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CS 250: Software Development Lifecycle

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Final Project: Sprint Review and Retrospective

As the Scrum Master, I was able to see how our Developers and Testers were able to work with the Product Owner to deliver a successful product to the SNHU Travel team with a Scrum-Agile workflow. Christy, our Product Owner, was able to work with our client, SNHU Travel, to develop and manage a number of user stories that were used to ensure that the development team had strong direction during development. By analyzing the needs and wants of the target audience, they were able to refine several stories that both gave direction to the project, but also acted as good working measurements of our progress. The Agile approach really excelled when SNHU Travel passed on a change in focus to our project and shifted the target audience/experience of the final product: we were able to quickly and easily alter our existing backlog in order to adapt to these changes and pass them onto our developers.

Our Developers and Testers also benefited greatly from our Agile approach by being flexible and altering the previous test cases to the new stories. With a focus on user personas and stories it allowed them to easily alter the direction of the project and quickly shift the new iterations of the project to match the client’s needs – detox and wellness focused vacation packages. This meant that there was little to no downtime or progress lost from altering the test cases to ensure that each new iteration test was still on target.

Likewise, as the Scrum Master, I was able to help communications between the Product Owner and the Development and Testing teams to help “grease the wheels” and ensure a smooth transition using proper Scrum-Agile methodology. This included facilitating our daily stand-ups to track and tackle any hurdles that we came across and report in with the Product Owner to further develop a strong system of refining the backlog based on the development velocity(s) throughout the project.

Our success can be traced back to a strong foundation of our User Stories that emphasizes the strength of the Software Development Life Cycle and Agile approach. Initial research and interviews with current SNHU Travel customers gave us a strong understanding of the requirements. We then used these stories to develop and implement a working prototype that had thorough testing procedures, which in themselves had their own Life Cycle. This deliverable was then passed onto the client for review which led to an evolution of the project parameters with a new focus. With this new focus we were able to re-analyze the new requirements and rapidly develop, implement, and test the changes to deliver an ever increasing in quality product.

This change in focus – switching from niche packages to a detox and wellness focus – might have been a massive interruption for traditional teams, but changes and evolution of the requirements is a natural and expected aspect of the Agile approach. Not only did we tackle the above-mentioned change in focus, but we were also able to adjust our micro procedures such as our quality testing methods. We created initial test cases in order to ensure that our deliverable was working as intended with each new feature. During the process there was an exchange between the Testers and the Product Owner to clarify the exact interface flow details to ensure everything was working as intended: this led to a new iteration on the test cases and, in the end, a product that works exactly as intended with button placements and visual layouts to specifications.

The exchange mentioned above is just one good example of the high level of communication that Scrum and Agile promote and utilize. Outside of inner-team communications, I, the Scrum Master, helped facilitate constant communication between our Developers and the Product Owner Christy. This involved regular sprint planning and clarifications that arose after they had decided on what stories to tackle each sprint. But it also became essential when the change in focus was passed on from the clients: while the user stories were being modified by the Product Owner and myself, the Development team was already getting started on altering their work with what immediate information they had. By communicating with the Product Owner to answer questions such as if the new focus should be the exclusive focus of the product and/or if the target vacation could be included in a larger overall travel package it both allowed for the developers to reiterate quickly as well as help the Product Owner get a feeling for how the backlogged stories should be altered to eliminate confusion going forward. This prompting of communication shows both how “tuned in” all of the team members are to the shifting parameters of the project, but also highlights how easily an Agile based project can adapt without additional headache and work needing to be done. This high level of communication between project roles was a natural extension of the communication fostered every day within the teams.

Utilizing “Daily Scrum Meetings” throughout the development process allowed for the team to start off every day with a solid understanding of both their current progress during that sprint as well as having a gameplan to tackle any obstacles they encountered. This was compounded by the use of a large Scrum Board acting as an ever present and evolving information radiator, having our daily meetings next to this board ensured that everyone started off each day on the “same page” and could easily track and ask questions about their progress. This allowed for there to be a strong and open working culture where developers are able to share successes and challenges to everyone’s benefit: working outputs directly correlated to user stories and project progress, while any potential issues leverage the overlapping skillsets and talents of all other developers. With our small, self-sufficient team being able to operate autonomously, with the information provided through communications with the Product Owner, allowed for fast iteration since everyone was familiar with and proficient with every aspect of the deliverable.

All of these Scrum-Agile practices and methods really came to light under the relatively short timeframe of the SNHU Travel project, especially with a substantial change in direction occurring during its development. The focus on adaptability and iteration was essential for both internal testing processes, but also with development from external changes to the project. With a traditional Waterfall style approach, we would have had major setbacks and/or substantial downtime where the development process would need to be reworked from the ground up to accommodate the changes. While the focus on iterative design might have led to poor initial work, relying on later iterations to “polish” and refine the product, by focusing on solid working deliverables as our measures of progress and quality work from the start we were able to complete the SNHU Travel project on time and with the requested parameter alterations. There is no doubt that the use of Scrum-Agile was key to the development, evolution, and delivery of this project.