Scrum and Kids

A few months ago, I met a software developer who had absorbed the essence of Scrum and had also helped his team use it effectively. The reason he reached out to me was because of my interest and experiments in taking Scrum beyond software. He had been trying to do something similar and wanted to share his learnings and ideas as well as gain some insights.

Here was his challenge:

"I volunteer at a non-profit for kids. My son also participates in their fund-raising events. Since the funds are better used to serve the kids, the organization is slim-staffed. There are volunteers like me, who give 2-4 hours of our time weekly as and when we can. There is no set time when every volunteer is available to plan, or work, or review the work. However, I think the team can really benefit from Scrum, since I have seen it be successful at my work. How can I make Scrum work in this setup?"

Following was my recommendation:

"Since presently the team never actually gets together, you can start with creating a Product Backlog. Best will be to use an online tool like Linoit or Trello, or even Google Keep for that matter. The employees of the organization can help create and maintain it. The employee who leads the volunteer program can be the Product Owner. You can be the Scrum Master and begin with coaching the volunteers on Scrum and introduce them to Product Backlog and to self-managing their work. In order to achieve this you will need to sacrifice 3-4 hours of a weekend where all volunteers can come together. They would be interested in doing this, especially if they know that it is something that they can use at work as well.

The volunteers can then go to the online Task Boards and assign tasks to themselves, complete them, and take on the next task. By this time you would have setup the roles and a product backlog.

The next step will be to setup the Sprint and meetings. Given that volunteers give 2-4 hours every week depending on their availability, a Sprint of a week may be too short. Also given that the items on the product backlog would need attention in a week or two, best will be to have Sprints that are 2-3 weeks. However, the duration that the team will actually work will be 1 or 1.5 days. So a Sprint Planning meeting can be about 30 minutes, and Sprint Review and Retrospective can be 15 minutes each. If you host it on evening or a weekend, it might work out if the team is able to meet for one hour during the Sprint. You can start with 15 minutes of Sprint Review of Sprint n-1, followed by 15 minutes of Sprint Retrospective of Sprint n-1, followed by 30 minutes of Sprint Planning for Sprint n.

If you are able to get through this next step, it will help you determine Sprint Backlog as well as Product Increment to be delivered at the end of the Sprint. For example, Product Increment can be "Sample Brochure   for   the   next   event"   or   "Event   plan   for   the   next   event".

The only Scrum component hard to implement would be Daily Scrum. This would need some thinking and may be a 10 minutes touch base once a week instead of Daily. Regular daily update of Task Board, might also be an alternative. Something to think and ponder about."

He seemed convinced that this approach will work and thanked me for the help. I am opening this up to all of you for any other suggestions. Thoughts are welcome as always.