The SNHU Travel Project has been a unique test for our team, both as a platform and as a process. We have made the transition from our more traditional Waterfall software development process to the SCRUM variant of the Agile process and have experienced both the benefits and the drawbacks associated with it. This has been a successful process however, as we are currently wrapping up our first development cycle using this new mthodology. This document will be a summary of this cycle and our takeaway from the shift to the new process.

Our initial meeting with the customer was highly productive and gave us a clear idea of what kind of platform they were looking for. They asked for a number of simple features: a “Top-Five Best Vacations” feature, the ability to sort by price and other criteria, and a recommendation system. In addition to these features, our team decided on building a robust user account system to track consumer purchases and travel history, an algorithm to sort through this data to build a list of recommendations, and a separate search menu to accommodate both the algorithm and any customers that didn’t agree with our “Top-Five” list. The sorting system for the new search menu would also be extended to the “Top-Five” list with the default being a curated set of travel destinations managed by the customer. Upon laying out this initial product plan, we turned it over to the development team to begin work on implementing these goals for a client demonstration.

During our production process, our product owner contacted us about a trend the customer had noticed in the travel industry and requested that we change our project guidelines to take advantage of this trend after launch. Ordinarily with a Waterfall approach, this request would have been made after the project launch or would not have been included in the project plan after we had entered development. However, due to our focus on producing more manageable sections of code and our close contact with the customer, we were able to quickly pivot. The change in focus was intended to take advantage of the rising trend in health or wellness focused activities and services. Upon asking the product owner for more information on the customer’s request, they indicated that the customer wanted to curate the “Top-Five” list to reflect this trend. As such, since most of the functional code would not need to change we were able to proceed with relatively little change to our product demonstration. We also made a note to add a filter for “Health and Wellness” to our search menu, curated list, and as a tag for travel options.

Further communication with out testing team during and after development during each Sprint cycle also did wonders for productivity: by allowing the teams to work together, we could save time by building in obvious test cases and adding others as potential problems were spotted instead of allowing them to leave active development unaddressed. This also means that the customer can be appraised of any potential concerns with project goals earlier than we could have done using a more traditional development cycle and allows us to incorporate the changes they make immediately as a result. As a result of this process, we were able to deliver a functional product with fewer severe impacts due to changes, errors in code or other issues that would ordinarily cause delays.

With this being said, we did identify some drawbacks or potential issues with this new process. The increased incorporation of customer input during every meeting meant that changes were more common than expected and directly influenced our development process. While the increased transparency aided the overall product design, there was some concern among developers that it could lead to significant delays if drastic changes were to be requested by the customer. There was also a concern about so much time being spent in meetings instead of working on the project that was raised during one discussion. Regardless, I believe that the Scrum methodology was the correct choice for our team during the SNHU project and I look forward to implementing the process during future endeavors.