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Sprint Review and Retrospective

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SNHU Project Retrospective

After the successful completions of our sprints during our project for SNHU Travel, as the Scrum Master it is my responsibility to arrange and conduct a Sprint review and Retrospective. The purpose of these get-togethers is to provide a detailed summary, to analysis and to evaluate the work that has been completed by our team following our Scrum-Agile methodology. Our transition from a waterfall approach to an Agile framework was pivotal to this process, and has been reflected in every step of this process.

The roles taken on by our Scrum Agile team are critical to our successful development of our project for SNHU Travel. Every role has its purpose and they all support one another allowing us to function as a team working towards our one goal.

My role as the Scrum Master has many responsibilities. I ensure that all the Scrum ceremonies take place and stay on point. I am tasked with making sure the team remains focused on the sprint goals and that they are adhering to the Agile principles. I work with the team during the sprint planning meetings to help clarify and prioritize the user stories. This helps to increase our efficiency and productivity during our sprints. It is also my role to ensure that there is effective communication within our team and with our stakeholders during our project. The use of a Scrum board is helpful to keep everyone informed outside of our stand-ups and is visible to everyone. We can also use different digital tools as well to manage and track our tasks, and allow for open communication when our team members are not all in house.

The role of the Product Owner is pivotal to our alignment and development ensuring that we are meeting the expectations of our client. Their ability to maintain our product backlog and update it for every sprint planning meeting is vital to remain on target and under budget. As we look back on our SNHU Travel project a good example of this is when our Client asked for an option to select destinations based on the users preferences. This had the Product Owner working closely with the team to reprioritize the backlog making sure this new feature was added to the backlog without causing any delays or quality issues with other deliverables.

Our team of Developers are tasked with taking those user stories and turning them into functional software in increments that can be delivered at the end of our sprints for review. Their ability to work as a team was evident in our ability to deliver features such as vacation packages based on types of vacations. This showed how front-end and back-end tasks can be divided amongst the team and allow them to work efficiently. The ability to divide these tasks allowed for them to work in parallel and complete these features within our sprint timeline and maintain our quality standards.

Throughout the development of the user stories our testers create test cases based on the acceptable criteria for each desired function. The ability for our testers to work with our developers and for our developers to test their own work while creating it allows for a seamless transition from sprint to sprint. With feedback being given to the team mid-sprint, the developers can make any needed changes ensuring the quality of their work meets the required functionality of the user story. Delivering a quality product at the end our each sprint ensures that we are progressing towards our goal and can start our next sprint as planned.

When I look back on the complexity of moving to the Agile method for our project. I can clearly see the benefits gained from this move. The ability to break down the project into smaller more manageable sprints, gave us to ability to adapt to the needs and desires of our client during this project. We were able to consistently deliver quality pieces of code during each iteration and sprint. This would not have been possible if we followed a waterfall method as we would not have been able to make the needed changes mid-stream and would have had to go back to what we thought was completed work to add the desired changes of our client.

As the Scrum Master, communication is one of the most important areas I need to focus on. This helps keep the team keep running efficiently working towards the end-goal which is product delivery. We used emails to keep everyone informed and in touch at all times. We had our information radiators which allow all team members to see the overall progress and who was working on what. We had daily stand-ups which I facilitated to make sure we stayed on topic and discussed new topics as needed later after the daily stand-up. This ensures everyone has a voice and contributes to the overall team development. This gives the developers a chance to form pairs to help create more efficient programming sessions. Other communication tools are our Scrum board which is visible to everyone on the team. This allows us to display our current sprint goals and accomplishments. This is key for those that need a tactile way to see items moving from in progress to complete on a board. We also used an online tool to allow our remote team members to keep up to date and stay on the same page as the team.

The online tool of choice for us was JIRA, this task management tool allowed us to manage our product backlog, track our sprint progress, and monitor task completion. JIRA's kanban board provides the same visual representation as our centralized board. This will possibly lead to the elimination of the physical board over time. The use of burn down and burn up charts was very helpful in identifying possible bottlenecks and making needed adjustments to help us remain on schedule. The use of slack as it is integrated with JIRA enabled constant interaction among the team and ensured that all task related communication is centralized helping to eliminate the chances of miscommunications. This was evident when we added the Budget Traveler feature and a bug was found causing the return of packages that no longer aligned with the travel preferences. The ability to quickly update the task using JIRA key. The seamless integrations between communication and task management tools adds to our efficient workflow.

Communication also was paramount during our sprint reviews and retrospectives. These meetings helped our team to come together and discuss what challenges they faced during the most recent sprint and to discuss what steps can be taken going forward. Our teams ability to have this open line of communication and to be able to give and receive valuable feedback that is actionable is vital to the success of the team.

When we look back on the effectiveness of using the Scrum-Agile approach for the SNHU Travel project. We need to weigh the pros and cons that we experienced during its development.

Looking at the pros, I would have to call out the flexibility we had using this approach. With the changes and interruptions we faced at different times during this project we were able to quickly adjust our backlog to implement the needed requirements that were requested by our client. The iterative process allows for this type of continuous feedback and ensures we can deliver on those requests. The emphasis on collaboration and communication helps to create a more cohesive team environment and helps ensure issues are addressed quickly using a collective problem solving mindset.

The cons faced by our team started with the initial learning curve as we transitioned to the Scrum method. Some team members struggled with the new roles and responsibilities under Scrum. There was also some confusion in our early sprints and we struggled with time estimation and task prioritization. Lastly some team members struggled with the constant communication and feedback as they felt that the need for a consensus was slowing them down.

In conclusion, I feel the pros far outweigh the cons. For this project and its dynamic nature. The Scrum-Agile approach was the better choice for this project. Most of the cons faced are a onetime issue and as you build a team of self-sufficient and self-led individuals the benefits will continue to grow. Once you move past these growing pains the ability for our team to work effectively, adapt seamlessly and produce quality work for our clients will be an asset to any client looking to hire us.