Project Sprint Review and Retrospective

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Over the course of the SNHU Travel project, the Scrum-Agile approach proved to be both flexible and effective. As a Scrum Master, I was in a unique position to observe firsthand how different roles, processes, and tools contributed to the success of the project even when we faced unexpected challenges. Acting as Product Owner allowed me to witness the external portions of project management, like interfacing with users and stakeholders, then relaying their needs to the team. Lastly, as both Developer and Tester throughout the project, I gained experience with using sprints to guide programming efforts while carefully crafting test cases to ensure the stability of my code. In this essay, I will reflect on our ‘team’s’ journey by discussing how various roles contributed, how user stories came to life, the ways we managed interruptions, the communication practices that kept us aligned, and finally, the tools and methodologies we used to evaluate our overall approach.

To start, one of the most valuable aspects of our project was gaining experience with how each team position implements their specific role to bolster the Scrum team and Agile process. As a Scrum Master, my responsibility was to facilitate processes and ensure that the team remained focused and productive. For example, when acting as a Product Owner we introduced new project goals and needs to the team. Then, as Masters, we made sure that these were clearly communicated during sprint planning sessions, which helped adjust the backlog accordingly. On the other hand, the Development team took full ownership of the work, breaking down complex tasks into manageable chunks and regularly updating progress during communication events. Even though there may be differences in opinion on a project, the open discussion allows all members to debate various solutions until they can settle on a clean, efficient path forward. This clear delineation of responsibilities not only fosters accountability but also ensures that every contribution is valued, increasing morale.

Another critical element in this Scrum process was the completion and editing of user stories. In an Agile environment, each user story represents a piece of functionality that holds importance to the overall project. For instance, one of our key user stories involved creating a streamlined ‘Top 5 List’ system for travel reservations. Rather than waiting until the end of the project to test this feature, we broke it into several iterations. Each sprint allowed us to incorporate feedback from stakeholders and users, which meant that any issues or ambiguities were addressed promptly, instead of compounding into the project’s future. This iterative process not only improved the quality of the final product but also boosted the team’s confidence in the process. By continuously refining the user stories, we were able to ensure that our final product truly met the needs of its users and stakeholders.

Despite this, projects rarely run exactly as planned, and our team encountered interruptions that had the potential to halt project progress. There were moments when a sudden change in conditions required us to pivot our strategy mid-sprint. In one instance, a stakeholder requested that we change the graphics and functionality of the Top 5 List based on new market data. This meant that we had to quickly revise this module’s appearance and function to meet the new requirements. In this instance, as the Product Owner we were responsible for cleaning and relaying this information, while the Scrum Master applied it to the backlog, and the Developer and Tester implemented and tested the new graphical interface and content. Here, the Agile approach, with its built-in flexibility, allowed us to adapt easily. Daily meetings, while only emulated in this course, are especially useful in these situations because they provide a forum for immediate problem solving and re-prioritization. While these interruptions initially added a layer of stress, they ultimately proved to be opportunities for the team to learn how to adapt quickly and efficiently while constructing a program that best met the needs of the users and shareholders.

Expanding on this, communication is another major cornerstone of Scrum team success. Throughout the project, we simulated an open and honest dialogue through multiple channels - whether it was discussion posts, email exchanges, or mock sprint reviews. In a real-world instance, a minor misunderstanding about task priorities could escalate into a larger conflict or delays; however, a quick discourse can clarify the issue before it becomes problematic. These ideas reinforce the value of transparent and timely communication, which not only keeps everyone informed but also builds trust among team members. The sample emails, meeting notes, and chat logs we reviewed serve as evidence of this type of ongoing collaboration, and they provide valuable insights for future projects.

In addition to communication, the tools and organizational practices we employed played a crucial role in the project’s success. We looked at digital boards to track progress, sprint burndown charts to monitor pace, and backlog management software to prioritize tasks, just to name a few. Each Scrum event - whether it be sprint planning, daily stand-up, review, or retrospective - serves as a checkpoint that keeps the team aligned with the project goals. For example, during sprint retrospectives, teams can collectively assess what works and what doesn't, which allows continuous refinement of the processes. This systematic approach not only enhanced our productivity but also provided a structured way to handle the inevitable ups and downs of any development project. My time acting as a Tester emphasizes this idea. Making and executing test cases from user stories push the software to ensure stability. Meanwhile, relaying this knowledge to the team during stand-ups and reviews allows the Developers to address bugs and user experience factors. Furthermore, Scrum Masters and Product Owners can use the information to organize the project backlog and sprints and inform stakeholders, respectively.

Finally, evaluating the overall Agile process in the context of the SNHU Travel project allowed us to see both the strengths and areas for improvement of our approach. One of the major advantages of using Scrum was its iterative nature, which allowed for frequent reassessment and adjustment. This flexibility is invaluable during periods of interruption and change. However, the process is not without its challenges. The constant need for reassessment can lead to scope creep in larger projects, and there were instances when the rapid pace of iterations made it difficult to keep up with changes. Despite these challenges, I firmly believe that the Scrum-Agile approach was the best choice for the SNHU Travel project because it allowed us to remain responsive to stakeholder needs and rapid changes.

In conclusion, this experience with the SNHU Travel project has highlighted the importance of clearly defined roles, the iterative completion of user stories and test cases, adaptive strategies in the face of interruptions, effective communication, and the systematic use of organizational tools and strategies. Each of these elements contributed significantly to the overall success of the project, proving that while Agile is not without its challenges, it offers a robust framework for navigating complex projects. The lessons learned from this project have not only improved my own performance and mental framework but have also set a strong foundation for future projects where flexibility, collaboration, and continuous improvement remain key needs.

Resources

Cobb, C. G. (2023). The project manager’s guide to mastering agile : principles and practices for

an adaptive approach.

https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/think/reader.action?docID=1895876&ppg=131

Scrum Guides. (n.d.). Scrumguides.org. https://scrumguides.org/scrumguide.html

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