Product Owner Pitfalls

1. **Excessive Preparation**
   The Product Owner need only spend a very small amount of time up-front in preparing an initial Product Backlog – approximately 1% of the expected effort of the total Product Backlog.

2. **Not Enough Communication w/ Team**
   The Product Owner will naturally be pulled in two directions: communication with users, customers and other stakeholders vs.communication with the team.
   - needs to be at all Scrum meetings in-person
   - work with and accept the guidance of the SM regarding the rules of Scrum (this is the working contract for the team!)
   - present with the team often enough to see work in progress so that there are no surprises at the Sprint Review

3. **Describing Solutions (not Problem/Need/Goal)**
   The Product Owner is best served by leaving <u>all</u> technical decisions to the rest of the team: architecture, design, coding standards, tools, frameworks/libraries, refactoring, build environment, buy vs. build etc.

4. **Unbalanced Responsibility/Authority**
   The Product Owner role requires final authority over the Product Backlog and accountability for their team's ROI.
   - Not given the authority by the executive leadership
   - Delegating too much tactically, without also delegating authority
   - Split responsibility b/w multiple products and/or teams

5. **Too Much Change!**
   A Product Owner must understand their business well enough that most of the time they are correct in their ordering of the Product Backlog. If this is not the case, the team can be subjected to violent swings in direction, and it will never be stable enough to become a high-performance team.

6. **Team Pushes Back**
   The Product Owner must have enough authority and confidence to be able to firmly resist when the team attempts to force a change in the ordering of the Product Backlog.
   - Team Not Convinced of Value of Work
   - Team Claims Dependencies

7. **Stretch Goals**
   The Product Owner should never attempt to use the psychological tactic of "stretch goals" to enhance the performance of their team. Instead, focus on ordering the Product Backlog by value and supporting the ScrumMaster in removing obstacles.

8. **Urgent Interruptions**
   The Product Owner may be tempted to interrupt the team mid-Sprint with a "small" but urgent interruption. Instead, either put it on the Product Backlog for next Sprint or cancel the Sprint.

9. **Imposed Deadline-Scope-Resources**
   The Product Owner does have the authority to order the Product Backlog, but does <u>not</u> have the authority to determine how many Product Backlog Items the team does in any given Sprint. Instead, the Product Owner uses the Product/Release burndown chart to manage expectations with stakeholders.