Module 7 Journal: Retrospective

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As the scrum master for the SNHU Travel Pro application, I had a multitude of items to work through every single day. First thing in the morning I had to make sure that the daily stand-up meetings were performed to gauge where the development progress is. I was constantly making sure that everyone felt comfortable with their own progress, what was expected of them, and fixing any internal issues. Fixing internal issues is a big thing that I have to worry about. In the case of Christy, needing the project to suddenly focus on wellness style vacations instead of personalized packages was a massive change. I had to be certain that the new requirements were stated, or we would have rolled out a massive failure.

Our product owner Christy was wonderful throughout the entire process. She made sure to get in contact as soon as she could when any issues arose, or clarification was needed for any of the technical requirements we had received. During the sudden transfer from having a list of “Top 10 Vacations” to more wellness-oriented vacations, she made sure to get in contact with us as fast as possible to let us know. She was essential for getting out backlog and user stories in order and making sure that all of the functional requirements were met.

The development team was wonderful in being able to break up all the user stories into very clear and manageable tasks with both pass and fail metrics. During the initial breakdown of the user stories, they all made sure to gauge how large of a task each story was, what needed to be done, how it would be deemed complete, and any fail metrics that could be counted against completion. One developer asked a great question when we found out there was a swap over to wellness vacations. He made sure to ask about the timeline possibly changing. In the case of Agile, a delay is nowhere near as bad as compared to using waterfall, but it is good to make sure that the deadlines either have or haven’t changed due to the new requirements. This helped us restructure the user stories to better fit the new requirements while staying within the deadline.

Due to the agile process being very iterative based, this led to us having a much easier time when it came to completing the user stories for the travel software. The short sprints were the biggest factor in making these as easy as they were. These sprint sessions allowed us to break down all the requirements into smaller stories and focus on smaller chunks at one time instead of with waterfall and it being all linear with no real check-in situations or progress updates. The biggest help with this was breaking down the mobile app development later in the cycle.

Agile as well helped us massively when we ran into any interruptions. In a waterfall situation we would have had no choice but to essentially wait until after rollout, and then go back to fix issues. Using agile we were able to go back at a moment’s notice and work on things when there was some down time. This was very good in the case of switching vacation types from user personalized to wellness as it let us make the changes right as we were developing, and the team not having to perform a large rewrite directly after a rollout. I have a strong feeling that, if we had to do the rewrite, a lot of the team would be very overwhelmed and could potentially leave the company entirely to have better mental and even physical wellbeing.

Communication is another monumental component to the agile development process as it allows for team members to work through many issues without having to pass it over to others in a “telephone” fashion. The daily scrum meetings and the sprint reviews allowed us as a team to come together, decide what needed to be focused on first, analyze current progress, and make any changes with overwhelming approval. A good example, yet again, is the changeover from the top destinations to the wellness focused ones. The group meetings and check-ins with the owner, shareholders, and others allowed us to find out about any changes that either had to happen or were needed as soon as possible before anything got too far along to reliably change. Overall communication as well helps in cases where one developer is having an issue that another person could solve. If one has a little free time, others can help out and keep the flow going.

Many of the scrum events such as the sprint planning phase, daily scrum meetings, and end of sprint reviews were great for keeping everything organized throughout the development process. The end of sprint reviews helped us to figure out any current bottlenecks or items that could have transformed into one down the line. One thing that I wish we decided to use are the many iterations of a decision board or development log system such as Trello. Trello would have been a brilliant way to organize the tasks that were in progress, still left to complete, or had already been completed as you are able to create individual categories for each and any others needed.

Overall, I would say that using Agile instead of the waterfall method that ChadaTech has been using for years on end was a wonderful change of pace, and made everyone's lives a lot easier during deadline pressures. The biggest benefit of the agile development method is how flexible it is compared to waterfall. I would argue that the biggest downfall of waterfall is how linear the progression is, and this leads it to be very hard to make any changes after something is already done. Being able to incorporate the feedback from our shareholders and Christy basically as soon as we receive it was a very nice benefit of agile as we would be able to receive feedback on their feedback being added as fast as possible. The only real downsides I can think of for Agile are the iterative nature leading to a monumental scope creep as a sprint progresses, and the shorter sprint lengths possibly leading to overworking if hard to fix issues arise very close to a deadline. I still do believe that the best method for the SNHU Travel Pro project was to use Agile, and there is a good chance that waterfall could have been a nightmare to work with some of the late-stage changes that were needed like the mobile application.