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As the Scrum Master I have overseen making sure the team is on track and understand their role in the team. It is important to remind team members what their responsibilities are as the selected or assigned role, and how to best utilize their skills and abilities. I also make sure to effectively manage the Product Backlog and ensuring the Product Owner themselves know how to effectively use the Product Backlog. I also manage and facilitate Scrum Events which include standups or organizing situations which require elaboration or collaboration with the team. I assist in the development of creating a high-value product and look to remove impediments to the development team's progress.

During the development of the SNHU Travel project there have been various changes and implementations which have required the attention of various members on the team. For example, when the client requested that we shift our focus away from the ‘vacation’ audience to a more formal ‘mental health/wellness retreat’ audience, the Product Owner had to convey to the rest of the team on what this change meant and made sure all questions regarding the features and requirements were answered. This also meant that the Developers had to organize, plan, and create these new features in a professional and intuitive way, which always kept the focus on the client and the users during each stage in development.

The Testers oversaw providing quality feedback and suggestions based on their findings while using alpha or beta versions of the features, which helped align the vision and the quality of the product. This is important for the outcome of the product since it allows the team and the client valuable results from scenarios which could help reveal issues or problems within the product. It also enables the team to focus on generating quality and keeps the team focused on the user through the use of user stories.

User stories help provide a different angle or perspective on a particular user experience and outlines the process of a stereotypical users experience on a specific aspect of the application. This helps create a quality experience with the use of a mock experience. User stories were used during the development of SNHU Travel to provide understanding on how the user would interact with the product and how the functionality of the software would flow. The flow of a software is important since you want to provide the user with the least amount of struggle in order to achieve a goal or utilize the product to its fullest potential.

A Scrum-agile approach to the Software Development Life Cycle of SNHU Travel allowed for the product to evolve and grow at its own pace while sustaining quality and an exceptional user experience. This was achieved through the use and balance of each role in an agile environment, where each role has a specific goal or task and work fluidly with one another, while avoiding putting too much responsibility into one position. This allows for a balance in power with decision-making and details in development, which also allows the team to communicate openly and effectively. For example, when the team was faced with the conceptual change of the product, the team openly organized and discussed the goal and how to achieve this goal.

It begins by first assembling the team members into a scrum meeting, openly discussing what the issue is or changes needed, and gaining further input and open discussions from each team member on what they’re initial plans or approaches will be in order to achieve the change or goal. This meeting is also called a standup and generally lasts for around 15 minutes each day during the sprint. This process is repeated indefinitely until the product itself has achieved a point in development which is usable and consistent. Then it moves to the product management and maintenance phase, which adheres to smaller changes and focuses more on user experience over functionality.

Scrum-agile approach supports project completion through the idea of MVP (minimum viable product) and involves stages. Those stages are not critically, or time defined unless specified otherwise, and they involve achieving small incremental changes or implementations in order to sustain quality and focus. This helps provide a quality product or feature and looks to allow the team more freedom to innovate and create genuine products. A prime example during the development of Travel SNHU was the process of developing the overview of the top 5 destinations and focusing on ‘bare-bones’ of the application at first, and then next implementing more advanced and user-friendly features such as images or content information. This helps break down the structure of the development cycle into segments and doesn’t allow for other features to be prioritized over others, which would’ve resulted in some features being worse than others.

Communication within a Scrum team environment is crucial to the success of the product and the team. An example of communication during a scrum meeting can easily be represented with certain questions regarding the product. For example, what did you do yesterday? What will you do today? Is there an issue you will confront during this goal for the day? These questions help address the goal and problems one might face in any role of the development team and allow for open communication on how to resolve the issue in addressing it. Rather than allowing the team member to solve the issue solely on their own, this allows for feedback and brainstorming on the issue. It’s also important to layout requirements and critical features necessary for the application, which will keep the team focused and on track. For example, what feature are we most currently working on and what will the user find valuable from this new feature? What issues will we encounter and will be required to achieve the new feature? What are the pros and cons to implementing this feature and how will it benefit the user's experience?

It’s also important to communicate between team members in an effective manner which is both supportive, brief and to the point. An example of this can be seen when the product owner requests or assigns tasks to the development team in which the development team can respond in a freely and open manner on their interpretations of the goal in mind and what will be required. Example, “(Product Owner) I just discussed with our client on a new search function feature for our top 5 vacation locations/venues. Let’s setup a Scrum meeting to discuss further details.” The response from the development team would look something like this: (Developer) “After discussing further details regarding the new search function feature, we now recognize the need to implement a user setting for a favorite location type. This will require the user to specify their preferred vacation type and will allow the search function to operate based on their selection.” This is an example of the Product Owner, Scrum Master, and the development team discussing openly the requirements necessary for the product to be successful.

The goal of daily scrum meetings is to keep team members in sync, identify and remove problems, adapt a daily plan and a sprint backlog, and improves team participation and involvement. This makes sure that team members are identified and involved throughout the entire process without leaving out any loose ends during development.

Organizational tools such as Jira and Microsoft Azure help keep the team on track and in sync with the most recent development focuses and goals. It also allows for a virtual centralized workplace where team members can collaborate and communicate freely on the most recent iterations of the product. Planning and developing the product can be achieved here as well through changing focus and directing team members in the right direction. This allows for instantaneous feedback and collaboration without the need for a thorough Waterfall development structure where a plan might have been already structured and planned. Using these tools also allows for a place of reference for the most recent feature focus and can be useful for daily Scrum meeting to organize and plan the future of the development process on the product.

The Scrum-agile approach during the SNHU Travel project helped keep the team focused and energized, while also allowing for open and free-flowing communication on the future implementations and changes. This meant the team was in sync and allowed for the team to collaborate effectively while keeping the vision of the product.

The pros of Scrum-agile development involve the ability to communicate openly amongst all areas of the development team without a top-down view, the ability to make fast and new innovations or changes to the product, and the ability to organize dynamically while still maintaining a consistent momentum throughout development.

The cons to Scrum-agile is the amount of freedom and free-flowing processes involved, which could lead to team members getting sidetracked or losing vision or scope of the product. It’s important to have members on the team who are self-motivated and driven and will be able to refine and redefine processes which don’t work properly or aren’t as effective. It can also be difficult to organize or create a level of collaboration amongst the team if one member does not adhere to the best practices of Scrum-agile. This proves to be problematic and could lead to the failure of a product or features of the product lacking quality or consistency. It’s important to acknowledge problems during the development lifecycle and openly discussing solutions or changes which may help synergize the team better.

Resources

1.) Charles G. Cobb. (2015). The Project Manager’s Guide to Mastering Agile: Principles and Practices for an Adaptive Approach. Wiley.

2.) *Home*. Scrum.org. (n.d.). <https://www.scrum.org/>.

3.) Atlassian. (n.d.). Agile software development. Atlassian. https://www.atlassian.com/agile/software-development.