Sprint Review and Retrospective

David Burrell

Southern New Hampshire University

During the development of this project for SNHU Travel I had the opportunity to take on a variety of roles within agile project management. Those roles were the Scrum master, product owner, developer, and tester. By experiencing these different perspectives, it has demonstrated how you need to have a full understanding of your role, the roles of your team members and how these roles rely on each other to create a quality product. Learning how agile methodology functions in a real world scenario shows how important communication and accountability are throughout your entire team.

The Scrum Master is a servant-leader for the scrum team. Their job is to facilitate the scrum team through sprint planning, daily standups, backlog grooming, and sprint retrospective meetings. With sprint planning and daily standups, it is important to discuss what has been completed, what will be worked on that day, and any obstacles that may be encountered. Having daily goals that the team can agree on is more manageable for individuals to accomplish and helps prevent them from getting stuck on one task for too long. These meetings help the team identify and resolve any areas of conflict, remove unnecessary tasks and correct estimates based on new information.

As the Scrum Master I wrote a cohesive agile team charter, based on initial interactions with the Product Owner, that briefly describes the SNHU Travel project and suggests some behavior and communication practices for the team. Communication is important for every member of the development team. It is also important for the Scrum Master to manage the exchange of information between every team member and make sure all goals and tasks are clear for everyone.

The Product Owner is responsible for maximizing the value of the product and the work of the development team. They handle most of the decision making for a project as well as give direction to the team and prioritize the workload. As the intermediary between the client and the rest of the development team, it is the responsibility of the product owner to make sure the goals are clear and the vision is aligned with the business objective.

As the Product Owner I was responsible for creating user stories and a product backlog after meeting with potential users and finding out what features they would like to see. User stories are essential in delegating tasks and prioritizing the workload for the development team. Hearing feedback from the users can make the goals of the project clearer and clarify which areas of the project are the most important and what needs to be prioritized. When creating the user stories and product backlog it was easy to see how visualizing the workload in this manner makes a project much more organized and helps progress the project.

A tester on an agile team will help design and execute tests to determine if the product passes or fails. Frequent interactions with the product owner and the development team ensure that everyone understands the test criteria that the user stories must pass to be considered “done”. Testing is used throughout the development process and testers are responsible for identifying what parts of the project are working a what is not. User stories are very helpful in developing test cases by defining “acceptance criteria” where most of the useful information comes from. It is also useful to define the size and priority of each story to get a consensus on how to delegate the work among the team.

In my role as the tester, I developed a detailed test case for each of the user stories. However, there was a scenario where more information needed from the product owner. An email was sent asking for more detail so that the test cases can be created as specific as possible. Communications like this to the product owner are an effective way to relate my needs, prompt a response, and progress the project. This also encourages collaboration among team members by inspiring more discussion about details of the project. User stories provide a great start for the development team and a nice framework for what needs to be accomplished. Testers clearing up confusion makes for a smooth transition into actual development.

Developers play a very important role on the agile team. They are responsible for designing the software and interacting with users, testers, and product owners as necessary to clarify requirements. They also need to be aware of changes that are made during the development process and efficiently update the software. Agile teams work together to communicate changes accordingly and update those changes at every level, such as product backlog, user stories, and test cases. Developers can then continue with their code simultaneously editing where necessary so that deadlines can still be reached.

As a developer, I was asked to modify existing code to fulfill the new requirements from the product owner. There was a pivot to incorporate detox and wellness destinations as this was a trending vacation destination. Occasionally there might be a need for further clarification from the tester or product owner while making changes. To ensure I receive the response needed to move forward I need to be as specific as possible when asking questions about functionality and desired outcomes. Agile allows developers to be more flexible in their approach to development due to its adaptable nature.

Throughout the project several communications tools were used to provide clear feedback and collaborate effectively among the team. The primary means of communication were through daily stand up meetings that allows the team to disclose what has been completed, what will be worked on next, and any obstacles encountered. This enables the scrum master to get an understanding of the progress of the development team. The use of email was another method of communication. The developers were able to ask clarifying question to the product owner to elaborate on user stories and to testers to understand what test cases may be used. The tester was able to email the product owner for further clarification of the acceptance criteria so they could write the appropriate test cases.

There are several benefits of developing an agile product management approach. Many people think the primary benefit of an agile project is getting it done faster, but that is not always the case. The primary emphasis in an agile project is to deliver value in the form of successful business outcomes by taking an adaptive approach to maximize the value that is delivered. Time to market is also an important consideration. Agile accomplishes this by reducing the start up time required for projects, improving the efficiency of the overall project, and focusing on simplicity by eliminating non-value-added work. Agile can also result in higher productivity and lower costs by eliminating unnecessary overhead and bottlenecks and doing work concurrently rather than sequentially. In a traditional waterfall project, quality is often perceived as a separate effort that is the responsibility of the quality assurance department. The developers tend to develop software and then “toss it over the wall” to the testers. In an agile project, the entire team owns responsibility for building quality into the design of the products they produce. Finally, an important benefit of agile is a more effective organization with higher morale. People at all levels are motivated and empowered to do their work and take pride in doing it well because the environment is built on solid values, including respect for people. All parts of the organization work together more collaboratively in a spirit of partnership toward common goals.

Reference

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