CS-250

Journal Week 3

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***Directions***

*In this second journal assignment, you will think about your work as the Product Owner for the travel booking software and how you communicate user needs and preferences. Address the following questions:*

* *What benefits can you gain by engaging with users or stakeholders?*
* *Reflect on the User Stories assignment in this module. How can user stories help the Scrum Team?*
* *How did the interviews/user meetings help in writing these user stories?*
* *What other methods for collecting feedback are needed to build the user stories?*

NOTE: Citations are not used here as these are my own ideas as my understanding has developed from the readings and personal experience inside an agile/scrum team dynamic. This is a self-reflection assignment, not a peer reviewed publication!

*What benefits can you gain by engaging with users or stakeholders?*

By engaging with the users and stakeholders, the product owner gets a personal feel for how the product is/will be used and what the users like and dislike about the product, competitors, etc. These ideas can be difficult to capture in traditional requirements where it’s *this SHALL be that* formatted, you lose the *this is helpful because that can now happen* motivations that ultimately drive the reason for the work to be done in the first place. This internalization allows the product owner to better react to questions about the how/why/when questions that arise during the course of the development process. These are typically difficult to internalize and convey from traditional requirements development processes.

*Reflect on the User Stories assignment in this module. How can user stories help the Scrum Team?*

Anyone exposed to traditional SHALL requirements understands how mind numbing they can be, and how easy it is to lose the big picture for the sake of the smallest details and requirements all captured in court-document type languages that are hinged on the exact word choices at each step. Through the use of user stories, the scrum team can instead develop a more personal understanding of the intent and impact of the change, which will help drive the implementation of the product. These individual stories allow the developers to internalize the use cases, workflows, etc. which helps them to implement in a way that they personally would find more useful as a consumer with a similar need.

User stories also can help with making development more about solving the needs of an end user, a person in need, as many engineers became engineers to solve problems. This gives a sense of helpfulness which helps to drive towards success rather than just implementing some random feature in a giant collection of code, the team is instead helping this one person solve a specific problem.

*How did the interviews/user meetings help in writing these user stories?*

Through the use of interviews and user meetings, the product owner collects unusual use cases, or more niche desires of the customer that could easily be overlooked without a free flowing discussion. While gather this information, the product owner can also gather a sense of how impactful the implementation of each feature will be on the larger consumer base based on the energy and repetition of the responses and ideation around a given feature. Example, everyone jumped on the idea of having top recommendations, and the added comments on how they could be made even better by adding customizations and filters to suite their individual needs. This energy shows it is a major benefit to many users. This helps the product owner to establish the priority which can then be derived into sub-stories to build towards the final implementation.

*What other methods for collecting feedback are needed to build the user stories?*

When collecting user stories from interviews and user meetings, the scope of work is likely not obvious, is it small / medium / large / epic (and what is the criteria for each level for consistency)? To gain these insights, it is also important to consult with technical experts to gain insights into the implementation effort estimates. If a technical expert says that seems easy enough, couple days work then it should be a straight forward task. However, if the technical expert says, “our code will have to be rebuilt from the ground up to support this change”, then the story is more likely to be an epic level change.

In addition to the direct communication methods, a product owner should be aware of the competitions offerings and how the customers feel about those offerings, what do they like and dislike about the alternatives?

A product owner also needs to gather information about the impacts of the change outside the user’s experience, such as will this cause a massive hurdle to releasing the product into market due to regulatory impacts, or will it greatly increase the cost of productization, is it legacy hardware compatible or does new hardware need to created to support it. The whole picture needs to be understood before changes and user stories can be added to the backlog to ensure the right changes are made at the right time.