SNHU Travel Project Sprint Review and Retrospective

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Transitioning to a new method of software development is a challenge for many companies. The team working on the SNHU Travel project met this challenge with consistent effort and a willingness to adapt. The results were a successful sprint with an executable program emerging within the strict timeline given for the project. Barry Overeem stated, “a great Scrum Team consists of a Product Owner who maximizes value, a Scrum Master who enables continuous improvement and a Development Team who focuses on delivering high-quality product increments” (Overeem, 2016). The process of learning any new skill involves a learning curve but as we implemented the Agile process our team grew into one great Scrum team.

One important role when following the Scrum-Agile approach is the Product Owner, this role’s primary responsibilities are to maintain the product backlog and “to maximize the value the product creates for the users, customers, and the business” (Scrum Alliance, n.d.). On the SNHU Travel project, the Product Owner contributed to our success by meeting with the client to get a good understanding of their needs and putting those needs into succinct user stories. The Product Owner then modified the product backlog as the client’s needs changed. A good example of this process was when the client met with the Product Owner and decided to change the “Top Destinations List” to a list of wellness and detox destinations. The product owner then notified the team of the change in needs and updated the product backlog to reflect these changes. This resulted in a higher quality product for the client to utilize.

An additional role in a Scrum-Agile team is the Scrum Master, this person is responsible for “ensuring Scrum is understood and enacted. Scrum Masters do this by ensuring that the Scrum Team adheres to Scrum theory, practices, and rules” (Cobb, 2015). For the SNHU Travel project, an effective Scrum Master was best demonstrated when the Scrum Master lead the daily Scrum. During the daily Scrum the Scrum Master kept things moving and productive, she led by example and was the first team member to illustrate an efficient team update. She quickly updated the team by relating what she did yesterday, what she would be working on today, and what impediments her work was facing. This was a great example of how to keep the daily scrum short and effective. She also worked with the team to resolve any issues that were impeding their progress and explained Scrum events and processes as needed. “Scrum Masters are true leaders who serve the Scrum Team and the larger organization” (Schwaber & Sutherland, 2020) which was demonstrated by the Scrum Master as the team moved through the SNHU Travel project.

The final, but equally important, component of the Scrum-Agile team is the Development Team, which encompasses both developers and testers. As explained by Charles Cobb, “Scrum recognizes no titles for Development Team members other than Developer, regardless of the work being performed” (2015). The Development team is collectively responsible for doing the work that will lead to a releasable and functional product at the end of the sprint. The Development team is “self-organizing. The developers decide how to turn product backlog into Increments of potentially releasable functionality” (Scrum Alliance, n.d.). To do this the team must be cross-function and flexible. The flexibility required was demonstrated in the SNHU Travel project when the client’s needs changed from a list of destinations to wanting a slideshow of destinations. The team adjusted the definition of complete as well as the tests for the program to reflect the changes the client gave then adjusted the coding to meet the new requirements. This process occurred again when the client asked for the site to focus on wellness and detox vacations instead of the top destinations.

The Scrum-Agile approach to software development helped each of the user stories come to completion during the sprint by clearly listing the needed elements for each task to be marked as done. For example, the Product Backlog I made for the SNHU Travel project included a user story that said, “as an end user, I want to be able to set a price limit, so that I can plan vacations that fit my budget” (Knupp, 2022). The details of the user story then set benchmarks for completion like the ability to set the price limit in an editable field and once set the price limits all vacations are displayed. The consistent and succinct format makes prioritizing the stories easier which helps the development team decide how to allocate tasks. The Scrum-Agile approach also supports realizing the user stories by encouraging a self-regulated and cross-functional team (Scrum Alliance, n.d.). The Daily Scrum and other Scrum events all serve to open communication so that the team was able to work together to find solutions to any problems and move quickly passed them.

The Scrum-Agile approach supported project completion when the SNHU travel project changed direction by being flexible and using open communication. The open dialogue between the Product Owner and the client allowed the client to communicate the changes in their needs as soon as emerging information indicated that wellness and detox vacations were projected to be the next leading sector of travel. The Product Owner was then able to update the Development Team and the Product Backlog. The Development Team was able to change the direction of the project with minimal rework because of the incremental nature of the Scrum-Agile approach. The tester was able to change the tests to reflect the new requirements, for example, the tester changed the “click a button to view a list of the top destinations” (Knupp, 2022) to say “click a button to view a list of top wellness and detox vacations” (Knupp, 2022). A change in direction will always cause some additional work but with the Scrum-Agile method, it was minimized.

Open and honest communication is essential to the Scrum-Agile approach, it is the only way to keep the team all on the same page and working toward the goal together. The Scrum-Agile methods prefer direct conversation, “the most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a project team is face-to-face conversation” (Cobb, 2015). However, in many cases, the team is spread out in location and other methods of communication are used instead. In the case of our team email was the primary method but Daily Scrum was done via video conference. Here is an example of my effective communication:

To: Christy

Subject: Requesting Clarification on User Stories for SNHU Travel

Good morning Christy,

I have just reviewed the user stories you sent on the SNHU Travel project and have started to write the test cases for the requested completion criteria. There are a few points I would appreciate clarification on so that I can clearly define my test cases for the upcoming sprint. Please provide any answers or feedback for the following questions.

*User Story 1*: How are top destinations determined, sales, reviews, or outside sources? How often are these updated and by whom? Are they separated by type or one big list? How should they be presented, a scrollable list or slideshow you can page through like a brochure? Is the description a single sentence or a short paragraph?  Is it ascending or descending in popularity?

*User Story 3*: Is the list of the top destinations based on the user’s profile the same top destinations list rearranged in order of how well they match the user’s profile or is it a list of vacations that match the profile that is organized in order of popularity? Are we presenting it the same as the non-customized top destination list?

*User Story 4*: Is the price limit going to affect both the non-customized top destinations list or just the list based on the user’s profile? Do you want the list to be ascending or descending prices? Are the vacations separated by type then listed in order of cost or in order of cost without regard to the type of vacation?

I appreciate any clarification you can give me. Thank you for your time.

Connie

(Knupp, 2022).

This email had many elements of good communication. It was clear and concise while asking for clarification. The email also was polite and professional and not accusatory, a counter-example of poor communication could have said “you did not provide me with enough information to properly design test cases, here are the questions I have.” This approach is too confrontational and accusatory, and it would result in poor teamwork. This open and respectful communication was also displayed during the Daily Scrum as team members asked for help or offered to help others overcome impediments.

**Evaluate the organizational tools and Scrum-agile principles that helped your team be successful**. Be sure to reference the Scrum events in relation to the effectiveness of the tools.

* **Assess the effectiveness of the Scrum-agile approach for the SNHU Travel project**. Be sure to address each of the following:
  + Describe the pros and cons that the Scrum-agile approach presented during the project.
* Determine whether or not a Scrum-agile approach was the best approach for the SNHU Travel development project.

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