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Every team member played a role in the successful completion of the SNHU Travel project.

Christy, the Product Owner, efficiently performed her role as a liaison between the clients and the scrum team. She identified the needs of the client in their initial meeting, where the fundamental goals of the travel application were outlined, namely the ability to offer trending vacation packages and to grow the customer base within the United States. Immediately following that first meeting, Christy got to work detailing the project's backlog, and soon after met with a focus group of customers to better inform the direction of the travel application – the information gathered from the focus group was later used to create user stories which were then relayed to the rest of the team. Ron, the scrum master, was also present at the initial meeting with the client. He quickly began to organize the structure of the scrum team and plan the necessary scrum events such as the daily stand-ups and sprint planning.

After having the context of the project laid out by the product owner and the team charter being created by the scrum master, the development team was able to begin addressing the technical needs of the project. Brian, the tester, evaluated the user stories produced via the focus group and made contact with the product owner in order to ask clarifying questions regarding the user stories – and use her input to decipher the most appropriate ways to delineate exactly how these bits of functionality should work. This sort of communication between the development team and the product owner is vital in order to create accurate pass/fail conditions for the project's features. Nicole, the developer began to develop the first iteration of the product by creating a Java application by using the swing package in order to create a graphical user interface.

A couple feature of agile that were hugely beneficial in the task of the user stories being addressed – the heightened emphasis on collaboration and communication. As mentioned above, the tester was able to refine the test cases derived from the user stories more completely by forwarding his

clarifying questions straight to the product owner, who is then able to direct him towards criteria that best suit the product's vision. Within each user story, the estimation of the time/effort required to satisfy each item was clearly defined, which should help the development team more effectively work through the items within the backlog, where these estimates would play a role in how each story is prioritized. With the refined user stories, the development team has a very good idea as to what the product should look like, and they were able to quickly begin writing a program to meet the needs laid out by the product owner. Within the agile framework, testers and developers are often working side-by-side, and that would serve to enhance the development process.

One of the main strengths of agile is its flexibility. This was clearly demonstrated when the needs of the project changed mid-way through the development process. Upon an additional meeting with the clients/stakeholders for the SNHU Travel application, Christy (the product owner) informed the team that there was an unexpected change in the desired functionality/emphasis of the application. The change that the client desired was to shift the product's focus towards a specific sort of vacation package – namely detox/wellness vacations. This was a result of their analysis of market trends, and was not something that would have been possible to plan for at the outset of the project. This ability to shift focus whilst in development is a key feature of agile, whereas in a more explicitly plan-driven approach (like the waterfall method) this sort of change would be incredibly disruptive – as it would have come after the explicit planning phase, where each portion of the project is laid out and is much more set in stone. The agile approach lends enough flexibility so that the team was able to deal with the change effectively. Christy began to adjust the backlog to allow for the new functionality to be implemented. Nicole (the developer) was initially concerned, thinking her work would need to start over from square one, but was assured that this new focus was compatible enough with the current trajectory of the project that it would only take some tweaking to make the technical side of things match up with the altered product vision. Brian (the tester) immediately began to adjust the test cases to account for the new conditions. Ron (the scrum master) inquired as to how this change of focus would

affect the project's timeline, in order to best plan out the scrum activities and effectively guide the team through the process.

Assuming the role of the scrum master here, it is one of my primary responsibilities to facilitate effective communication within the scrum team. This begins as the outset of any project, and in this instance I created an agile team charter that serves to introduce the team to the broad-strokes goals of the project, as well as including contact information for each team member, and a code of conduct detailing how the scrum events will be conducted (and how team members should conduct themselves within them). Although I don't recall a specific reference to this within the modules/SNHU Travel project – in a real-world situation I would be highly motivated to establish an effective information radiator by employing organizational tools. Establishing a resource that is available to every team member at any given moment (during or outside of our scrum activities) would help to foster the collaboration that agile depends upon.

The limited time-frame (5 weeks) within which our team was meant to complete the SNHU Travel application is an important factor when deciding whether or not using an agile framework is the appropriate decision. Although it may have been possible if we had gone down the route of a more plan-driven approach, it would have been necessary to spend much more time planning and also writing much more extensive documentation. The less plan-driven approach that agile employs made us more flexible, but simultaneously leaves more room for uncertainty – which can be construed as a negative. An example of the potential frustration that comes along with this element of uncertainty inherent to a less plan-driven approach can be seen in the development team's response to the shift in the project's focus – where they were somewhat taken off-guard and had a brief moment of confusion regarding the work they had already completed.

Ultimately, I believe agile was the appropriate methodology to work within in order to complete this project. Although the aforementioned element of uncertainty can be unnerving, by adhering to agile's core values of communication and collaboration, the team members were able to account for the

bumps in the road and effectively deal with issues as they arose. Especially in the context of the client's needs for this specific application agile was beneficial. That is for two main reasons – first, the importance of the end-user of the application makes the issue of getting frequent feedback from focus groups very useful and important. Second, the client's needs were subject to change, as a result of the shifting market forces that dictate the utility of their product. The client's research into market trends is meant to inform how their platform operates, and this isn't something that is able to be accurately forecasted, meaning that in order to deliver the most value to the customer the development team needs to be able to adjust the project on-the-fly. Considering these factors, especially the shifting priorities and needs of the project, it was a good decision to work within the agile development cycle rather than a more stringent plan-driven approach.