Module 7 Sprint Review and Retrospective

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After completing the first ChadaTech company project using the agile methodology, it is a good time to look back and see what our team has learned over the past few weeks about agile and how we can apply this methodology to future projects. In this review we will go over the various roles of the scrum team, SDLC and user stories, change of direction, communication, and the overall effectiveness of the agile style approach to the SNHU Travel project.

The roles in the scrum team include the product owner, scrum master, developers, and testers. Starting with the product owner, this role is responsible for building a solution, or product, that a company needs to improve their business. In this case, it was developing a website for SNHU Travel where users have access to vacation information and booking. To ensure they build a good and working product, product owners hold meetings and interviews with stakeholders and users to correctly address their needs and preferences. The product owner also uses user stories, which I will go over more fully later, to simplify the product’s requirements into a more easily understood language shared by both developers and users.

The next role is the scrum master. This role works closely with the product owner by helping them focus down the product backlog. The scrum master also works closely with the development team by making sure they have everything they need to work effectively on the project. The scrum master also organizes and precedes over all scrum events such as the daily stand up, sprint planning, and this document: the sprint review and retrospective.

Developers are responsible for creating the product or solution that the product owner has planned out. Developers work in short periods or sprints, usually two weeks’ length, in which they tackle specific backlog items. The development team is responsible for self-organization during these sprints, and for clear communication with the product owner and testers of what is expected of them. This last part is especially important when changes are requested by the customer, as was the case in the SNHU Travel website.

The fourth role is the tester. The role of the tester is to create test cases from user stories and to ensure that each addition to the code works cohesively and does not break previous progress. To do so, testers might create programs to automatically check the program after each day. Testers must also have good communication with developers and the product owner to ensure that the test cases align with the direction of the project.

Moving on to user stories, the agile approach helped complete them in a few ways. In a scrum-agile approach, the highest priority stories were worked on first to ensure that they aligned with the product owner’s priorities and backlog. For each user story, an acceptance criteria was used to ensure a successful completion and release of each user story. In the SNHU Travel project, the acceptance criteria was used when creating the first slideshow of the top-five travel destinations. In that case, a clarification had to be made with the product owner regarding the style of presentation, and a quick response helped ensure that the product owner’s vision was being followed.

During the development phase, there was another big change that the scrum team had to address. The client requested that the travel locations focused on health and wellness destinations instead of just the most popular destinations. In response to that, the product owner made changes to the product backlog to prioritize this request and make sure the team focused on this change without delaying the final product. This quick change of direction exemplifies the strengths of the agile approach. Thanks to the scrum-agile approach, the team was able to accommodate this request on the spot without having to wait until after development as is the case of a waterfall approach.

Communication within the scrum team is essential for a successful final product. While face-to-face communication is the preferred method, sometimes the product owner might not be at the location when a developer or tester needs to clarify a part of the project. For those cases, email is a great form of communication to address those clarifications. The following is an example email requesting additional information from the product owner:

To: Product Owner or Tester

Subject: Project Update Clarification

Dear Product Owner / Tester,

Thank you for the time to answer my request for clarification on the changes requested for the project. Could you please clarify the new expectations regarding:

* Project requirements and project description
* Project deadline
* Any new priorities

Thanks,

Developer

Organizational tools and scrum events also helped maintain clear communication and organization within the team. During the daily stand up, developers and testers can express their progress and their struggles with the team. The team can then help them overcome their struggles through suggestions or teaming up with them to complete the task. A central board, such as the one used during the SNHU Travel scrum meeting, is also an organizational tool that can be used to show the team’s progress. Having another digital project management tool, such as JIRA, is a great way of updating the team’s progress in real time, which allows any problems and setbacks to be detected quickly and it allows the team to check the progress even if they are not at the office in person.

Agile is a great methodology for project development as it was applied in this case. While not a perfect system, the positives of using agile outweighed its disadvantages and was the best approach for this project. Considering the pros and cons, agile allows for quick and effective changes in direction. It allowed the travel project to refocus on health and wellness without pushing back the deadline. Agile also encourages a team effort instead of what usually happens in a waterfall approach where a few people are given most of the work. The disadvantages of agile are that not everything is known or perfectly defined for the scrum team when the project begins. This could be stressful for some developers who are used to knowing exactly what and when something is expected. However, this disadvantage is largely overshadowed by the flexibility that it brings to the project. Because of these advantages, I firmly believe agile was the best approach for this project and can be very useful on future projects.