Dylan Dunagan

20 April 2025

CS-250: Software Development Lifecycle

Module 7: Final Project

As the Scrum Master for the SNHU Travel project, my job during this first sprint was to help the team deliver a functional application to provide a source for finding and booking travel destinations. Throughout the sprint, we followed Scrum-Agile principles to guide our development process, foster accountability and collaboration, as well as maintaining flexibility. This retrospective provides an overview of how the team contributed to successfully creating a valuable product, completed user stories, maintained communication, handled change, and utilized Agile tools.

For any sprint to have success, each Agile role must be clearly defined to ensure expectations and contributions are understood. The Product Owner was the main source of communication between the stakeholder, or client, and the rest of the Agile team. If the client did not meet with the team in the beginning, the Product Owner would meet with them and disseminate that information and the expectations to the rest of the team through user stories. By maintaining the user stories in the backlog, the team can understand where priorities lie for each section of the project. At the beginning of the sprint for SNHU Travel, the Product Owner made clear user stories of what the client was asking for, which was a list of the top five to ten travel destinations. That request was the top priority and was relayed to the rest of the team. After that there were lesser priority tasks such as having the top destination list customized to user settings, as well as having information next to the photos. This then allowed the development team to perform their duties with creating the software needed to complete these user stories. The development team quickly created a list of five of the top travel destinations with all applicable information requested. While the development team was working on the programming side of the software, the testers were creating their ideas on how to ensure the functionality of the software. The testers advised the development team of what tests they planned to perform, which allowed the development team to have more clarification as to exactly what was expected of them. Lastly, the Scrum Master facilitates the daily stand ups, reviews, and retrospectives, as well as helping with the planning and backlog management alongside the Product Owner. Through these daily stand-ups, the whole team understands what work needs to be done that day and gets more clarification on expectations.

The Agile approach to software development lifecycle helped user stories come to completion by breaking up the complex idea of SNHU Travel into smaller and much more manageable tasks. During the client meeting, the different heads of the Agile roles were able to identify dependencies and bottlenecks to have a clear view of where the project could have been held up. After all concerns were voiced, the Product Owner was able to revise the user stories to make them clearer as well as potentially adding more user stories because some tasks needed to be broken down even further. By completing these smaller tasks, it allows the team to receive feedback and adjust priorities as needed to ensure a quicker and more effective process to provide a valuable product.

After the development team created the functional list of top travel destinations, unfortunately a major change took place. The client realized that health and wellness vacations were becoming the next big trend and wanted the list to show the top health and wellness destinations instead, which required us to pivot. Fortunately, by leveraging the flexibility that Agile provides, we were able to revise the backlog, reprioritize, and adjust properly to still provide a valuable product that met all expectations. With a change of this nature, or even a bigger change, many questions and concerns can be brought to the surface from the rest of the Agile team, which is where communication is key for ensuring productivity.

The communication starts with the daily stand ups. This is where everything for the day is laid out on the table so that everyone is on the same page. As the day moves on, more questions can arise which requires more communication. This can be in the form of meetings, emails, or even as simple as just a quick face-to-face conversation. Throughout the SNHU Travel project, we primarily utilized emails. This ensured that there was always a paper trail of what the expectations were. We would also utilize meetings because in person meetings allow for much more information to be given all at once. The downside to meetings is that it requires planning to get every person that needs to be involved there and in attendance. The two real examples of when communication helped were when the testers were creating their test cases, they emailed the Product Owner to receive clarification on certain user stories. This ensured that their test cases were testing for the correct requirements. Next, when the project shifted to health and wellness destinations, the development team emailed the Product Owner for more clarification on exactly what needed to be changed.

To help with organization, Agile has tools built specifically for that. There are different kinds of software that provides effective ways to organize the backlog and user stories and make them accessible to everyone. They also use Azure boards and other kinds of visual aids as reminders of various pieces of information. Some of these visual aids come in the form of software so that if something changes, the team will be notified in real time and quickly, rather than through a slower process such as email. These tools are not to be confused with Scrum events. The Scrum events are things like daily stand ups and sprint reviews, where the Agile team works together to get on the same page and to critique how a sprint went so that they can do the next sprint better. The tools on the other hand are meant to be a helpful source that brings all the necessary information into one hub that is easy to maintain and find.

The Agile approach has many pros. To the SNHU Travel project, one was continuous improvement. Constantly completing user stories allowed defects to be found quickly and early enough to not become bigger problems down the line. There was also the flexibility that Agile provides. Without a flexible project management framework, when SNHU Travel shifted their priority, we potentially could have had to start completely over rather than just shifting our workload. Lastly the transparency that comes with the Agile model facilitates strong collaboration within the Agile team, and accountability with everyone involved, which all leads to faster delivery times. There are some cons of an Agile approach though. One is that it could create a large learning curve for new teams, especially if they are not currently using a project management method like Agile. Since Agile requires daily meetings and a large amount of communication, some people or teams might not be used to that, and it could create friction among the team. This unfortunately could make team members disengaged, and since Agile requires a committed team and active participation, that could easily pose problems. Lastly, Agile focuses on constant delivery, which could make a long-term road map hard to follow, especially if there are multiple changes interrupting the workflow. I do believe the Agile approach was a perfect fit for the SNHU Travel project. Since the goals for SNHU Travel were very clear from the beginning, and with the proper coordination amongst the team and client, we were able to provide a valuable product with the user’s needs in mind, that met all expectations.