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CS-250 Software Development Lifecycle

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Retrospective

After finishing the sprint, and completing our task on delivering a working and functional product, it is time to look back on the process and review. After all, there has never been a perfect sprint, only sprints that have performed better than the last. And for that to happen, the team needs to take into account what was done well, what can be improved upon, and how we can keep this momentum going for the next sprint.

I previously mentioned I was the Scrum Master, and my job was the same as it ever was. I was tasked with keeping effective and simple communication with all the team members in order to keep the sprint going. Of course, simple in-person meetups and stand-ups worked extremely well as the team could discuss what bothers them about the product, and what they could do to improve it without the concern of being lost-in-translation like online meetings or emails. The main hiccup was actually getting the team to properly communicate at the start, which is understandable. Working with a new team can cause some issues and anxiety to form, but it just took some more elbow grease from me in the meetings, as well as time for them to be open with each other. And with everyone on constant updates, with a board that’s clear for everyone, communication within the team was taken care of.

Communication outside the team, and with clients, was taken care of by the Product Owner. The mitigator between the team and consumer, the Product Owner would gather user stories made by clients and testers through meetings and focus groups. The Owner would then relay them to the team, and we would discuss what implementations could be better or worse for the product, and add/remove accordingly. If a feature needs modifications based upon the current trends or design philosophies, the Product Owner would be the one to meet with the developers to discuss the pivot. Without the Product Owner, both the development team and the clients would be lost and confused on the vision of the product.

However, without the development team, there would be no product at all. They were the ones that created the software for our product, thus actually making it functional. With the testing team and user stories to help them, they managed to bring the vision of a proper vacation website to life, and were able to change focus if need be, such as updating the websites for wellness vacations. The testing team should not be left out of praise, though, as they were a crucial step towards the development teams’ success. For every development change, bug fix, and new implementation from the development team, the Testing team was there to notify any mistakes or poor decisions made by the team.

Now with this whole setup, one may ask how big of a role Agile played within the development cycle. The answer, to put it bluntly, was that it played a huge and astounding role in making this cycle go smoothly. When the development team was working on the user stories, having constant feedback from the Product Owner and the rest of the team helped them in choosing the priority of what to work on allowed the team to finish all of the features, even the lower priority ones. When the product owner brought in last minute changes, the team was able to efficiently complete them within time without missing a beat. Things like the backlog could be changed in real-time as opposed with waterfall, meaning the team would not have to wait until they complete an unnecessary implementation to continue working.

One thing that has been key to all of this was the aspect of communication, as it was the saving grace that made everything work well. While we live in the digital era with emails, calls, and online meetings, the in-person meetings and daily stand-ups play a key role where the team can quickly and efficiently give thoughts and inputs on what to focus on or cut off. Even those who worked remotely could still voice their thoughts through the emails or meetings.

So, after this entry, one might think that Agile is the definitive approach to software development. However, there always is a caveat to a different development cycle. While efficient a significant amount of times, having a self-sufficient and self-leading team without a proper leader can confuse and distract many of the members. While some may enjoy the freedom and constant changing approach to the development, some would rather be hard-stuck given a task and be told to complete it. It all depends on the strength and communication of the team, where Agile shines in communication, that light can quickly dissipate without the proper teamwork.

The team has successfully used the Agile Approach to make the travel website, due to its ability to easily shift from one change to another based on feedback. From a basic vacation website to one based on wellness and health, as well as the UI functionality, the team was successfully able to pivot to finish the product on time and with the requested features.