

### How Scrum Design started

Welcome to “Scrum Design”. This is a small design office to provide print layout service and printing service for documents using computers. I run the office on my own.

Twenty-two years ago, I injured my neck in a sport accident. I have been wheel-chair bound since then. I lost my job and almost gave up returning to work in the real world.

One day in a hospital, one of my friends recommended that I try to use computer. Since then, I thought maybe I could do some work just with my fingers if I use computer which was finally becoming more affordable at that time. By then, I started to use computer in the hospital.

After discharged from the hospital, with the support of those around me, I started to work providing layout services for newsletters using computer at home. Computers have become such a valuable working tools for people with disabilities. Wide use of the Internet also made it possible for us to work at home.

However, I did not have much work to do and wanted to do more than just working alone in front of computer everyday. I also realized that my life and job after I became disabled was centered around my home. I felt slowly detached from society and the local community. I was insecure and frustrated for a long time and felt as if I was being left behind in the world.

Meanwhile, in 2002, I got an offer to apply for a project of utilizing vacant stores in Takayama city. The project aims to revitalize the city center and to support entrepreneurs. The Shopping Street Promotion Association renovates vacant stores and lease them to those who want to start a new business. Takayama city supports entrepreneurs by providing subsidy of half of the rent for the first three years.

Vacant stores were renovated with barrier-free facilities. Bathrooms are designed for wheel-chair access and I could commute even in the rain or snow because of the arcade. As I was keen on feeling connected to the society through work, I decided to take a plunge and apply for the project even I did not have a proper business plan. After the document screening and secondary presentation of interview, four candidates, including myself, were selected out of a total of twenty-three proposals. We only had one month to prepare the shop for opening. Four new shops were set to open in the vacant stores and shop owners named the place “Four Leaf”.

Initially I was prepared to run a business by myself. Because I have trouble using my hands, I thought I could only handle limited types and amount of work. But once selected, Takayama city asked me to implement the project for them. It was a part of their emergency measures for creating employment, which was also an economic–stimulus package of the national government. With the advancement of information society, the project aimed to provide IT support services to new computer users. I hired consultants and they gave advice to the

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clients in the office or based on a phone conversation. When there is no client, these consultants could help me with other tasks and I could expand my work. Moreover, I thought it would create an opportunity for visiting clients to know about people with disabilities at work. I have undertaken this project for four years from the beginning of my business. I could hire people with or without disabilities as consultants.

I now undertake the project for the brunch of an organization called “Welfare Media Station” which supports the use of computers for people with disabilities. The project is called “Hida Brunch Project” and I will explain it later.

It has been nine years since I started the business. I still do not have enough sales to make good business sense. I only manage to earn enough to cover the expenses. But I have regular customers and feel the connection with people and the society. This is something I did not have when I worked from home. And I think that this connection with people, which I get through customer service, and the connection with the society is the biggest benefit through which I feel a full social participation.

I did not apply for the promotion project for vacant stores just because stores were renovated. There are some reasons behind that; Takayama city put in place policy measures to install more multipurpose toilets in public toilets, eliminate difference in level between the sidewalk and the street, and increase transport services for wheelchair users; and all of these contributed to making more disabled-friendly environment where people with disabilities could go out safely and freely.

I am truly delighted that people in the shopping street and community, and also the clients of “Four Leaf”, see now that people with disabilities can work in town just like everyone else. It also creates a good opportunity for them to understand what inconveniences and needs people with disabilities have at their work place in town or community, or with their life in general.

There are many opportunity for people with disabilities like me to start working, if support services or projects with considerations for barrier-free environment are provided, in relation to countermeasure for vacant stores and economic-stimulus package. Furthermore, I think that commissioned business and projects, which offer benefits to both parties, such as rental subsidy and physical support after starting a business, would help business owners sustain their business for a long time.

It will help more people with disabilities work in town and enhance the possibility of social participation and contribution for other people with disabilities. And this, I feel, will help the shopping street to not only revitalize itself but also add a value of active participation in making the city more barrier-free.

### Overview of Welfare Media Station

“Welfare Media Station” is a setup established by Gifu Prefecture and managed by the Gifu Prefecture Welfare Association for Physically Disabled Persons. It has its headquarter in the city of Ogaki. In order to cover a widespread area in Gifu by creating brunch offices, the first brunch office was established in Hida area, which is the farthest away from the headquarter.

For people with disabilities, computers can be one of the most useful tools. However, depending on the types of disabilities, it becomes difficult for some people to use the computer mouse or to look at the screen.

Welfare Media Station displays alternative keyboards and computer software for those who have trouble using computers. It also showcases various devices necessary for different types and degrees of disability, and gives guidance on how to operate these devices.

Main activities are as follows:

- Introducing, displaying and offering experience of accessibility-related devices
- Giving advice and consultation on computers
- Providing instruction on basic operation of computers
- Training of computer volunteers

Staff dispatching service:

We have a dispatching service of our computer volunteers. Volunteers will be dispatched to people with disabilities who cannot leave home to provide assistance in response to computer related problems.

We also have a dispatching service of IT instructors. For people with severe disabilities who cannot leave their home, instructors will be dispatched to their home to conduct IT trainings. Working staff at Welfare Media Station also have disabilities and we operate based on the idea of “peer-support.”