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CS 250

Sprint Review & Retrospective

The various roles within the Scrum team each had their own valuable contributions to the success of the SNHU travel project. The Scrum Master was responsible for facilitating the various Scrum events like Daily Scrum, Sprint Planning, and Sprint Review. The Scrum Master was also important to removing obstacles that the team faced and assisting the Product Owner with backlog refinement. The Scrum Master’s role as a servant-leader is crucial to the implementation of scrum in any team.

The Product Owner contributed to this project by engaging with end users and stakeholders to determine what features should be added to the product backlog. Because the user is the most important perspective in development, the role of the Product Owner is extremely important to the team as well. The Product Owner’s frequent communication and collaboration with stakeholders and users allowed the team to maintain a clear vision of our goal throughout development, even when that goal changed. This goal was then translated into user stories that the development team could work on, allowing the product creation to be driven by business value.

Because we practice test-driven development in our Scrum-agile team, the next step was to turn the user stories into test cases, the responsibility of the Tester. By starting with the test criteria, we were able to develop with the intended functionality in mind. The Tester defined the test criteria based on the user stories which made it simple for the Developer to write code to pass the criteria. This was a key aspect of development because it represents the turning point of items in the backlog from user vision to well-defined development tasks. Once the test cases were defined, the Developer did the work of fulfilling the criteria so that the team could deliver value in this sprint. This work is extremely important and puts to use all of the guidance and support of the rest of the team. The Developer also capitalized on the communication aspect of agile to clarify what the changes to the requirements would mean. This meant getting feedback from the Product Owner and Tester, who in turn assisted the Developer in maintaining a clear vision of the business value we were looking for. This adaptability on the part of the entire team was critical to the success of this sprint.

The Scrum-agile approach used by our team is what allowed the user stories to be completed in this sprint. The iterative nature of agile meant that we were not working from the ground up with this iteration of the product but rather making improvements to the existing SNHU Travel site. One example is the top destinations feature, which was implemented by making small alterations to the source code in order to create a list for users to view. By adapting what was already there, we were able to save development time and resources. Similarly, when the requirements changed, we simply altered the site to reflect the new stakeholder vision, rather than starting over from scratch. This meant merely changing the images and text on the site which we were able to do without difficulty. Most importantly, the constant communication and collaboration inherent to agile meant that we were quickly made aware of the changes the users wanted to see. This enabled us to deliver on that new goal rather than being tied to a contract for deliverables that were no longer desired.

Communication between the team and the stakeholders is important, but it is also critical for the team to communicate effectively with each other in a Scrum-agile environment. One example of effective communication as part of the team was in the email from the Developer to the Product Owner regarding the changes to the requirements. This email showed a clear and concise way to ask for clarification and outlined exactly what needed to be covered before moving forward with development. To quote, “I am unsure if our goal is to replace the content on the site that is not related to wellness vacations, or if we will instead add more content that is focused on wellness vacations and push that content to the users. If we are replacing the content we already have, this will mean redefining our other user stories that involve user-preferred vacation types. If we are not replacing content for other vacation types, how exactly do we plan to focus on wellness vacations?” This text from the email makes it very clear what must be defined before the Developer can fulfill the new requirements.

Another example of good communication was in the team discussion, in which I took the lead as the Scrum Master to start the conversation and get the team engaged. This servant-leader communication falls directly in the role of Scrum Master as the facilitator of Scrum events and promoted collaboration among team members. By introducing myself, my role, and what the team can expect from me, I was able to start a dialogue in which others would feel empowered to join the conversation.

The Scrum-agile principles, tools, and events used by the team streamlined our success in the project and our implementation of Scrum. Sprint Planning was the most important Scrum Event we practiced, as this gave the Developer a clear outline from which to complete their work. Managing the product backlog into a series of well-defined user stories and test cases allowed the team to maintain focus on our goal and deliver value in the sprint. Our use of communication and collaboration enabled us to receive feedback and adapt quickly. Our use of organizational tools was minimal, but this is acceptable given agile’s emphasis on people over tools. One tool we did use was Microsoft Excel to create tables in which to organize our user stories and test cases. This made Sprint Planning easier by helping us to manage the backlog items and create a plan for what to deliver in this sprint.

The Scrum-agile approach has been very effective for our team’s work on the SNHU Travel Project, but it is not a perfect system. Because this project was relatively simple, it could possibly have been done with a waterfall model approach that could have saved resources by planning up front and sticking to said plan. However, the waterfall model would have been a problem during development when the requirements changed. If the team were locked into a contract for certain deliverables, we would have been unable to adjust to the new requirements. This would mean that even if we delivered what was originally agreed, the users would ultimately be unhappy with the outcome. The ability to adapt is the strongest merit of the agile methodology. Another drawback of Scrum-agile is the limited ability to estimate the timeline of development or the associated cost. This is arguably a worthwhile sacrifice, however, to ensure that the end user is satisfied with the results even if the goals or strategy change during the process. Ultimately, I believe the Scrum-agile approach was the best approach for this project. Through the application of agile principles and the Scrum framework, we were able to successfully convert stakeholder vision into user stories, test cases, and finally into functioning software. I would call this outcome a success for the team, the only remaining question is whether the end user is equally satisfied.