Week 1 Reflection

I want to learn and have a good understanding of scrum, sprints, and other important concepts of agile development. During the exercise session on Wednesday, it felt hard to both concentrate on keeping to the allotted time, as well as making sure we really focused on each step, the planning, execution and reflection. For example, instead of truly reflecting on the sprints, we focused more on planning the next sprint. Instead of the 3 sprints feeling like an iterative process, it felt a bit more like 1 long extended sprint. I am also really interested in seeing how using this style of development effects and benefits the software that I create.

I am excited about working with the team to create something interesting and creative. I hope to be able to contribute to the group as much and as best I can. I want to be able to create an environment in our group where everyone feels like their voices can be heard and they don't feel afraid to make suggestions. Group dynamic can really effect how well a project is carried out and so I hope to do my part in making it as successful as possible.

Week 2 Reflection

Week 2 was really about establishing ourselves as a team. We struggled a lot with members both leaving and joining our group which felt a bit stressful to not know how many members we would end up with, and ultimately how much we would be able to accomplish with the people that did choose to stay in the course. Despite those problems we were able to start on our project. I think one thing that I found interesting was the focus on the value that our product is giving the customer. It feels obvious but it is new to me to think of the value proposition in every step of the development process.

We also started creating out project backlog and I had initially thought the vertical slicing would be a lot more challenging as it is definitely a new way of thinking for me. In most of my other programming classes I have thought only in terms of methods, functions, and the entire code being like layers. However this understanding of vertical slices actually came quite naturally to our team and we managed to create user stories that give value in themselves. While each slice builds on the functionality of the other, each slice has value in itself.

For next week my focus is trying to continue to create a good structure in our sprints, and in the team in general. As well as of course start with the coding of our project.

Week 3 Reflection

Week 3 went a lot less smoothly than we had originally planned and maybe hoped for. We had divided the project into about 4 epics that we felt covered the entirety of the functionality that we would like to implement in our app. We decided to focus on the user stories that related to the 1st epic which was about creating a basic foundation of the app, implementing the map, creating a database and connecting the database to the frontend. In the end we only ended up finishing less than a half of the tasks we had originally planned to finish. We overestimated how long "setting up" would take as well as how long it would take us to begin to understand all the tools that we had chosen to use (in this case javascript, react native, Expo, MySQL). At the beginning of the sprint we also did not spend enough time with poker planning and really evaluating the amount of time/effort each task would take. We had a loose understanding of "oh maybe this task will take the more time

than this task". In the next sprint we hope to spend more time with poker planning. We will also try to estimate the effort each task will take not based on our wishful thinking but more based in actual reality. By that I mean the amount of knowledge we have on the topic (how much will we have to research) and the amount of time we have in the week to work on the project.

I was also the scrum master this week which gave me the responsibility of leading the sprint and ensuring good communication and teamwork in the group. For a first time I think I did an alright job however I think there are definitely areas of improvement. I think I had to remind myself that it doesn't matter if just I have managed to finish the tasks that I was supposed to finish, if the rest of the team is stuck on something or needs help. I think I should also have established more and better communication throughout the week and not just on the days we decided to have a meeting. I think the team would definitely benefit from small, daily updates so we know where everyone is at with their tasks. If someone in the group is struggling with a task, it is better to know as quickly as possible and not wait till the sprint is almost finished.

Ultimately for the next sprint I feel it is important to do a better job estimating our own capabilities as well as establishing better communication amongst the group.

Week 4 Reflection

In week 4 our sprint went a lot better than in week 3. We made lots of improvements to the structure and format of our sprint starting with the first meeting we had at the beginning of the week. In our discussion with the supervisor we gained a better understanding of the meaning of value. It was very helpful in understanding that even though we may think we have not done enough or progressed enough, the tasks we have completed can be valuable depending on how they are sliced. If you slice tasks strategically each one can give value to the product owner and ultimately the customer as well. We realised that in order for our tasks to deliver more value we would have to rewrite them and give them a greater focus on the value that they deliver to the project once they are completed.

This definitely helped in our sprint going smoother and ultimately being more effective. We divided the tasks even more. For example, we changed the task "get markers to show up on map", we sliced it further, "have one hard-coded marker appear on the map" and then "have one marker appear on the map from information from the database" and then "have multiple markers appear on the map from information in the database".

For myself thinking in terms of incremental value has had a really great impact in my own understanding of agile. In my previous experience of programming and creating projects it has just been about trying to get something done or something to work, a kind of brute-force programming style. However this format of agile development allows for a lot less stressful programming style. As a fairly new programmer, creating something like this project felt extremely over-whelming but it has really helped being able to focus on one small slice at a time whilst also being able to see a progression. For example if we had just spent 3 weeks focusing on the database we would not have really had anything to show for it. Our product may have some kind of value to us but not to our customer.

This week we managed to accomplish many more of our tasks. We were also better at communicating and updating each other on the progress throughout the week. We also did the poker planning which helped in our ability to plan effectively. For the next week I hope to continue to progress, and follow the sprint structure even better.