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Sprint Review and Retrospective

Throughout the SNHU Travel project we have implemented an agile methodology with a Scrum framework. Implementing these practices has allowed us to deliver a better product and has helped our team work together in a more cohesive and productive way. This retrospective will outline the contributions of the specific Scrum roles. It will also demonstrate how a Scrum-agile approach helped to complete the project and enhance communication in the face of changing expectations. Lastly it will explain the tools used, and the overall effectiveness of the Scrum-agile approach in completing the SNHU Travel project.

The various roles on the Scrum team helped to make the project a success by satisfying different needs of the project. The Scrum Master is a servant-leader who creates the best possible conditions for the team to succeed. During the SNHU Travel project the Scrum Master planned and executed a variety of Scrum Events, including Sprint Planning, Daily Scrums, Backlog Refinement, Sprint Review, and Sprint Retrospective. These events helped to keep the team focused and agile and made it possible for the team to overcome obstacles that might have slowed the project otherwise. One such obstacle was vague user stories at the beginning of the project. The Scrum Master was able to interface with the Product Owner to iron out specific details. The Product Owner facilitated success by being an advocate for the client throughout the project. One way they did this was by having a focus group with users of the SHNU Travel platform. The consumers provided clear insight on what they wanted, and what wasn’t important to them. They gave the Product Owner a place to start to plan the project.

Two other important roles on the Scrum Team are the Developers and the Testers. Without the Developers, the product would only exist as an idea. Developers take the instructions from the Scrum Master and the Product Owner and put them into practice. In the SNHU Travel project, the developers implanted the designs of the product by focusing on the user stories created by the Product Owner. These stories told the Developers what the SNHU Travel users wanted, and how the product should function. One example of this was the users desire to be able to search vacations by price. The developers were able to add this functionality. The Testers took the developed product and tested it against the user stories to ensure completion. The user stories allow the tester to know what the client wants, and how the development team is expected to accomplish those wants. Each user story allowed the Testers to create unique and thorough test cases. In the SNHU Travel project, the Product Owner designed user stories based on an initial meeting held with real life users. The needs expressed in this meeting were written up as user stories, and passed on to the Developers, who then passed them to the Testers.

The SNHU Travel project was successful partially because of specific and well-defined user stories. These user stories were written with direct input from the actual product customers. User stories were helpful to the Scrum Team in multiple ways. Firstly, they prioritized which tasks should be worked on in what order. The larger stories dominated the sprints, while small stories were with as time allowed. Secondly, the user story value statements gave a clear picture to the Developers of what the stakeholders wanted and what was important to them. They focused the tasks and made an overarching goal for the team to achieve. Additionally, the user story acceptance criteria set a minimum level for completion. By meeting these criteria, and nothing more, the team was able to produce a streamlined product that met the expectations of the client. Lastly, the user stories were able to be flexible because of the nature of the agile approach. When the client decided to shift their focus to “wellness vacations”, the user stories were able to be updated, and the product easily changed.

While creating the product for the SNHU Travel project communication was a necessity for success. In a traditional waterfall structure communication is predominantly top-down. In taking an agile approach for this project, it was important for all members of the team to be able to communicate with each other. It was similarly important for stakeholders to be able to communicate with the team. One communication practice which helped our team complete this project was focused client meetings with the Product Owner. We felt that the best way to deliver a product that the client would be happy with was to keep them involved in planning and production. By having meetings with users, the Product Owner was able to keep the product backlog groomed and priorities organized. The ability of the Product Owner to communicate the client’s needs to the Scrum team helped eliminate waste and streamline production.

Another practice that helped communication within the team was daily standups. These were 15-minute daily meetings where we laid out any issues we were having, and what we were going to work on for the day. While discussing our shift into agile, I sent the following message to our Developer, Katherine “Hi Katherine, I think if we use Azure Boards, we can keep everyone on the same page.  As the Product Owner, my plan is to keep the product backlog updated online.  We can use this as our information radiator and assign tasks to each team member.” This encouraged collaboration by directing the team to our information radiator. An information radiator is a visible display of what is going on within the team. It shows current and completed tasks, as well as who is working on them and their progress towards completion. An important part of an information radiator is high visibility. Every member of the team, as well as outside stakeholders, should be able to see what is being worked on and how progress is going.

In today’s environment, using an online platform can help team members and stakeholders in varying locations stay connected to the project. Our team decided to use Azure Boards. This tool helped us be successful in the various Scrum Events. In Sprint Planning Azure Boards was helpful because we were able to set up each user story and assign it to a developer. We could easily decide how many story points to assign each story, as we all had the Azure Boards screen accessible. In our Daily Scrums Azure Boards kept everyone up to date with the status of projects. Developers could see any new tasks that had been created by the Product Owner and Scrum Masters, and they could update each other on the progress of tasks that had already been assigned. Azure Boards also had great tools for seeing how much work was completed, and who completed which tasks. This was helpful during the Sprint Review and during the Sprint Retrospective. Looking back on what we were (and more importantly what we weren’t) able to accomplish allowed us to better prepare for our next sprint.

Overall, I believe that the Scrum-agile approach was the best approach for the SNHU Travel project. Primarily, it helped us to be communicative and decisive about tasks within the project. The ability to make changes after the onset of the project allowed us to be flexible and deliver a product that was ideal for the client. The Scrum Master was a helping hand to the developers, as he was not a project manager, but a servant-leader. The Product Owner kept the team organized and kept the client engaged with production. If it had not been for the Scrum-agile method the product created would likely have been far inferior to what the team was able to deliver.