**Chada Tech: SNHU Travel Retrospective**

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CS-250: Software Development Lifecycle

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Looking back on my latest Scrum Master project, a niche vacation booking system for SNHU Travel’s website, has shown me how invaluable a good Scrum Team is. Throughout the project, the Product Owner met with the client and stakeholders to collect user stories and built the product backlog from the obtained information. As the Scrum Master I assisted the Product Owner with the backlog by working with the development team to make sure items were broken down into appropriately sized parts and assisted the company with integrating agile methodology with Scrum habits such as the Daily Scrum and explaining things as necessary. The developer on our team was invaluable in creating the deliverables for the client. Without the developer and the tester working together, this project would have been much slower to complete. Between the two of them, they communicated via email and in person to create a quality product that met the client’s specifications and reasonable wants.

Utilizing Scrum was important to our company’s switch to an agile methodology, particularly with meetings. Collecting information as we worked on the project allowed for more flexibility on changes and an opportunity to show the client progress. Our Product Owner collected user stories and worked with the rest of the team to break them down into appropriate chunks. Setting up each user story included creating acceptance criteria. After determining acceptance criteria the team worked with the tester to develop step-by-step checks to be passed by this part of the program.

One example from this travel project was to allow users to sort and filter through top destinations by price, which ended up with four checkpoints as acceptance criteria. To mark this user story complete, the deliverable had to have a price filters button on the top destinations page with the ability to sort in either ascending or descending order, a text box for entering a maximum price point, and the search results had to refresh when the filters were applied to display the new appropriate top destinations. Once the acceptance criteria had been decided, test checks for this user story included navigating to the top destinations search page appropriately and then checking that the filter options were present before checking the options to make sure they work appropriately.

During one of the later meetings the client decided that they wanted to focus specifically on niche wellness vacations, this was smooth to implement due to agile principles. The code itself did not require excessive changes, mostly just to the location options and their highlight description. Since the tool was being coded incrementally there was not a major overhaul required like there could have been with a waterfall approach where the entire project would likely be fully coded before being demoed. The agile approach allowed the client to see that they wanted something a bit different than they initially thought.

Throughout the duration of this project, I have emphasized the need for a Daily Scrum because I believe that a brief daily meeting is a good method of collaboration. This meeting allows everyone to see the progress on the work in progress. The ability to communicate frequently and effectively is essential to the agile methodology to maintain flexibility. In addition, I argued against in-depth documentation for a project and instead recommended establishing basic requirements and creating short notes as necessary throughout the project. These methods of communicating encourage collaboration by helping the team learn to work on things together in the same place, also allowing an environment for questions, and hopefully keeping from getting hung up on failures which are simply methods to learn from.

The change in plan was a wonderful example of the agile principle of customer collaboration over contract negotiation as well as responding to change over following a plan. If we had still been using a strictly plan-driven method then this change would have resulted either in a rework after most, if not all, of the product was demoed, or in a less satisfied client. In addition, this was fueled by the adaptive approach of daily communication between the project team and SNHU Travel stakeholders.

Overall, while there were benefits, such as breaking the project into smaller parts and fostering a close relationship with the customer, and cons, like the need to get used to not having an entire plan for the program laid out from the start, I believe that the agile methodology was a better fit for this project than a waterfall approach would have been. Without the cooperation of the Scrum Team, however, this could easily have turned out more difficult, so training and patience are definitely a must when incorporating Agile into a company that has previously focused on plan-driven operations.