality is the problem, not the charts.

When I was a West Point cadet, I slept in Dwight Eisenhower's old room. At night, the streetlights would reflect off a gold plate on the mantelpiece and sometimes wake me up. dwight d. eisenhower slept here, the plate read. And I'd remember that Eisenhower once observed that planning for combat is important, but as soon as the first shot is fired, your plans go up in smoke. At least he had enough sense not to use a Gantt chart.

So Lockheed presented the FBI with all these lovely charts, and the Bureau signed on. Supposedly, the task was now so well planned out that nothing could go wrong. "Look, it's in the color-coded, time-stamped, bar-graphed plan."

Yet when Jeff and his boss, CIO Chief Chad Fulgham, looked at the plan in the spring of 2010, they knew it for what it was, what such charts all are, really: a complete fabrication. When the two men started to look at actual development and actual deliverables, they realized the problem was beyond fixing. New defects in the

software were being discovered faster than old ones were being fixed.

Chad told the Department of Justice Inspector General that they could complete the Sentinel project by bringing development in-house, cutting the number of developers, and that, by doing so, they'd deliver the most challenging half of the project in less than a fifth of the time with less than a tenth of the amount budgeted. The skepticism in the usually dry IG reports to Congress is palpable. In the October 2010 report, after laying out their nine points of concern with the proposal, the IG watchdogs conclude: "In sum, we have significant concerns and questions about the ability of this new approach to complete the Sentinel project within budget, in a timely fashion, and with similar functionality.?.?.?."2

A New Way of Thinking

This new approach is called "Scrum." I created it twenty years ago. Now it is the only way proven to help projects like these. There are two ways of doing things: the old "Waterfall" method that wastes hundreds of millions of dollars and often doesn't deliver anything, or the new way, which, with fewer people and in less time, can deliver more stuff with higher quality at lower cost. I know it sounds too good to be true, but the proof is in the results. It works.

Two decades ago I was desperate. I needed a new way of thinking about work. And through tons of research and experimentation and looking over past data I realized we all needed a new way of organizing human endeavor. None of it is rocket science; it's all been talked about before. There are studies going back to World War II that lay out some of the better ways that people work. But for some reason people never really put together all the pieces. Over the past two decades I've tried to do just that, and now this methodology has become ubiquitous in the first field I applied it to, software development. At giants such as Google, Amazon, and Salesforce.com, and at small start-ups you haven't heard of yet, this framework has radically shifted how people get things done.

The reason this framework works is simple. I looked at how people actually work, rather than how they say they work. I looked at research done over decades and at best practices in companies all over the world, and I looked deeply at the best teams within those companies. What made them superior? What made them different? Why do some teams achieve greatness and others mediocrity?

For reasons I'll get into further in future chapters, I called this framework for team performance "Scrum." The term comes from the game of rugby, and it refers to the way a team works together to move the ball down the field. Careful alignment, unity of purpose, and clarity of goal come together. It's the perfect metaphor for what I want teams to do.

Traditionally, management wants two things on any project: control and predictability. This leads to vast numbers of documents and graphs and charts, just like at Lockheed. Months of effort go into planning every detail, so there will be no mistakes, no cost overruns, and things will be delivered on schedule.

The problem is that the rosy scenario never actually unfolds. All that effort poured into planning, trying to restrict change, trying to know the unknowable is wasted. Every project involves discovery of problems and bursts of inspiration. Trying to restrict a human endeavor of any scope to color-coded charts and graphs is foolish and doomed to failure. It's not how people work, and it's not how projects progress. It's not how ideas reach fruition or how great things are made.

Instead, it leads to frustrated people not getting what they want. Projects are delayed, come in over budget, and, in too many cases, end in abject failure. This is especially true for teams involved in the creative work of crafting something new. Most of the time, management won't learn of the glide path toward failure until millions of dollars and thousands of hours have been invested for naught.

Scrum asks why it takes so long and so much effort to do stuff, and why we're so bad at figuring out how long and how much effort things will take. The cathedral at Chartres took fifty-seven years to build. It's a safe bet that at the beginning of the project the stonemasons looked at the bishop and said, "Twenty years, max. Probably be done in fifteen."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Blouin:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each publication has different aim or maybe goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They can be reading whatever they have because their hobby will be reading a book. How about the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, particular person feel need book once they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you will need this Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time.

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