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Sprit Review and Retrospective

After completing our latest Sprint, we can say that the SNHU Travel application was produced successfully through the use of the agile methodology. To begin the production of the SNHU Travel application through the use of the agile methodology, we first assigned individuals to the following roles on the team: Scrum Master, Product Owner, Tester, and Developer. The Scrum Master served a very unique and important role for this project, corralling the team by keeping the team focused but also enabled independent thinking and for the team members to think individually as they worked to complete the Sprint. An initial step the Scrum Master implemented to foster this type of environment was the initiation of the Daily Standup meetings. These meetings were 15-minute-long meetings every morning where each team member addressed the following topics:

1. What did I do yesterday to meet the Sprint Goal?
2. What will I do today to help meet the Sprint Goal?
3. What impedes me from meeting the Sprint Goal?

By holding each team member accountable for addressing these conversational questions at every morning meeting, it enabled team unity and transparency. All team members were aware of what the other team members were working towards and obstacles they faced along the way. This enhanced the overall team cohesion and communication.

Another key developmental aspect that the Scrum Master exhibited with the transition to an agile methodology was the team involvement with product backlog refinement. This process involved the team working together to determine product backlog priorities. By involving the entire team in the process, we were able to appropriately prioritize key features and aspects for the SNHU Travel application, allowing our team to utilize our time and resources in the most meaningful manner. To do this, the Scrum Master made use of the Planning Poker tool which was a fun way for the team to actively participate in the product backlog prioritization. To expand on this new format for prioritizing product backlog requirements, the team members assigned a value to the numerous cases until the team universally agreed upon a proper prioritization for the case.

Another important team member role seen within the agile methodology that was established for the SNHU Travel application is the role of Product Owner. The Product Owner played a unique role as they served as a primary advocate for the stakeholders and end users. The Product Owner was responsible for establishing a sound relationship with the stakeholders and end users which through various communications allowed the Product Owner to discuss the stakeholders and end users demands with the team. This relationship and ultimately communication between the team and the end users allowed for our project to adapt to the user needs/wishes in real-time. The Product Owner was able to capture the stakeholders and end users’ inputs through the use of user stories. The suer stories are styled in a format such as “As the <type of user>” “I want to <perform some task>” “so that I can <achieve some goal>”. This is a very clean and concise manner to accurately define what the stakeholder/end user is seeking in a product and the reason behind what they wish to have the identified feature/ability implemented. Having this format also allows for the team to more easily define the difficult of the task and prioritize the user story appropriately.

Another key role of the Scrum-agile team that contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel project was the Tester role. The Tester played an important role in revising the user stories to create a revised user story that was more specific to what items must be completed prior to starting a new user story. The Tester also played a key role in racking and stacking the user stories in accordance with their priority list. The Tester played a crucial role working with the Product Owner to clarify key details with the stakeholders and end users, allowing the Tester to create revised user stories that addressed questions the developer had regarding the product. The Tester ultimately enabled product efficiency and alleviated unnecessary stress on the team by removing looming questions that the developers may have had regarding the stakeholder’s and end user’s product vision.

The last key role that was seen with the Scrum-agile team that contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel project was the Developer. The Developer was responsible for developing the application in accordance with the revised user stories. All of the input that had been gathered from the stakeholders, Product Owner, Scrum Master and Tester were put into fruition by the Developer, ultimately developing a product that met the goal of a successful and functioning SNHU Travel application within the given time constraints. By integrating the stakeholders along the development process, the application was able to be revised real-time and address the stakeholder’s desires/needs. In all, the Developer was able to meet everyone’s goals and expectations by producing a successful SNHU Travel application.

Through each of these various roles, we were able to very clearly see how the Scrum-agile approach to the software development life cycle (SDLC) helped each of the user stories come to completion. The use of the Scrum-agile approach saw the Product Owner and Tester directly interact with the stakeholders to create user stories. The user stories were then used by the Developers to create the end product that the stakeholders desired. One specific example where we had seen this was when the stakeholders had stated they wanted to have a Top 10 list of locations formatted in a slide show format. By drafting this desire into a user story, the Developer was able to take the desired outcome in a concise format and bring the newly desired format to life. The user story identified the prerequisites to achieve the goal as well as outlined a yes or no format for completion of the required test steps. This made it easy for the team to see if the product was meeting the expected mark when being produced.

