A Final Prospective: Retrospective

Today was our final sprint review for our project with ChadaTech, and while we were able to successfully roll out the product, to the client’s satisfaction, some areas are to be addressed. In the preparatory phase, the Product Owner was a huge proponent of client relations. They were able to gather much needed information on what was needed for the product, including specialized features like requesting the style of list they desired when conducting the Travel website. They also went above and beyond answering requests from our developers on how the client wanted certain features to look and feel. A lot of emails were sent back and forth between developers/testers and the Owner on features like: filtering for the search results, slideshow style/versus scrolling list styles for display, and especially when the client switched to wanting specific wellness retreats, rather than a overall top 10 list. Myself, as the master, attempted to maintain specialized communication for any technical or business break downs in communication between the Owner and the development team. I found myself hardest at work with this during the breakdown from Top 10 lists to wellness retreats for the website, as the development team had a lot of questions and felt a tad overwhelmed from the spontaneous transition, fielding a lot of concerns that were discussed between myself and the owner when we first found out about this transition. Besides that huge roadblock, I found myself mostly conducting the busy work, to ensure the team had the maximum amount of time to work on features and testing. Lastly, the team had the hardest portion of work. They built the product based on what the client requested and what the reviews held on the Kanban board we had. They meticulously worked with each other and with the owner to crank out every task designed for the website. From the initial design of the top 10 website to the changes from scroll down to slideshow and finally the split second change to wellness/detox ventures. They hit every change in stride and were able to deliver the product in a timely manner, and within specifications of the client.

User stories are an important tool for developers to think in different perspectives when developing features for their product. Agile’s incremental approach, helps the developer design user stories to develop very specific features that any sort of end user may want for their product. While also being freely designed and thought of due to the very small iterative cycles that agile supports as well, this means that the developer can create numerous user stories for the board, or the client can add their own through the Owner for the developers to build without interrupting the flow of the product creation, because everything is developed in smaller segments to the overall completion of the product. Back when the SNHU Travel site was being developed, the initial user stories were just for overall design of the filtering system, after the overall design was changed to a slideshow, the altering of the user stories were easy, and did not distract from the overall product design, because of the iterative nature of Agile. It really was easy and altering the stories during the sprint, and tweaking small matters of code to be successful with the new stories. This also transitions well with all the interruptions that were present in the design process. Because of adaptable user stories, when the Travel website had to be changed 2 times for different client desires, the small iterative sprints made the interruptions non-detrimental to the project. While yes, annoying to the development team that major portions of the code had to be redesigned to support the new image, the work was tackled by the team seamlessly through the kanban board stories and the standups that were had to address the changes.

The easiest challenge of the Agile development methodology is communicating with the team. There is a lot of room for sprint planning, retrospectives and daily scrums, without really distracting from the overall development time. Agile hits the sweet spot of giving the team time to program and develop, while not allowing a lot of time for the team to be stuck or “suffer in silence”. The team had multiple opportunities in the cycles to get together and discuss what they are doing and what is not going so hot, so the team can come together and acknowledge good work, and help fill the gaps of knowledge and skills that may not be there. For myself, it is really easy for me to sit somewhere and plug away at a project, while attempting anything and everything to get me around a hurdle. While it is good if I figure it out, having meetings where I can step away and talk about the project with my team is my ultimate improver of my work. The weekly discussions in the course have helped me think of different perspectives and incorporate things I may miss through discussing them with my teammates and classmates. So having those small discussions or group talks helps me the best through communication.

For the tools utilized during the implementation process of our board and getting to the dissemination of tasks. The team utilized the planning poker method to design the priorities of the tasks and features we wished to design prior to each sprint. The team was able to differentiate what was most important to least important of our tasks to accomplish, with a few iterations where a couple of the team member with the lowest and highest had to explain why their views on the task were different from the team’s. This kept everyone on similar pages and helped the team remain united through the sprint to accomplish every task slated for that sprint. Alongside that we kept the tasks listed on the board from lowest number to highest before they were given to specific team members. During the sprint, each member was given the opportunity to pick which tasks they wanted during daily scrums and gave the opportunity for any paired programming that they would wish to partake in. This was paired with me accomplishing any grievances they wished for me to tackle to make their work go seamlessly.

Ultimately, at the end of the project, the website was finished in the wishes of the client. The iterative processes of Agile helped keep the team on track and within deadline to accomplish the goals laid out. The ability to properly communicate daily made everyone’s job easier, and helped boost camaraderie within the team, and the planning poker principle turned what would be an arduous planning process into a fun game while getting the mission completed. Now, some times the meetings would not be so meaningful, as there were large portions currently being worked on and not a lot of need to interrupt the work currently being done for these meetings, and some sprints were terminated abruptly due to the changes from the client. Otherwise besides those 2 major cons, the process was an effective approach and probably the best approach for a project like the website, considering the short deadline and multiple changes from the client.