**Sprint Review and Retrospective**

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Frameworks within the agile methodology such as Scrum have greatly helped streamline the production of the SNHU travel project. A key part of the Scrum ideology has been the quick ability to adapt to customer needs through the specific roles given throughout the team. To start, the product owner has become an essential role to connect the team with the stakeholders. My initial role, with the Scrum Master, was to develop a plan based on the customer’s needs. I would then help prioritize certain stories within the product backlog to help ensure the team is productive. One such example of the value of the product owner is when the customer decided to shift the product focus to more of a detox/wellness vacation package. The development team had to quickly adapt to this change. To help the team, the product owner reorganized the backlog to ensure the team had the focus necessary to finish the task within the sprint timeline.

The Scrum Master has also been crucial to facilitating the project. Under this role, I was to ensure all the agile practices within Scrum are understood and followed. Through daily scrum meetings, I guided the team through these principles by asking the questions: What did you do yesterday? What will you do today? And are there any impediments? These questions help with transparency in the project and help me handle any type of impediments that may arise in the project. To reflect on this role, a large part of the Scrum Master’s involvement in the SNHU travel project was in developing the agile team charter which was the blueprint for the daily scrum and the upcoming sprint. Here, I laid out the basic roles and rules to ensure everyone is understanding of their responsibilities under agile.

Another important role to the project has been the product tester. The constant and concurrent testing within agile development is a large benefit that helps prevent and handle any issues early in the process. This aids the team in achieving its definition of ‘done’ and helps potentially proved shippable products after each sprint. The tester develops a plan of attack the make sure the quality of the product meets the customer’s needs. For this specific project, I used the user stories to build test cases for the project. Here, I can give a pass or fail to each element that the development team produced. This helped quickly identify issues that need to be address before the end of the sprint.

Finally, the development team is the last piece of the Scrum puzzle. They need to be adaptable and committed to ensure a quality product is presented to the customer. These qualities were certain present in the SNHU project when the product owner discussed changes within the customer’s vacation focus. The team had worked hard to develop a workable product and for sudden changes to the plan to occur can certainly be disheartening. However, the adaptability of a development team within agile methodology certainly helps attain goals more effectively. Instead of causing delays, with some adjustments from the product owner, I was able to deploy a deliverable product that met the customer’s needs.

Along with the backlog, the product owner helps create user stories based on the customer’s desires. These stories each describe a piece of customer wants that provide a framework for the team for development. Each story uses a value statement that identifies the end user and specifically identifies the desired output; acceptance criteria is then developed to help achieve the desired output. User stories are the backbone of the agile process. For the SNHU project, the product owner was able to identify and prioritize certain elements for the product backlog. Here, I was able to identify the scope of the tasks and help determine the quickest and most effective way to manage the end goal. I also used these stories as the tester to help set test cases for the product. This helped with any bugs within the code. Finally, the user stories are what the development team worked on to produce the product. For this project, I was able to quickly identify the acceptance criteria and develop the product on the customer desires. The scrum – agile approach also used these stories to help develop project estimation to help maximize adaptability and produce workable code in a certain timeframe. One such practice done was with affinity grouping that helps identify story sizes that helps in prioritizing certain tasks.

As stated above, a key benefit of agile is the adaptability it provides. Changes can occur at any time during a project and one such instance occurred for SNHU travel as well. The product owner called a meeting and mentioned the customer’s desire to shift focus to detox/wellness-based vacations – a niche market that they wanted to exploit. To react, the product owner shifted the product backlog to match the new requirements. I then made the necessary changes and the tester developed new test cases. The small iterations within the agile framework allowed quick changes that did not affect timeline or the functionality of the product.

Communication is an important part of any type of management of a project. For agile, it helps ensure there is transparency and adaptability within the project. These two core values of scrum help keep the project on track and focused to optimize the product according to the customer’s needs. An example of this is when I took a developer role in the team and needed to adjust to the customer’s desire to shift to the new vacation package. I felt I did not have all the necessary information to effectively complete the task, so I sent the following emails to the product owner and tester:

Dear Product Owner,

I am working on the new updates that the client has requested. I understand the product backlog has been updated in accordance with these new requests. What are the new prioritized criteria? Also, what type of detox/vacation packages are they prioritizing? This information will help me develop the appropriate functionality that the client may desire.

Thank you,

Sean

To: Tester

Subject: Detox/Wellness package test cases

Dear Tester,

I am working on the new updates for the SNHU Travel product. How have the test cases been updated with the new information from the client? We have gone to a slideshow format for the lists, since this function is not changing, has the list order changed?

Thanks

Sean

These communications helped me prioritize certain tasks for the project and provided the transparency necessary to ensure I was not developing something that the customer may not want or need. It provided clarifying questions to the product owner who could then connect with the customer and helped the tester know exactly what I was specifically working on so he can plan to test my code. Effective communication enhances the adaptability throughout the process and does not simply stop at a planning phase.

There are many useful tools that can help a team with its communication practices and transparency. One such organizational tool is Jira, which is a project management software. This tool really helps the team manage user stories, product backlogs, and product progress in real time. Since agile is iterative and everything is refined as needed, Jira helps give the entire team a central place to view any changes and to adapt quickly. This tool can be useful in Scrum Events such as sprint planning where the team discusses the value of the sprint, what can be done in this iteration, and how the chosen work will get done. With Jira, the product backlog can be set up with workflows and test cases all in one place where anyone can access it. This level of transparency only enhances collaboration among the team.

Throughout the course of the development of this project, I have seen the many advantages for using an agile based approach. The small iterations of the project certainly help reduce the workload while ensuring functioning product. It also provides incredible flexibility within the scope of the project. Changes can be made quickly and without disrupting the final product. One last advantage is with the management of time and money. An example in this project is once again the situation where the customer changed their desired focus. In any other management method, this would have caused serious delays that could be detrimental to finishing the project. Instead, changes were made quickly which saved both time and money. The only disadvantage example I have for this is if the team is not responsive with communication it can be difficult to implement. A more specific example is for the discussion for moving from waterfall to Scrum. One member of the group put little effort in implementing Scrum practices while another did not involve themselves at all. With such a focus on good and effective communication, it is essential that everyone is on board and involved in order to really optimize agile practices. Besides all of that, I feel that it was the best method for producing the SNHU travel product.