ChadaTech Sprint Review and Retrospective

Alex Barber

Southern New Hampshire University

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Prof. Clinton Bush

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ChadaTech has recently transitioned from using the waterfall methodology to agile methodology. In this transition, I was nominated to become the Scrum Master. During this transition, we were tasked with helping the SNHU Travel Agency update their website with more modern features to retain current and attract newer customers. During this time, I worked extensively with various members of our Scrum team and analyzed how important their roles are to a highly functioning Scrum team. These roles included the product owner, developers, and testers.

The Scrum Master is responsible for teaching and training the team about the scrum framework. This is an integral role for a company transitioning from waterfall to agile. The responsibilities of the scrum master are ensuring that the team understands the product backlog and its organization, facilitating scrum events, and assisting team members in their daily routines. Daily scrum meetings are to be held every day by the scrum master. These meetings typically last 15 minutes. The scrum master ensures that the team members use their time wisely during these meetings and keep the topic on the tasks at hand. During these meetings, the team members typically discuss what they accomplished yesterday, what they intend to accomplish today, and discuss any impediments that would hold them back from completing their goals. These meetings also open the door for important collaboration between members of the scrum team. All-in-all, the scrum master ensures that the day-to-day workflow sees its maximum potential through the framework laid out in the agile methodology.

The Product Owner is responsible for forming the initial backlog, grooming the backlog, and ensuring the team understands the backlog. They also are responsible for communication with the clients, stakeholders, and users of the product. They receive critical feedback on prototypes of the product to ensure that the product will be tailored to the needs of the clients/users. They are usually the main line of communication between the clients and the scrum team. This communication provides crucial information to the development of the product. As a product owner, one must have a great understanding of what the client needs or wants from a product, while also being able to make difficult decisions on what may not be important to the product. This is part of the grooming process. The product owner gathers user stories and prioritizes them by their importance. They then integrate these into the product backlog. This gives the scrum team goals to work towards while also refining the product into something extraordinary and tailored to the clients' needs. This was a crucial role in the SNHU travel site as the product heavily leaned towards user satisfaction. The user stories that were gained through the Product Owner helped to focus the project and create a website that our users genuinely wanted and enjoyed using. As such, this helped to retain current users and gain new followings in the vacation rental space.

Developers and testers play important roles in the operation as well. The development team consists of a team of developers that complete sprints and deliver updates of working prototypes that the product owner can deliver to stakeholders and users for testing. These are then tested and garner feedback to then be incorporated into the backlog. This process then repeats. The development team is given the freedom to decide how to approach the product backlog and they are all treated as equals, no matter what experience they may have (Cobb, 2015, p. 38). In the SNHU travel website project, the development team delivered prototypes to the product owner who then gathers user stories and feedback on their progress. They stayed in contact with the product owner through emails and asked questions regarding the changes and requirements of the website. These questions helped the development team better understand what to work towards to deliver a product suited to the users’ needs. This is where the testers come into play. The testers were responsible for testing the product before we delivered it to the product owner. They would find any problems in the product and test pass/fail conditions within the product. Testers were responsible for creating the pass/fail conditions that would give a clear guideline to ensure the product performed as initially intended. Once the product passed the necessary tests, it would be passed to the Product owner for delivery to the users. This allowed for feedback and opened the team to implementing more detox locations that our users wanted. This was an integral part to the usability of the SNHU website and allowed us to branch out our offerings to fill the needs of our customers that we may not have realized if not for the user stories.

**SDLC and User Stories**

The Scrum-Agile approach benefits greatly from user stories. It is one of the main aspects that push the development to become greater. They normally take the format of “As a <role> I want <to be able to do something> so that <benefit> (Cobb, 2015, p. 65). This helps to break the project down into digestible goals. It also helps to clarify to the team what aspects are important to the users. User stories helped to guide our development team to making features that the actual users of our site would like. We used previous users to create the user stories and requests, which is an organic way of progressing the usability of our website.

**Scrum-Agile in the Face of Change**

The agile methodology embraces change during the development process. Within a scum-agile environment, it is not expected to fully flesh out the product backlog before beginning the project. Agile allows for changes to take place, and it is even encouraged. Initially in the SNHU Travel Website, the “Top Five Destinations” project was supposed to just be a link on the website that would present the user with a list of the top five destinations sorted by popularity. However, during development this idea was changed in favor of a slideshow type of presentation. This also required more programming on the next and previous selections and how the team presented the destinations on these slideshows. However, because agile adapts to change, we easily transitioned the development team into creating this vision. New test cases were created, user stories were created off the prototypes built, clarification was provided, priorities were updated, and the slideshow vision was able to come to fruition.

**Effective Communication**

In the scrum-agile setting, communication is essential. Ensuring that there is clear understanding in the hand-off between each role ensures that the product is always improving, and the desired results are achieved. With the SNHU Travel website, I needed some clarification on a change being made to the Top Five Destinations List, so I sent an email to the Product Owner and testers.

To: Product Owner, Tester

Subject: Clarifications on new features

Dear Product Owner and Tester,

I have seen the new plan for the SNHU Travel Website, and I would like to arrange a meeting with both of you to discuss the new plans in further detail. I would like clarification on what items in the backlog we should not be prioritizing as much anymore, what pass/fail requirements are expected, and how these features can be implemented with code that we have already written. Thank you, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Alex Barber

This email helped to clarify some of my concerns as we made significant changes to how we presented our top destinations to our customers. It allowed the team to know what items in the backlog were becoming less important or needed to be removed. It also allowed our development team to know what results were expected of them in the pass/fail tests. This was very important as the development team would not work on items that may be irrelevant going forward, and they could focus on the new vision we were trying to present to our customers.

**Organizational Tools and Scrum-Agile Principles**

As stated before, communication on a scrum-agile team is one of the most important aspects to creating a product that your customers will enjoy. One example of an organizational tool is an online informational radiator, which is a collection of important information that is continuously updated by the team (Cobb, 2015, p. 139). One example of an online informational radiator is JIRA, which provides a “Scrum Board” for constant communication and easy referencing between the members of a scrum team. This helps all members collaborate and stay updated on the progression of the project.

**Scrum-Agile in the SNHU Travel Project**

Overall, I think the scrum-agile approach was very beneficial to the SNHU Travel website. Throughout the development, many changes were needed to better suit our customers' needs. This would not have been nearly as easy with a waterfall approach. However, because of the need for changes, development time extended, and we were not able to deliver the product as fast. This was a minor inconvenience as we were able to make a better product overall. The feedback loop used in scrum-agile is especially useful in a situation where a team is creating a product for the general public to use. The technology of our competitors and the needs/wants of our consumers are constantly changing. This means that it would be best suited to use a development methodology that allows the development to be constantly changing as well.

References

Cobb, C. G. (2023). The Project Manager’s Guide to Mastering Agile: Principles and Practices for an Adaptive Approach. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.