Brianna McCollum

CS 250 Software Development Lifecycle

13 June 2022

Sprint Review and Retrospective: SNHU Travel and Scrum

Chada Tech has fully transitioned to using the Agile method within its programming workforce, and it has greatly benefitted the company’s work already. The new travel booking application for SNHU Travel works wonderfully and addresses all the user stories we had, passing through the sprints of development in a timely and efficient manner. Chada Tech changed a lot of our company policies and shifted to using new tools fitter for the new work style. Each member of the team had to perform their jobs well for this to happen, and we’re thankful for all of their hard work and acceptance of the transition to Agile.

There are four main roles that were used for team members during our transition to Agile. We had a Product Owner, a Scrum Manager, Developers, and Testers. The Product Owner is the “leader,” or at least as close to a leader that the Agile style can have. The Product Owner is the one who interacts with the stakeholders and users, and they do this to relay the information to the team about what we need to build. Our Product Owner had several meetings with users to develop user stories, which they then used to create our Product Backlog. These user stories included wanting a top ten list of travel destinations or specific search settings. Once the Product Owner creates the backlog, the other roles can get to work. The Developers have the most straightforward role, where we took a piece of the Product Backlog and developed it into usable code. This development was typically done in pair programming to assure that we kept each other motivated and held to a high bar of code quality. The Testers would then take our code and test the for quality and proper functionality, using their own test cases they derived directly from the user stories our Product Owner gathered. The Scrum Master is perhaps the oddest role, but it is by no means unnecessary. Our Scrum Master was incredibly skillful in making sure that we stayed a team, and they did so by utilizing a Scrum framework for our team. The Scrum Master hosted daily Scrum meetings, which served a wide array of purposes. The meeting allowed the team members to update each other and communicate, both about the project and about themselves to keep a trusting team dynamic. The Scrum Master also oversaw backlog refinement with the group, making sure we stayed on task and produced good work. They acted as a sort of guardian to the team, helping us when we needed it and saying back when we were hard at work.

User Stories are not a unique concept to Agile, but they certainly play a larger role in an Agile-focused workplace. The User Stories were the basis for all of our development and the core of our workloads. In the daily Scrum meetings, we would look over the Product Backlog, which was composed of pieces that were directly developed from User Stories thanks to the Product Owner. We would speak to the group about what we were working on every single day at the daily Scrum meetings, which would allow us an opportunity to communicate about the User Stories if we misunderstood something. And if a misunderstanding popped up later in the workday, communication was widely available. Clarification requests could be emailed to or brought to the Product Owner directly since Scrum-Agile encourages communication and requires the User Stories to be handled with a lot of care.

In the Waterfall approach, planning was rigid and done way in advance. When something unexpected came up and interrupted our workflow, it would be an utterly massive problem to try and solve. So much preplanning and work would have to get scrapped and rewritten, which would push our deadlines way back. Agile doesn’t set any rigid plans, only guidelines. With the sprint-geared approach, work is done in pieces that allow for adjustments and changes after the fact based on feedback or even unforeseen circumstances. For instance, our stakeholders wanted SNHU Travel to focus its booking displays on wellness-based travel plans since those had a massive position reaction in public audience testing. However, they brought this shift in focus to our team after the initial planning phase. If we were still using Waterfall, this would be incredibly difficult, as the pre-planning was already complete, and going back on it would require undoing a lot of work. Agile however is a lot more flexible and allowed us to shift our goals dynamically along with SNHU Travel’s wishes.

Since communication is so key to making Scrum-Agile work, I had to relearn how to properly communicate with my team. Honesty and understanding became some of the most helpful factors in my communication, as it bolsters the trust and cooperation needed for a good group working environment. The Daily Scrums were an excellent opportunity to communicate with my team. During these meetings, I would share what I did yesterday, what I was going to do today and something I had been struggling with. I believe this format helped me communicate with my team effectively as we all shared similar things and could relate to them while still keeping on topic about work. I also sent out emails to my coworkers a lot, the example I’ll use is an email to my Product Manager about some clarifications on a User Story. One of the downsides of moving to Agile from Waterfall is all the uncertainty from not hard planning. Of course, that can be mitigated by using good communication to ask for help whenever something is unclear. I was honest with my Product Owner about what I was confused about and was very clear and direct about the part of the User Story that could use clarification. It was effective communication, as I got the clarification that I needed and could continue my work.

The Daily Scrum and Product Backlog have already been discussed, but it’s worth noting again that they provided a lot of help to the team during our first Agile development project. We kept a Scrum board in the same room as our Daily Scrum, giving us a visual tool to help us organize our User Stories and work distributions. Tasks would be moved down the board to respective categories, reflecting the progress we’d done. We did not implement this as a tool for the current project, but I would like to encourage Chada Tech to utilize Jira in the future. It offers a lot of functionality similar to other tools we’ve used but in a virtual and easily accessible setting. We could replace the paper Scrum board with a Scrum board within Jira. The team would be able to view and adjust the Scrum board remotely, instead of only being able to update it inside the Daily Scrum room. This should help the board stay up-to-date and allow the team easy access to see the progress, no matter where they are.

Scrum style worked wonders on our development process, with the Agile method making us incredibly efficient and a much more cohesive team. I would say it was incredibly effective, especially for a first trial. A few hiccups happened with the organization and with understanding, but that’s to be expected with a brand new approach. A lot of the difficulty with Agile is the stress it puts on the individual team members. It can be viewed as a lot of extra work, due to the amount of communication, organization, and individual prowess that is required from every single team member. Some other team members may get frustrated or confused at the amount of uncertainty left by not planning far in advance. I personally enjoyed Agile and Scrum, but I can understand and emphasize with the teammates who struggled to pick it up. I think that using Scrum-Agile for the SNHU Travel project was an excellent idea, due to the number of adjustments and feedback we implemented throughout the build process. We wouldn’t have been able to listen to the stakeholders nearly as much if we did Waterfall, and I think the project turned out better because of that flexibility.