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CS 250

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7-1 Final Project

Applying Roles:

Throughout this course I assumed the role of various members of a Scrum team. The team was transitioning from a waterfall approach to an Agile approach to develop an application for the customer SNHU Travel. The team consisted of a Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Development Team (which consisted of Developers and Testers). This paper seeks to provide an analysis of the Scrum-Agile methods applied to this project. For this analysis, I will draw conclusions about how these methods did or did not contribute to the final deliverable.

Product Owner:

Every member of the team is a critical player in an Agile project. This role is important because it is a direct link between the client and the Development Team. As the Product Owner, my responsibilities go beyond traditional project management. I had to define the requirements for how the project would be implemented. Part of the requirements came directly from the client while other input was collected from a focus group that I conducted with various end-users. I was responsible for creating and prioritizing User Stories to add to the Product Backlog. These User Stories would subsequently shape the way the Development Team would approach the project from start to finish.

Scrum Master:

When I assumed the role of Scrum Master, I was tasked with supporting the Product Owner with Backlog creation and maintenance while ensuring total transparency at all levels within the Scrum team. I was the liaison between the Development Team and Product Owner. Once the Product Owner defined the User Stories, I would facilitate a Sprint Planning session to review each of the User Stories that would get accepted into the first Sprint. During the Sprint Planning session, we implemented the planning poker estimation technique. This technique helped the team to define the level of effort required for each User Story. Once the Backlog items were defined, project development began. I facilitated daily Standup meetings which is a quick fifteen minute meeting to go over the day’s activities. The benefit of these Standup meetings is to maintain transparency and to identify and mitigate any uncertainty that could impact development. My goal as Scrum Master was to be a resource for the team and to provide guidance in the Agile methodology.

Development Team:

In the roles of the Development Team, as Developer, I was given creative freedom to structure my code as I see fit using industry best practices. As a Tester, my responsibility was to collaborate with all members of the team to create test cases in order to identify any bugs that may be introduced. Both of these roles served as critical components to the Scrum-Agile process.

Completing User Stories:

The Scrum-Agile approach to the SDLC, really helps to isolate critical functionality within a project. Software planning can be very complex if not executed properly. Having the ability to break down complex tasks into smaller increments is key to a successful deployment. With the SNHU Travel project, requirements were collected from end-users where we created User Stories. These User Stories defined the functionality of these requirements. User Stories are meant to be short but descriptive enough to be understood by both users and Developers. The standard practice for User Stories is to state the requirement and isolate the functionality and its purpose. A User Story consists of the who?, what? and why? The “who” represents the intended user, the “what” represents what the user needs to accomplish in order to complete a task and the “why” represents the reason behind the functionality which adds value to the requirement.

Handling Interruptions:

Agile, by definition, means “flexible” and “responsive” and by that very definition is not immune to changes. Agile projects are expected to have some level of uncertainty. For example, the change in direction for the SNHU Travel project to focus on detox/wellness travel allowed us to take what was already developed and revise the code to support the new requirement.

Communication:

With the SNHU Travel project, the requested changes sparked questions regarding the functionality of the existing code base. As a Developer, it is my job to mitigate redundancy while being mindful not to introduce new bugs. This mindfulness was evident in the communication to the Product Owner and Tester as seen in the email below:

“To: Christy (Product Owner); Brian (Tester)

Cc: Ron (Scrum Master)

From: Connor (Developer)

Subject: NEW requirements clarification and testing guidelines

Hi Christy & Brian,

As per our discussion, I am beginning to revise the code to implement the new requirements for the focus on detox/wellness travel destinations.

If the original code base is not changing, then this new addition should be fairly simple to implement. However, Christy, would you be able to confirm with the customer if they would like to have the default display set to view detox/wellness destinations or would they like the user to select it in their traveler profile? Also, Brian, would you be able to provide me with some test case scenarios so that I can implement them in my code?

Thanks, Connor”

I feel this email was concise yet to the point. This communication restates the requirement, then asks for clarification from the Product Owner. I then ask the Tester to provide additional testing requirements so that I can implement them in my code base. There is also a calmness to the tone of my writing which suggests a willingness to be proactive rather than display a vehement feeling of resentment for having to accommodate an unexpected change. Depending on the Product Owner’s response, the Tester may also want to create new test cases based on the requested information and submit to them to me. I think this communication helps to foster a cohesive environment of transparency and collaboration.

Organizational Tools:

There are several tools that can help a Scrum team transition to Agile. For the SNHU Travel project, the tools utilized were Azure DevOps and JIRA. Azure DevOps helped the team by facilitating the transition into an Agile environment. The tool allowed the team to develop the project by creating a Product Backlog, User Stories, and Sprints. We used JIRA to manage individual tasks and bugs. Both of these tools were a great way to maintain transparency in a distributed team environment. Our daily Standups were also conducted remotely with the use of video conferencing tools such as Webex and Skype. These tools provide an alternative to traditional information radiators. They provide a convenient visual representation of the project and its activities in real-time.

Evaluating Agile Process:

I think the implementation of Agile in this project had its benefits but it also had some drawbacks. The SNHU Travel project was also difficult to predict. Without a way to control the scope of the project, it can easily go off-track and over budget. Scope expansion is almost inevitable in an Agile project as the needs of the customer can change at any given moment. The upside to the lack of predictability is that while requirements may change, the quality of the product increases as does the involvement and satisfaction of the stakeholders.

Overall, I think the implementation of Agile to the SNHU Travel project was a great choice because it allowed for greater transparency and more flexibility. We also decreased the risk of having missed a critical requirement of the customer. In the end, a quality product was delivered that satisfied both the Development Team and customer.

In conclusion, Agile is becoming more accepted among project management teams. However, not all projects are created equal. It is important to have an understanding of the requirements before committing to an Agile approach. Access to critical resources can also help when implementing Agile into any project. In my opinion, the benefits of producing a quality product that adds value far outweighs the level of uncertainty that comes with Agile. Value-based products are the key to stability within an organization as well as customer retention.

References:

Charles G. Cobb. (2015). The Project Manager’s Guide to Mastering Agile: Principles and

Practices for an Adaptive Approach. Wiley.