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Final Project

Through the use of the Scrum-agile methodology, our software team has successfully created a product for SNHU Travel. This product has undergone continuous development, in accordance with Agile principles. The initial role that was undertaken was that of the Scrum Master. The Scrum Master is a sort of coach for the team, in the sense it is their responsibility to motivate the team while also eliminating obstacles and distractions. The Scrum Master works with the Product Owner to optimize the Product Backlog between sprints. As it pertains to our project, the Scrum Master facilitated the Scrum meetings in Module Two by structuring the meeting around three key questions. The Scrum Master also helped keep the distractions to a minimum by directing certain questions and comments to a sidebar. This allows concerns to be address in a structured format that allows the team to stay on topic during the Scrum meeting. Specifically, the Scrum Master addressed complaints about the difficult visibility of computer screens on sunny days. She also improved workflow efficiency by explaining the Product Backlog to the pushy Sales Manager and giving him a potential remedy that included going directly through the Product Owner to update the Product Backlog.

It is the Product Owner’s responsibility to have a strong vision of the direction that the team should be heading. That vision must also be clearly communicated to the Scrum development team. This is done by the development of the Product Backlog. By prioritizing the Product Backlog, the Product Owner can effectively convey the vision to the Scrum team. The Scrum team then has a responsibility to select user stories from the top of the Product Backlog.

In return, it is then expected of the Product Owner that there be no new product requirements introduced during any given sprint. Once a sprint has been started, the only goals are to finish the requirements of that sprint. It is vital for the Product Owner to attend Scrum meetings. This is an example of the Kaizen principle of Agile methodology. This gives the Product Owner an embedded perspective. It is the Product Owner’s responsibility to accurately set Sprint goals based on user requirements and then to define the processes by which those Sprint goals will be met. By communicating the processes and the end-goal, the definitions for success and failure are explicit.

The user stories are helpful to the Scrum Team because they provide a fresh perspective from the user that is unavailable from any other aspect of the Scrum process. It is through these stories that the mindset of the user is examined. Their desires will be more understandable when described from their own experiences. User stories can allow the Product Owner to identify a specific user need. This need can then be built upon in the next stages of the development process. The story format also gives a common structure that is conducive for comparison and analysis. In Module Three, our Product Owner created a Product Backlog based on user stories that prioritized filtering travel destination search results based on a location, vacation type, and/or price. The Scrum-agile process is conducive to updated requirements, such as these. They will be addressed once the current sprint is completed.

The next roles to be assumed were those of the Scrum development team. The team consists of tester and developer. As a tester, the user stories allowed me to develop specific test cases. They allowed me to see that from the perspective of the user, there was a clear need for selectivity among both search results and vacation suggestions. The first user story clarified the need to filter search results based on the type of vacation. Two user needs were based on monetary requirements. One dealt with a maximum price limit, while the other sorted top destinations from lowest price to highest price. The final two user stories covered suggestions based on observable behavior. The first based suggestions off of the user’s profile activity. The second listed the top travel destinations based on the activity of the website as a whole. Enumerating these needs is very helpful as a tester to develop clear requirements that can be explicitly communicated and judged in a pass/fail measure.

As a developer, I asked the Product Owner to clarify the overall direction of the team, define all requirements, and to communicate the end goals clearly. In Module Five, when the Product Owner returned from a meeting with SNHU Travel management, it was determined that health/wellness and detox destinations would need to be prioritized. In a typical waterfall methodology, this would severely impact development and cause major delays. However, the Agile team handled this adjustment by having the Product Owner de-prioritize certain items on the Product Backlog to account for the new requirements. As a developer, I revised the existing code to display detox and wellness vacation destinations.

The most effective communication practice for creating openness and transparency in the Scrum Team that was used in this project are the Scrum events. These meetings encouraged face-to-face communication while limiting distractions. The format of using a whiteboard and allowing one person to have the floor at a time gave the meeting structure without requiring the formality of an email that could inhibit creativity. Also, there must an open line of communication between the Product Owner, the Scrum Master, and the development team. This was vital when the Product Owner met with SNHU Travel management and was told that detox and wellness destinations were to be prioritized. Effective and efficient communication between all ensured that the Product Backlog and the user test cases were revised in accordance with the new requirements.

One of the advantages of the Scrum-agile methodology is that the small development team and the short product development cycles of ten to fifteen days enforced a higher degree of focus on each part of the project while still being conducive for rapid cycles of idea creation. Also the cycle allows smaller sections of code to be tested regularly, which detects and corrects any undesired outcomes early in the development process. Another advantage is that the developer, tester, and Scrum master have the goals and direction of the project clearly defined by the Product Owner. Then that vision is reinforced through regular Scrum meetings. One of the major principles of the Scrum-agile process is that the requirements are updated through input from both stakeholders and users alike. Also, the efforts of each team member can be evaluated at the Scrum meetings. This exposes team members that aren’t pulling their weight, such as Eddie.

A potential disadvantage of the Scrum-agile methodology is scope creep. Scope creep occurs when the end goals have not been properly defined and the scope of a project grows uncontrollably. Another negative aspect is the impact that one team member can have on the process if they aren’t completely committed to the goals of the project.

Overall, I feel that the benefits outweigh the potential disadvantages as it relates to the SNHU Travel project. The nature of this project was ever-changing and the requirements were heavily reliant on user input. The Scrum-agile process allowed us to adapt to this and develop test cases based on user stories. There was a major shift to detox and wellness travel destinations in the middle of the development process. The Product Owner was able to de-prioritize certain items on the Product Backlog to account for these changing requirements. The team developed and revised test cases and code for each user story. Ultimately, the team accomplished its goals and we delivered a product that satisfied all given requirements.

In determining whether to use a waterfall or an agile approach to software development, I would consider the nature of the requirements. Are they user driven? Are the end goals not well-defined? If so, then I believe an agile methodology is appropriate. However, if the end goals of a project are clearly defined and aren’t expected to change, then a waterfall approach is more appropriate.