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The biggest difference between Agile and traditional planning methods is how teams are expected to communicate. Those new to Scrum tend to struggle with the frequency and openness required in Scrum events and artifacts. Developers and Scrum Masters are encouraged to be completely transparent about their progress. Product Owners from a more traditional background can struggle to let the development team lead daily operations. These situations can be resolved if all parties are transparent.

To keep lines of communication open, Agile takes things a step beyond typical corporate correspondence. Information radiators can take on many forms depending on the team's prioritization. A team that values seeing the different steps in the process may use a bandana board, while those worried about technical debt may use a dominator. Allowing everyone to see a sprint's progress creates trust, while also fostering accountability.

On the SNHU Travel team, it was important that team members divide up tasks in a timely manner. This would keep people from waiting and checking to see what tasks they would be completing. To keep this process transparent a discussion board was made where team roles would be selected. Since we were all remote it could be viewed online at any time, mitigating scheduling conflicts. Having this open for anyone to see made it possible to see what roles still needed to be filled. An information radiator like this also prevents people from doing work that has already been done.

A discussion board isn’t the only way to share important information. Today there are tons of tools for managing projects. Many offer free and paid tiers depending on team needs. One such product is Microsoft's Azure Boards. Tools like Azure Boards keep tasks, deadlines, and project documents in one easy-to-access place. All of these fancy gadgets don’t mean teams should forget more traditional planning methods. Having a physical whiteboard can be incredibly effective since it is a physical reminder. Which of these tools is most effective will depend on each individual team’s needs. The beauty of agile is how each team adapts its practices.

References

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