Following a Scrum-agile approach can support project completion when the project is interrupted or takes an unexpected change in direction. The Scrum-agile approach is designed to be flexible. This flexibility allows for unexpected changes and new ideas to be implemented into an ongoing project versus having new ideas or unexpected changes documented for future work. This allows for ideas or changes that are deemed beneficial in providing the best possible version of a project to be implemented immediately, ultimately producing the best quality product out of the gate. This was best seen with the SNHU Travel application when the Product Owner came to the team with some unexpected changes to the application, mid-way through its development. The product owner had received feedback from the stakeholders about their preferences for how the final product would look, the top number of suggested locations and for there to be a focus around detox/wellness locations. With an agile approach, the team was able to make a quick shift in the current Sprint to implement these changes, allowing the for application to meet the required deadline while adjusting to the stakeholder’s requests.

Throughout the development of the SNHU Travel application, the team has been very active in our communication which has enabled the team to be highly productive. Communication has also been a key in how changes are quickly implemented to the on-going effort and was instrumental in how the team became a cohesive unit. All members of the team participated in our discussion forum where questions were posed all-around. This provided clarity to the team for how we will move forward with the project. Additionally, through this class, we had practiced drafting emails to communicate with the team as a Product Owner, as the Tester and as the Developer. Communicating from the perspective of the various team roles on the team provided insight as to how to address the various other team members from that given perspective. It also enabled us to efficiently communicate the required information to the other team members.

Organizational tools and Scrum-agile principles played a key role in the success of the SNHU Travel application. To start, effective communication was exhibited from the start to the finish of the project. Effectively communicating our ideas, any issues we encountered and the status of the project allowed for the project to move along seamlessly. Discussing issues allowed for the issues to be resolved quickly. Discussing ideas allowed for new, great ideas to be implemented into the project in on going Sprints, ultimately producing the best version of the application. It also sparked other new ideas along the way which again were then given the opportunity to be implemented in the active Sprint. Due to the team being remote from one another, all communication took place in a discussion board or email which could be used as a white board for this project to show all of the communications, obstacles and ongoing efforts. This provided team cohesion and clarity as to what all parts of the team were working on. The team also made use of burndown charts which allowed the team to track progress along the way. As each Sprint was completed, the score was deducted from the overall starting point until the chart reached zero.

In conclusion, the Scrum-agile approach for the SNHU Travel project was a great success and I would highly recommend this approach for future projects. It became very clear that this approach, once understood, could be extremely efficient and effective in producing the best quality product. To start, the team was more integrated with one another from start to finish. The sharing of ideas, the use of a Daily standup and the numerous communication trails amongst all of the team members provided a more inclusive environment where everyone felt their opinions/thoughts were valued and ultimately built team chemistry. The team also was heavily involved in the product backlog phased which created a unique, fun way of involving the team to prioritize Sprint efforts and the resources required to complete each Sprint. The agile approach was also very flexible which allowed the team to make a design shift that appropriately addressed the stakeholders’ requests in the middle or the application development. By using the agile approach, the desired changes were implemented in the final product and the team managed to meet the demanded deadline versus listing the stakeholders’ requests as a future change to the application, which for this application, could be an old input by the time the desired changes were made. Another pro of the agile approach is that the team is less specialist based. The team is enabled to work together more as a team, rather than individuals working on components of the project and becoming a specialist in an area of project development. A con to the agile approach is the learning curve associated with this type of development. Having to understand the various team roles and how the team roles fit together after being used to the waterfall approach can be a challenge. For the SNHU Travel project, the Scrum-agile approach was by far the best approach for the SNHU Travel development project. A waterfall approach would not have been able to implement the stakeholders’ requests for detox/wellness locations or the new appearance they desired. By not being able to implement these requests during development process, the SNHU Travel project would not have met the stakeholders’ demands, possibly turning these stakeholders’/customers to go elsewhere for their travel plans, ultimately leading to lost sales. The team also would be more ridged due to how the team operates under the waterfall approach and they would be more specialist based as likely team members would be aligned based on their specialty/craft, rather than dispersed to work with one another in a more blended format seen with the agile approach.

References:

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