Each of the roles on the Scrum team were incredibly important, and each team member contributed to the SNHU Travel project. The Scrum Master facilitated events and mentored the team. Because of those events and meetings, the team had guidance throughout each sprint. The Product Owner refined the product backlog and provided a bridge between the team and the client. During development, she asked end-users directly what features they’d like. She then was able to take those features to the product backlog to bring to the team. The tester designed acceptance criteria to test the project throughout development. He took the newly added items and designed tests to ensure that those features did what the users wanted. The developer implemented the product by writing the code and running it against the acceptance criteria tests. Each member was instrumental in delivering a product that the customer was happy with.

A Scrum-Agile approach to the software development lifecycle helped user stories come to completion by using incremental sprints and focusing on customer feedback. Sprints for the SNHU Travel project lasted one week, and the team’s goal was to have a working product at the end of each sprint. Instead of trying to put together one big project, we focused on producing modular pieces that we would later integrate. Originally, we showed a list of top destinations, but we later changed the code to show top destinations as a slideshow. Because we worked in incremental sprints and gathered feedback each sprint, we were able to change the list to a slideshow to better serve the client.

Around the midpoint of the project, the Product Owner, Christy, let the team know that the SNHU Travel website should focus on wellness destinations and vacations. Though the team was upset with the sudden change, our Scrum-Agile approach allowed the team pivot easily in the next sprint to focus on the new requirements. The Product Owner also needed to reevaluate the previous requirements to consider what might now be unnecessary. Continuously refining the backlog was important to prevent redundant or extra work.

Face-to-face communication and emails were the primary ways the team communicated. Scrum events and meetings used face-to-face communication, which is where critical information was discussed. Emails, on the other hand, were generally used to ask clarifying questions about those events and meetings. After Christy informed the team about the wellness destination change, Brian, the tester, sent an email to her asking for clarification. Part of the email is shown below:

“I’ve looked at the user stories you’ve sent us, and I’m currently developing test cases for the features. I have a few questions about some of the user stories, and I’m looking for some detail about how you envision these being implemented. I’ve listed them below:

**User Story #2**

• When setting user preferences for vacation types or destinations, would you like the user to be able to set multiple preferences or just one preference? For example, cruises and tropical destinations instead of just cruises?

• Where should the option to change these preferences be? Should it be with other profile settings or be kept in a separate menu?”

Brian asked specific questions about specific user stories, which allowed Christy to provide detailed answers. Emailing other team members with clarifying questions allows the team to reference previous emails should these questions come up again. Even though emails between team members can hold important project information, information radiators might have been a better option to hold that important information.

Our team didn’t use an online information radiator, but, in future projects, I would encourage the use of one. This would help us keep the product backlog visible to all team members, and when the Product Owner updates the backlog, each item will be updated everywhere in the information radiator. This would likely reduce redundant communication and allow for greater team member accountability. An online information radiator, such as Jira, is adaptable and can easily reflect changes in the project, and the SNHU Travel project would have benefited from the team using one.

Out of the 12 principles of Agile, the most important principle during this project was the second principle, which is “Welcome changing requirements, even late in development. Agile processes harness change for the customer’s competitive advantage” (Agile Alliance, 2024). Needing to embrace change is necessary for Agile to work. In general, a project’s requirements might change suddenly in the next sprint, and the team continuously needs to reflect on their own growth, both individually and as a team. This principle was particularly helpful when the new requirement to focus on wellness vacations was added to the product backlog at a high priority. The team ultimately was able to embrace change and produce a product that the client was happy with.

The biggest positive aspect that the Scrum-Agile approach brought to the SNHU Travel project was the team focusing on what the client wanted instead of what the team thought might be a good product. Relying on the team’s expertise is important, but it’s also important to deliver a product that will fulfill the customer’s needs. During the Sprint Reviews, the customer and Product Owner provided feedback to the team, ensuring the client’s needs were at the forefront of development.

A negative aspect that the Scrum-Agile approach presented was that some requirements were pushed down on the backlog, even if they were still important. All the requirements needed for a minimum viable product were still met for this project by the deadline, but if the client ended up continuously changing their mind, those important requirements might not be completed by the deadline. Another negative aspect was that, because the project was scheduled for a short five weeks, any changes, while welcomed, could still easily push out the schedule. Agile will be much more adaptable to changes than a waterfall approach though. Despite these negative aspects of a Scrum-Agile approach, I think it was still the best choice of approach for the SNHU Travel project. With a waterfall approach, the change to focus on wellness destinations could have set the project back by multiple weeks, but instead, the project was able to stay on track. A Scrum-Agile approach gave the client the product that worked best for their needs, which is arguably the most important goal for the Agile team.

References

Agile Alliance. (2024). *The 12 Principles behind the Agile Manifesto.* https://www.agilealliance.org/agile101/12-principles-behind-the-agile-manifesto/