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SNHU Travel: Review and Retrospective

Over the course of this project, many different people and teams contributed considerably to creating an effective and dynamic platform. This process began with Christy, the team's Product Owner, in information gathering sessions with the client. During these initial meetings she generated a number of useful story points to begin the planning phase. The main aspects of the product that were outlined during this session were developing an effective web application to handle travel bookings, allowing for search refinement based on cost and user data, and adding a dedicated cruise section to the main page. These high priority stories were then passed to the team to begin processing them into test cases and identifying the most critical story points. During this phase, our Scrum Master Ron developed our team charter and began setting up a KANBAN board for the purposes of assigning tasks and for use later in estimation. The tester Brian also began developing accurate test cases to gauge the success of our final product. These test cases were then shared with our developer Nicole who began writing a list of software requirements and tools that she projected would be required for development to proceed.

The Agile-scrum method is perhaps the currently most effective method of developing effective products. This is due to the collaborative and feedback driven environment that it incentivizes within an organization. It is also highly adaptive and can be modified on a case-by-case basis to fit the needs of any organization. During the development of the SNHU Travel web-application, this kind of environment was a great advantage. Each story point started in the planning phase with input being collected from both the client and team. They were then passed into the development and testing phase where feedback was given to help assess productivity as well as update and improve them. This feedback is a key element of the Agile strategy which helps to shape the way the methodology is integrated into an organization's development process. Encouraging team members to provide useful input also helps to build team cohesion and thus an even more effective workplace is created.

A key advantage that the Agile environment presents is the wide array of tools that it utilizes. One of the most important is the KANBAN board which is a highly visible display of each key element of a project to all team members. These story points are then physically moved through the phases of the project as team members complete their assignments. It helps increase visibility of project scope within the team and make sure everyone is on the same page about progress being made. The ability to visibly track progress also helps with the estimation process which is another core tenet of the Agile process. It is an evaluation of the progress completed to the amount of time left for the project. The result of this evaluation helps the team to project how their doing and find ways to increase productivity to meet deadlines. These tools as well as many others make working in the Agile environment a much better and more efficient experience. Everyone feels involved with not only their responsibilities but also the broader vision of the final product.

Another advantage that the Agile-scrum method was the ability to quickly respond to changes in the client's vision. During the course of development, the client informed us of a change in their vision of the applications' functionality. This new vision was different from the original plan and therefore implied a significant amount of work to realign the team. Although there was no additional time provided to complete these alterations, the team quickly got to work generating new story points and revising the KANBAN. This made sure that even though there were many things that had to be changed, the team maintained their productivity and got to work. We were able to successfully change course to meet the client's vision and deliver a high-quality effective product.

As highlighted earlier, feedback and communication are extremely important when using the Agile-scrum method. The team needs to feel that they are free to speak their mind on their progress and any obstacles they may be facing. A great example of this communication strategy in the work on the SNHU Travel project is when we had to alter the design of the final product. The Scrum Master immediately sent communications to the entire team with updates to the workflow strategy such as requiring attendance of all team members at daily stand ups. This helped to increase the level of commitment and dedication within the team while also encouraging a responsibility of outcome for the product owner. The rest of the team also added input to give notice of any changes that they forsaw within their responsibilities. By working as a team to change the plan rather than having a new plan handed to us, it encouraged the team to really engage and help adapt. Despite being under a crunch the work dindt feel unmanageable because everyone was aware of the things that needed to be done and what parts were theirs.

I believe that using the Agile-scrum method in the development of this product was extremely effective. Its high visibility environment made it easy to keep track of all elements of the development process without feeling overwhelmed. Each member of the team was allowed to conduct their work in a way where they felt informed and involved. This environment was greatly supported by scrum events such as the daily scrum session and planning sessions. The team felt prepared for their responsibilities from the outset and were encouraged to share their experiences with the team. The many different tools and strategies that the Agile-scrum methodology utilizes make even very large projects feel much more manageable. It is highly suited to the fast pace and ever-changing world of today's corporate landscape. Many of the organizations that have risen above competition or changed course utilize the Agile methodology. Having worked with and used these methods, I understand why it has rapidly become an industry standard. I hope that in the future I will have the chance to work in this kind of environment or help to integrate it into a more old-fashioned organization.