Faris Malik

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CS 250 Final Project

**The Importance of Communication in a Scrum Team**

**Sprint Review and Retrospective**

As the Scrum Master of our team working on the SNHU Travel application, the difference from a traditional Waterfall approach to an Agile methodology using the Scrum framework was becoming more and more clear and helped me gain knowledge of communication in team settings. By this process it was observed that each and every role in the Scrum team was useful, firstly all the user stories were completed and secondly, the team was able to handle interruption gracefully. This retrospective aims to summarize our experiences, examine the tools and practices adopted in the Scrum-Agile framework and the validity of the framework.

**Applying Roles**

During the creation of the SNHU Travel application, it was important to specify the role of each individual in the Scrum team. The team had one member who acted as the Product Owner; his/her key role was to dissect the backlog in order to attend to those that were most crucial. Such prioritization was critical in controlling the scope of the project as well as ensuring that the development process responds to the change in the needs and/or requirements of the client.

The Developers on our team assumed full responsibility for their work assignments and well-coordinated during the sprints. Sprint stand-up meetings allowed Developers to present what they had done the previous working day, talk about issues affecting their productivity and get feedback on the spot. This cycle of interaction was important to ensure that continuous progress was made and that each sprint was a step towards a functional product.

In Scrum, there are several events which I was involved in as the Scrum Master when organizing these activities for the team; these include sprint planning, review, and retrospective. My responsibility also entailed overseeing the work flow of the team and to make sure that anything that would slow the progress was dealt with immediately. For instance, in one of the prior sprints, we faced a problem with an integration of a third-party API that we nearly lost. Thus, within several minutes if an organized team discussion we came up with other options we could implement and minimize drifting off the set plan. Every member of the Scrum team benefited for the project since it created a culture of cooperation and problem solving.

**Completing User Stories**

The Scrum-Agile approach was particularly effective in helping our team complete user stories. On the same note, we were able to dissect the project into smaller tasks and milestones to aim at releasing a basic working versions of the application at the end of each sprint. This means that the user stories were constantly under feedback from the client and adjustments were made as frequently as possible making it easy to deliver the final product that met the client’s requirements.

For example, one of the user stories included creating a subject like a search for the travel packages and its selection by the users. Initially, the filter was rather simple, as for the feedback during the sprint review, people wished to have extended filters. In the next sprint, we added filters such as price, destination and duration to make it an even more effective tool. This iterative result improvement would have been impossible in a ‘Waterfall’ model where feedback is given much later down the line.

**Handling Interruptions**

One of the strengths of the Scrum-Agile approach is its flexibility in handling interruptions and changes in direction. When working on the SNHU Travel application, the main issue that the team faced in the process of our practice was the fact that the client decided to expand the list of functionalities of the application in the middle of the development process and added the option of having a mobile version of the application. In a Waterfall approach such a request would have presented a lot of difficulties and could have been fatal to the project.

But there is one more advantage that aimed at high results, it is an effective switch to another working position that is possible only with the help of Agile methodology. They investigated the backlog, changed the priority of the user stories, and modified the targets for the sprint. This flexibility was further enhanced by the possibility of having regular sprint review and planning meetings where it was easy to integrate changes while following the set program. The exact flexibility to handle such interruptions is one of the main strengths within Scrum-Agile since clients can be unpredictable and may introduce additional requirements at any stage of the project without necessarily undermining the quality or the time constraints of the eventual project.

**Communication**

We aimed to pay significant attention to the principle of communication with team members. Throughout the project, different communication means were used to ensure that everyone is on the same page. For instance, we employed Slack as an application for real-time and fast-paced conversations together with quick updates to overcome various concerns without going through planned conferences. At the end of one sprint a Developer faced the problem of a bug which didn’t allow him to go to the next step. Because the team discussed the problem in the Slack channel, it was possible to come up with a solution instantly, which would have been impossible to deliver given the potential disadvantageous effects on the flow of the current sprint.

Also, we had a weekly video meeting aimed to discuss more top-p prioritize issues and make sure all members comprehend the project objectives and scope. Such meetings involved the basic principles of participative communication where everyone was allowed to express themselves and contribute in the formulation of solutions to the numerous challenges that arose. Such level of communication not only helped to manage the project and its progress, but also promoted teamwork and effective collaboration.

**Organizational Tools**

All the organizational tools and principles of Scrum-Agile described in the paper contributed to the success of the team. We had a backlog which was based in JIRA, here we were able to keep track of the backlog and the progress that was being made on a task-by-task basis. Especially, the functionality of user stories’ creation and their direct connection with the current sprint, progress tracking, as well as feedback integration during the product review process, was highly appreciated. It let the members of the team work transparently and helped in getting an understanding of the overall picture at a specific moment.

Other elements like sprint commitment meetings, daily scrum meetings etc. also acted as useful measures in maintaining coherence among the team. They are useful in offering feedback points for checking on the progress that has been made, the emerging barriers and how the process might be modified from one stage to another. These structured meetings made sense in the respect that it enable the team stay in structural form, whilst problems into the form of a structural project plan could be delt with quickly.

**Evaluating Agile Process**

The application of the Scrum-Agile approach in the development of the SNHU Travel application had several benefits and somewhat limitations. It allowed for the release of updates in small doses and for getting feedback in the process, which was one of the major advantages. This enabled us to work using real user input to improve the application that we were delivering to the end user, so that at the end of the day, we were very close to the needs of the client. Also, the ability to scale up or down in relation to the scope was a major determinant in managing the change in the client needs.

But as with any Agile system, a great deal of time, commitment, and discipline had to be brought forward by the team. Constant meetings and ideas sharing can be straining in a way because people have many other things to do. Secondly, flexibility offered by Agile can be a problem because they cycle through the development process several times, meaning that new ideas and forms are constantly added during the process.

Overall, I found it suitable that we applied the Scrum-Agile system to the SNHU Travel project. The advantages associated with flexibility of development, the continuity of feedback and collaborative work overshadowed the disadvantages of such an approach, making it the right choice for this type of development. This experience has illustrated how powerful Agile can be as a tool that delivers high-quality software that meets the client’s and users’ needs.

**Resources:**

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