**SNHU Travel Sprint Review and Retrospective**

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Throughout the course of the SNHU Travel project, I had the chance to stand in as Product Owner, Scrum Master, a developer and as a tester. Each of these roles contribute to the total success of the project, sharing importance through significant interdependence.

The product owner plays a key role in project organization from a high level. In my time as the product owner, I was able to talk with end users to create a vision for the final product, then prioritize the project backlog accordingly. While everyone else on the team makes countless day-to-day decisions, it is the Product Owner who makes the big-picture decisions. For example, in the SNHU Travel project, I met with end users of competitors applications. This helped me decide which features to include, what their prioritization should be, and how they should appear within the application. Mid-project, I also made the call to change the appearance to a slide-show type format and shift the focus to wellness and detox vacations.

During my time as the Scrum Master for the team, I learned how to work within and advise a self-organizing team. I planned and attended the Daily Scrum and other Scrum events such as sprint planning and retrospectives. In doing this, I was able to help optimize the efficiency of the development team. The most challenging part of this role for me was knowing when to intervene in meetings and when to allow the issues to be resolved within the self-organized team.

While I was a developer, I learned how to write code collaboratively and added destination information to the Java application. Through writing code collaboratively, each sprint was able to be completed on time. This is because no individual is particularly specialized within the development team, so no portion of the project can be held up by an individual developer.

As a tester, I ensured all items in the product backlog were executed and appeared as described by the product owner. This helped remove any bugs or unsightly features prior to deployment. For example, during testing, I found the text layout of the final slideshow application difficult to read. This was an opportunity to make a small improvement that could make a big difference in the usability of the final product.

From the conception to the testing of user stories within the SNHU Travel project, a Scrum-agile approach to the SDLC encouraged the development of the highest quality application features. An example of this is when the application transitioned from having a list-style view to a slideshow view of the top five recommended destinations. Although this was a major change to a user story, the team was able to change course relatively quickly. A large reason for this is the breakdown of project lifecycle into sprints. Although a non-negligible amount of work had already gone into making the list-style application, the development of the entire application was segmented into smaller deliverables to allow flexibility and change. Perhaps some time was spent redoing work to create the slideshow view, but it was far less time than if a waterfall approach had been taken and significantly more of the project needed to be redone.

The Scrum-agile approach to the SDLC also allowed flexibility and optimized communication and collaboration throughout the entire project. Because the project is broken down into sprints, there are multiple opportunities throughout the project for any role within the Scrum team to pivot their approach and make the remainder of the project more successful. For example, it was late in the development lifecycle when the Project Owner requested the SNHU Travel site recommend predominantly wellness and detox destinations. Because regular planning meetings and retrospectives are core Scrum events, it was very straightforward to incorporate this change into the project without wasting too much time or needing to redo too much work.

Throughout the project, strong communication was required to ensure all team members were on the same page. This was partially done through written communication, typically to the Project Owner. During these communications, I tried to be direct and concise, organizing my thoughts in an easy-to-read manner. For example, when appropriate, I would add headers to sub-sections of communications. In the following sample, I broke down questions about user stories into bullet points with bold headers:

**“User Story Two (Travel History – Base Recommendations)**

1. On what page should the user be able to rate past trips?
2. How should the rating system of past trips appear visually?”

I found that bullets points helped differentiate between questions and improve readability. Additionally, the bold header made it abundantly clear what user story the questions pertained to. Another example of effective communication was directly asking for a response. An example of this was written as follows: “Would you be able to give me clarification on the following items?”. In asking this directly, I make it clear that the intention of the communication was to get a response to the questions that followed.

The structure of Scrum and agile principles provide tools and guidelines designed to lead to project management efficiency and overall project success. One principle heavily relied on throughout the project was the agile manifesto principle #1: “Out highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of valuable software” (Beck et al., 2001). Through applying this principle, the team was able to prioritize customer input and provide a final product that is exactly what they are looking for in a travel booking tool. Another principle that was applied was principle #6: “The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation” (Beck et al., 2001). This principle was applied through prioritization of face-to-face meetings, most notable the Daily Scrum meeting, where team members meet daily, in person, for project updates. I think this was important because being in-person will naturally demand everyone’s undivided attention more than a remote meeting would. This is because it is too easy to become distracted or multitask during remote meetings. Another Scrum event that was extremely useful was sprint planning. During the sprint planning, the Project Owner was able to organize the user stories to be completed within the sprint, then the rest of the team breaks them down into tasks. This allows all team members to be on the same page and enter the sprint with clarity on what their role is.

I think using an Agile-Scrum approach to project management was the right choice for the SNHU Travel project. As the project progressed, design constraints changed, and the iterative development allowed these changes to be accommodated for the final product. Additionally, the division of roles: Product Manager, Scrum Master, developers, and testers, allowed for everyone to have a focused goal that promotes efficiency in project completion. A potential downside of using agile methodology is the same as its greatest strength: flexibility. Because changes to design and functionality can be implemented late in the development, it’s possible for the project to be drawn out beyond the initially projected completion date. Overall, I think the thorough communication, iterative development, and team structures used within the Agile-Scrum approach was an excellent fit for the SNHU Travel project.

Works Cited:

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