Sprint Review and Retrospective

Dalton Gollihue

Computer Science, Southern New Hampshire University

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Derek Jacobs

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I believe the work that the team has done on this travel project is owed to the agile-based approach we adopted. Every part of the process is absolutely crucial for sure, and we owe it to everyone who did the work. The first step of the process was the word from the top telling us what we are going to be doing for our work. This step comes from the product owner who has the idea of who we will be serving for the entire project. They have a keen understanding of who we will be developing this software for. The product owner will be communicating their ideas to the team that consists of people who are developers, testers, etc. So, the product owner came to the development team and told everybody that we were to be developing a software that allows people to plan out their vacations. The team then made notes of what to ask and even things worth remembering from the meeting with the product owner. This allows everyone to be maximally prepared for the coming days and weeks for the development of the product.

The next step in the process after getting the orders for the tools that we will be making is to create some user stories for the product. A user story is a simple format from a user’s perspective where you just state what you want to be able to do as the user of a given software or web tool. We started by asking what features will be intuitive for a customer to want. The first feature that came to mind was a budget option. So, for our user story, we say, “I would like to be able to set a minimum and maximum budget for my vacation.” so that we may get into their perspective in an attempt to create the best product for those we are trying to serve. We just repeated the process, so we could get a good idea what features customers would like us to add. This helped us implement other features like recommendations for other vacations based on recent ones, and adding a focus for a vacation, such as historical vacations or things like beach vacations.

In the middle of development, the product owner wanted us to pivot to a software that was centered around wellness getaways. The process allowed us to all get together to do our note taking, ask questions, and make the necessary adjustments to get the product owner what they wanted in the most efficient way possible. We simply did a quick pivot to making the locations in the marketing to locations like the Alps and Bali to satisfy the new requirements we were given.

Communication between the team is key to our success for sure. We have a lot to owe to our ability to talk to one another without any ego or emotion in the development process. Everyone can articulate their strengths to one another so that we can divide up tasks accordingly. One team member might struggle with uploading pictures to the code we made after the new requirements were given, so we gave that job to the engineer that found that portion really easy in comparison. The little activities that you can do in a scrum meeting are super helpful in this regard. You play the minigame where each member is given sticky notes and a bunch of tasks are on those notes, and everyone ranks how hard each task is compared to all the other tasks that need to be done. This gives everyone an idea of what they should be doing for the time of development. This also helps the team to get experience things that are typically a weakness for them, as it allows other team members to shed some light on blind spots that their team might have.

I briefly went over some scrum events that we employed that greatly contributed to the success of the team, but in truth, there were additional methods we used. One of these methods was “planning poker”. Planning poker also lets each member of the team talk about how difficult a given task is. You simply bring up a task to the team that will have to be done, and the team then ranks the difficulty of the task based on their personal skills. When this ranking happens, you ask the person who thinks it's the easiest task why they hold their opinion, and you do the same for the person who feels like it's the hardest task. This allows an open and honest dialogue to take place about every task the team plans on doing. It also shows everyone on the team to see weaknesses and strengths they have, so they can begin to think about what task each person should be responsible for, along with areas to work on in their own skillset. The reason this is so important is because each person on the team will likely be around for the future, so it's important to invest in your team for future endeavors. It’s a very underrated reason to do these tasks, for the sake of team building. If you stick with a similar team for multiple projects, the result will likely be a more efficient and seasoned team who knows the strengths and weaknesses of their colleagues. This allows the team to have a head start when compared to teams that lack this element.

The agile process has been very instrumental in making these tools for the customers, and it comes with a ton of strengths and a few weaknesses. Some strengths to mention are those of adaptability. This was proven when we were given new requirements and the team had to pivot towards the getaway style of vacations we mentioned earlier. Being able to use each member's strengths and weaknesses to your advantage in the context of a given project. We mentioned some team members not being familiar with adding the images into the slideshow. This keeps efficiency at an all-time high with your given team. Focus is another one. The creation of the user stories allowed us to imagine key features we wanted to have when the product was complete and deliver on those features. The few cons that the agile process can have been those of mismanagement. When the call was given to pivot the work, we already put in, that could probably have been avoided with better management or perhaps a clearer image from the product owner. It is also possible for the meetings to be mismanaged. It’s not hard to see that it does have drawbacks, but arguably, it is a net positive in the context of development, and I would also say that for my team, it was the right choice. I would be curious to see what kind of results teams across the company could achieve with such a process.