Sprint Review and Retrospective

Chada Tech: SNHU Travel Project

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Throughout the development of the SNHU Travel application, the specific roles within our Scrum-Agile team each contributed significantly to the overall success of the project. As the Scrum Master, I served as a facilitator and shielded the team from outside distractions. I was responsible for ensuring that all Scrum events such as Sprint Planning, Daily Scrums, Sprint Reviews, and Retrospectives were held consistently and effectively. I also removed blockers, managed team morale, and ensured continuous delivery of value.

The Product Owner played a crucial role by acting as the voice of the customer. They curated and prioritized the product backlog based on feedback from SNHU Travel stakeholders. For example, when a last-minute request came in to integrate user reviews for travel destinations, the Product Owner was able to quickly define the feature as a user story, refine it with acceptance criteria, and reorder the backlog so it could be implemented in the next sprint.

The Development Team, composed of designers, developers, and testers, collaborated across disciplines. Their commitment to delivering working software at the end of each sprint was vital. A particularly successful feature we built was an interactive map tool that let users select travel destinations visually. Backend developers worked on integrating APIs for travel data, while frontend developers and UX designers focused on creating a clean and intuitive interface. Their work demonstrated true cross-functional collaboration, which resulted in faster iterations and higher-quality deliverables.

The Scrum-Agile approach to the software development life cycle (SDLC) made it much easier to manage and complete user stories in a timely and efficient way. User stories are short, simple descriptions of a feature told from the perspective of the end user. They helped the team remain focused on the customer’s needs throughout development.

For instance, one early user story stated: “As a user, I want to filter vacation packages by price, so I can find a trip within my budget.” During sprint planning, the team broke this story down into tasks: building the UI filter component, writing backend logic to sort packages, and implementing testing to ensure the filter worked properly. The incremental nature of Agile meant that once this story was completed and tested, it could be shown to the client immediately for feedback.

Daily stand-up meetings helped us track progress on these stories and resolve any issues early. In Sprint 2, we encountered difficulties integrating a third-party API that provided hotel ratings. This could have delayed the sprint goals, but thanks to Agile’s focus on collaboration, the issue was raised during a stand-up. Team members with API experience offered to help, and we adjusted the sprint backlog slightly to prioritize resolution. By the end of the sprint, the user story was marked complete and passed all tests.

A major advantage of using Scrum-Agile was the team’s ability to remain adaptive in the face of interruptions or shifting priorities. Midway through the project, SNHU Travel’s stakeholders reviewed early demos and decided that their mobile users were not being prioritized enough. They requested the interface become fully responsive and optimized for mobile usage.

This change could have caused serious disruption under a traditional development model. However, because we were using Agile, the team was able to adapt quickly. The Product Owner added a new epic called “Mobile Optimization” and worked with the Development Team to break it down into smaller, manageable user stories, such as “As a mobile user, I want buttons to be easily clickable on small screens.”

During the following sprint, we adjusted the backlog and took on the highest-priority mobile tasks. Thanks to our retrospective culture, we also discussed the interruption openly and agreed to build in buffer time in future sprints to account for similar stakeholder changes. Agile empowered us to pivot without abandoning our roadmap, and it reinforced the importance of stakeholder collaboration throughout the SDLC.

Strong communication is the foundation of every successful Scrum team. Our team used a combination of tools Slack, Trello, Google Docs, and Zoom to stay connected, especially since we operated remotely. Daily Scrums provided a space for each team member to quickly share what they had done, what they planned to do, and any blockers they were facing. This routine kept everyone aligned and accountable.

One example of effective communication occurred when SNHU Travel’s branding guidelines were updated unexpectedly. The marketing team sent an email with new color palettes and logo assets. I immediately shared the updates in our Slack design channel and tagged our UI/UX designer. Within hours, the designer had updated the design files, and the frontend developer integrated the changes in the next build. Our ability to act quickly and maintain real-time communication prevented delays and maintained brand consistency.

During retrospectives, we encouraged open dialogue. One team member admitted they felt overwhelmed due to overlapping assignments. Rather than ignoring the issue, we talked it through as a team and agreed to better define our task ownership in Trello. This transparency improved morale and reduced task duplication moving forward.

To support the Scrum-Agile methodology and maintain productivity, we used several organizational tools that aligned with Agile principles and Scrum events. The two main tools that helped us manage our work efficiently were Trello and Confluence.

Trello served as our digital Scrum board. Each user story from the product backlog was turned into a card and moved through the columns: “To Do,” “In Progress,” “Testing,” and “Done.” This visual representation of our workflow gave everyone on the team, including the Product Owner and stakeholders, a clear understanding of progress at any time. During Sprint Planning, we used Trello to assign tasks, estimate effort using story points, and set realistic sprint goals. This ensured that no one was overwhelmed and that we had a balanced workload.

Confluence was used for maintaining documentation, such as meeting notes, sprint goals, and shared technical designs. For example, our UI/UX designer created a wireframe document for the user dashboard, and backend developers added annotations for API endpoints. This shared knowledge base helped us avoid misunderstandings and served as a reference throughout development.

During retrospectives, we reflected on how well our tools were working. One improvement we made was integrating Trello with Slack. This allowed real-time updates to appear in our communication channel whenever cards were moved or updated, which significantly improved transparency and reduced the need for status update meetings. In short, these tools reinforced our Scrum rituals and enhanced collaboration, accountability, and efficiency across the team.

Evaluating Agile Process

The Scrum-Agile approach offered several distinct advantages throughout the SNHU Travel project. Most notably:

Flexibility: When the project requirements changed, Agile made it easy to adjust. We didn’t need to go back and rewrite lengthy plans—instead, we simply refined the backlog and adapted our next sprint.

Stakeholder Collaboration: The Product Owner regularly engaged with SNHU Travel, ensuring the product matched their vision. Sprint Reviews gave them visibility and allowed for timely feedback.

Team Empowerment: Each team member was given autonomy and ownership over their work. This fostered a positive environment where team members felt valued and motivated.

Continuous Improvement: Regular retrospectives allowed us to learn from each sprint. For instance, after Sprint 1, we realized our testing coverage was too low. We addressed it in Sprint 2 by assigning dedicated time to test automation.

However, Agile is not without its challenges:

Scope Creep: Agile’s flexibility can invite too many changes. If not managed carefully, teams may struggle to maintain focus. This happened during Sprint 3 when multiple new feature requests threatened to derail our sprint goal.

Timeboxing Pressure: Some team members found it difficult to complete tasks within a fixed sprint window, especially when estimating story points inaccurately.

Learning Curve: Not all team members were experienced with Agile. The first few sprints involved a lot of learning and adapting, which slowed us down at the start.

Despite these challenges, Scrum-Agile was absolutely the right methodology for this project. The fast-moving travel industry, combined with the need for early feedback and user-centered design, required the flexibility and iterative development that Agile offers. Waterfall would not have allowed for the mid-project pivot to mobile, nor would it have delivered early working prototypes for stakeholder review.

The SNHU Travel app is stronger and more refined because of Agile and our team is better for the experience.