The Product Owner must speak directly to the client and determine what that clients exact needs are. They then must relay those needs to the scrum master so that they can effectively direct the remainder of the team. In the case of SNHU travel the Product Owner met with the client and was able to determine they wanted to present popular destinations for their website. Including search criteria for price, and type of destination and travel; example: cruise, hiking, boating. The Scrum Master would then be able to ask questions of the Product Owner to clarify any misunderstandings or further specific requirements of the client. In the case of SNHU Travel some of the questions the Scrum Master might ask would be about date of completion, perhaps some specifics about layouts for the program. Having knowledge of the software process helps this position to be able to anticipate problems that may arise in order to more effectively create backlogs and scheduling.

Once the Scrum Master has clarified all they can from the Product Owner, they can then present the project to the team. Calling the team to meeting and describing in as great of detail as able. Given the scheduling and backlog presented by the Scrum Master, the Development team can begin to categorize the priorities of how to actually develop the program. This allows the Developers the ability to ask any questions they may have about the software needs of the client. They can then give that list of questions to the Scrum Master to pass on to the Product Owner for clarification. Who would then return to the Product Owner for answers to those questions. Once the Developers have understood the requirements and over-all project timeline and scheduling presented by the Scrum Master, they can then begin to develop the software.

During this process the Scrum Master would present the user stories, developed by the Product Owner using the client interviews, to the Testers. As part of the team the Testers would be involved from the very beginning. They would need to work directly with the Developers to determine how the software is being written, so they can effectively create tests for the software. The User Stories as a guide to help them test the software, the Tester would develop a series of tests to help determine if each piece of software correctly displayed the information necessary of each piece. In the case of SNHU Travel, a Tester would need to test the search option using the different parameters such as type of activities available, price parameter, are these the best deals available, and after the Client introduced the Detox/Wellness concept, the Tester would have to test that as well. This requires direct knowledge of the interviews conducted of the Client by the Product Owner in the form of User Stories, as well as knowledge of how the software was being written.

Together this team can efficiently perform the tasks necessary to complete the project on time. Each member of this team is necessary so that multiple levels of eyes, ears, and thoughts can present their questions, answers, and expertise in specific areas. This structure allows each member of the team to understand exactly what they are to be doing and how long they have to complete each portion of the software.

The Scrum method allows the team to begin development even without a complete concept of the software needs. By using SCRUM, the Product Owner was able to communicate with the Scrum Master who can ask questions they are concerned about. However, the Scrum Master does not need to wait for answers from the Product Owner before presenting the information to the team. In the case of SNHU Travel, the Scrum Master can approach the team with the information available at the time to get things started. Meaning, they can inform the team that SNHU Travel wants a program that will search for the best deals on travel destinations, they must have parameters for type of activities; cruise, hiking, biking, etc; and they should be able to search by price point. No matter what questions the team may have and express to the Scrum Master, they have enough information at that time to begin the process. By having the User Stories available at the beginning of the development cycle, the Developers and Testers can begin the process of writing their software or preparing their tests. This allows the team to begin development even before all questions are answered.

This also allows the team to have flexibility in the instance that SNHU Travel introduces a Detox/Wellness criteria. By using SCRUM the team is able to adapt the software more easily than if they had been given a “written in stone” version of software needs from the client. Given that they may not have all the answers to their questions when they begin development of the software, it is easier to change course in the middle of the project. After the introduction of the Detox and Wellness criteria, the Developers have the option of changing a few functions in their code, or scrapping the existing functions and creating new ones. This also allows the Testers to change course fairly easily. They can simply change a few parameters in their tests, and get the test results needed to assist the Developers in correcting any mistakes that have been made.

During the development cycle the Scrum Master and team would use a whiteboard and an Information Radiator. The whiteboard is effective for communicating quickly the activities of the team members at any given time. A quick glance and once could see what each Developer or Tester is working on that day. The Scrum Master can even inform the entire team of any new functions or sections of the software the Client and Product Owner have presented. The whiteboard could also be used to communicate any questions the team have, or help the team may need from another member. The whiteboard is only a part of the Radiator, as other forms of communication were used. Stand-ups were used to directly communicate with other team members in a way that the entire team understood exactly what needs or issues another member may have been facing. These allowed the Scrum Master to be able to definitively understand the needs of the team and any hold-ups that may present themselves. This way the Scrum Master could relay those concerns back to the Product Owner, and the backlog could be updated multiple times a week. This allowed the development to progress continuously throughout the project.

Scrum presented a few challenges and advantages during the project. Some of the advantages were the ability of the team to view the progress of each member as well as the parts of the software yet to be developed. The Whiteboard offered the team the ability to see each part of the software and its importance in relation to the timeline agreed upon by the team. The whiteboard allowed the Testers to understand when they were likely to have software components given to them for testing, giving them the ability to develop those tests in an orderly manner. NO sense in developing a test for a software component you won’t get for three weeks when you can develop a test for a software component you’re likely to get tomorrow. The Information Radiator is a very useful tool when utilized correctly. Stand-ups were helpful in this scenario because it allowed the whole team to be on the same page so to speak. It allowed each member to express their needs, and concerns and ask for assistance if needed. Open communication is always a positive when working in a team.

Some of the cons to the Scrum method are timeliness of responses to questions from the team. Though some communications can garner a response very quickly, I can see where it is possible some of those won’t. As a Developer having to funnel questions through the Scrum Master to the Product Owner who then has to present that question to the Client, this can create a backlog of answers. If one of those communications goes unanswered for days or weeks, that can severely impact the ability of the Developers from completing a portion of the software based on the team timeline. If any of these communications go unanswered, the entire Project can be stalled. Fortunately this also present another useful benefit to SCRUM, in that as mentioned above, the overall development of the project may be able to continue because the team can simply move onto another portion of the project until they receive the clarification they need. Which is one way the SCRUM approach to project management the most versatile approach available for a project like SNHU Travel; and possibly the best approach to use for a project such as this.

As the Scrum Master.

Good morning team, we have a new project ahead of us for SNHU Travel. The Product Owner has interviewed the client and we have a few User Stories for the Tester group. I suggest the Developers also review these stories to understand how the software should operate for the SNHU Travel. In this project SNHU Travel would like to have a web-based program that displays the top 5 most popular vacation destinations. These destinations should be presented as a top 5 list with images, descriptions and locations. SNHU Travel would like to have User Profiles for members of their website. The User Profiles should have several preference options so they can set preferences such as Cruises, Hiking, Biking, Swimming, Markets, Etc. I am currently awaiting clarification of a complete list from the Product Owner and will get those to you ASAP. We have five weeks to complete this project. Any questions.

This initial meeting with the team is a good one since it covers all of the basics that I as Scrum Master have from the Product Owner to the team. It gives the Developers and Testers enough information to begin the process of developing the software as well as the tests. The team can begin to write effective code that only needs to have specifics added at such time when those specifics are given.

Also as Scrum Master.

Good morning team. You have been working hard and diligently on this project and at the start of week three, we must immediately shift gears. SNHU Travel has requested that instead of the software providing the top 5 most popular destinations, the software needs to display the top five most popular Detox and Wellness destinations. Nothing else at this time is changing, and there are a few specifics I’m waiting on the Product Owner to clarify, but the change needs to happen immediately. We are still stuck to our previous launch date. Any questions?

I feel this communication would also be effective in that it describes the changes needed while still providing the team with a path of communication through the Scrum Master for any questions they may have. As with the previous communications this would open up discussion throughout the team members on what specifics would need to be altered in the existing software, and which members of the team should handle those changes. It also allows the Testers to reevaluate their tests so that the project can remain on time.