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6/14/2023

CS-250

Sprint Review and Retrospective

When working on the SNHU Travel project there were multiple ways to approach the development cycle. Previously the waterfall project management method had been used, but this strategy became outdated. The waterfall method defined a strict pathway at which tasks were completed in a sequential order. Each step had to be fully completed before moving to the next. This often caused delays in production because when one step had trouble, the rest had to pay for it in the future. Another issue was when a step later down the line had an issue with something that was done in the first step, the whole project would have to pause and backtrack. The waterfall method was not ideal anymore so now Chada Tech has shifted to the agile workflow. Unlike the waterfall method where steps must be done in order, the agile method allows steps to be worked on coincidently. A project that uses the agile workflow is instead divided into shorter cycles called sprints. Agile also allows for a more dynamic development cycle that allows feedback to be made throughout production and not just at the end.

What allows the agile method to work so well is the team of people who are working with it. The work team is divided into a few different roles. The top of the chain is the product owner, who oversees making the product to begin with. They speak with the scrum master who makes sure that the demands of the owner and the feedback of testers reach the development team, as well as making sure the team is on track. The development team meets with the scrum master often and makes the concept product a reality. They accept feedback and can make changes as they go, which we could not do before when using the waterfall method, but now can since we use agile. Finally, there are testers who are involved in every step where we need something tested. Their purpose is to find issues and think of suggestions we could use to make the product better. Each of these roles and the individuals that fall within them did exceptionally well throughout working on the SNHU Travel project. The product owner communicated with me, the scrum master, well and was clear about what I should discuss with the development team. The development team did a great job accepting feedback that would be brought to them. The testers provided helpful feedback when asked that allowed for the SNHU Travel product to become better than it would have without the feedback.

The agile approach helped tremendously with the feedback I just mentioned. Without the agile method feedback would be very hard to accept throughout the course of the project. However, since we worked with agile it allowed us to accept tester feedback with each sprint. No longer did we have to worry about completing the whole product and then having to change it all at once, we could change things as we went along. Initially the user stories that were submitted were a good start to some ideas that would be great to include with the product. However, they lacked some key elements and specifics that we needed to know. We reached back out to the testers and kindly requested them to add some more details in their suggestions. They got back to us with the edits, and they were tremendously more helpful and allowed our development team to see a clear picture of what was requested. As useful as these critiques and suggestions were, they also slowed us down but not nearly as much as they would have if we were still using waterfall. Whenever something came up and we needed to shift our trajectory, we were able to do so quite easily.

I previously brought up the feedback that the testers gave to us. Initially I sent a request to all SNHU Travel users to submit any feedback to my email. I requested that they please include as many details as they could. The more details they could think of, the better we could potentially make their ideas become reality. I also asked them to think about how the improvement should be presented, what kind of input it can receive, among other things. I received some of the top ideas and critiques and transitioned them into user stories. I realized that lots of details were still missing so I reached out by email again detailing exactly what I wanted. With this email I included requests such as to give a full vision of what you want this product to accomplish. I also made sure to ask them to specify when they would like these changes to be completed by, and to kindly prioritize their requests so we know which to complete first. After I had received the top final changes, I finalized the user stories and sent them to the development team. This example shows how important it is to communicate in detail and be clear about expectations. I did my best to be clear throughout this project when communicating with all the team. I took what I learned from communicating with the testers and applied it to when I talked with the developers and product owner.

Organization is extremely important when we shifted to agile. Even though agile is better than the waterfall method, it is much messier and harder to keep track of. One of the first things that should be done with a project is to figure out which tasks will take the longest and which are most important. To establish priority of tasks there is a system called affinity grouping. It is a fast and efficient process that can help estimate how important some things are or how long something may take to do. The good thing about this method is that you can see the overall general agreement or disagreement very easily and promote discussion about it. The bad thing is that some members may have less knowledge about a topic and cannot estimate accurately or realistically. When a list is finally assembled groups can be made and applied to each task depending on the factors discussed when the affinity grouping process was live. After the tasks have been assigned and formatted, throughout the days, weeks, or months that a project takes multiple scrum meetings will take place. These will be used to address where we are at with the project, and where we should be by a certain time. Private meetings will also be held to discuss personal performance to ensure that everyone is contributing towards the project.

The agile workflow with the scrum approach is superior to the waterfall method. The waterfall method has many good things going for it like its simplicity and ease of progress, but the agile has many more pros. Agile allows for something extremely important when developing something, and that is edits and improvements being made along the way. Waterfall often prevents feedback from happening during the project while agile can accept change on the way towards the final product. The scrum format gives the team chances to bond and get to collaborate more with other teams in a positive way. The best thing agile does is make the entire project development efficient. Allowing multiple aspects to be worked on coincidently saves time and gives the opportunity to find errors and apply feedback in the middle of the project and not just at the end. The dynamic workflow given by agile created a better work environment for those that worked on SNHU Travel.