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Final Project: ChadaTech Sprint Review and Retrospective

For many years, ChadaTech has been designing and developing software using a plan-based waterfall method. The SNHU Travel application was the company’s first foray into an Agile methodology using the Scrum framework. Now that the project’s first sprint has ended, this document will serve as a review and retrospective to analyze the work that has been done and how Agile practices impacted the team’s performance.

A foundational element of the Scrum framework is the use of three to four distinct roles in the development process. The first is the Product Owner, who represents the interests of the client and company stakeholders. Their job is to create and manage the product backlog and prioritize requirements for the team based on those interests. For the SNHU Travel project, the Product Owner worked with the client and interviewed potential users of the product to create user stories that reflected what the client and users wanted out of the product. In developing these stories, the Product Owner acted as a bridge between the client and the rest of the team, translating the company’s vision into workable functional and nonfunctional requirements and prioritizing them to deliver the highest value to the customer.

The second role is that of the Scrum Master, who manages the actual Scrum process and ensures that the team is effectively using Scrum practices. The Scrum Master for the SNHU Travel project created the team charter, ran the daily Scrum and other events, and aided the team in communication and prioritization of tasks. With a thorough knowledge of Scrum and a team-focused leadership style, the Scrum Master made sure every team member was working at their highest potential and encouraged an organized and efficient approach that led to a better finished product.

The Development Team and Testers worked together to create working software according to the requirements defined by the Product Owner, and thanks to the Scrum Master, were able to do so with minimal friction and effective communication. Developers were able to communicate roadblocks and self-organize to overcome them. Testers had clearly defined user stories on which they could base their test cases. Through Scrum meetings and events, all team members understood where they and their teammates stood and what needed to be done. These factors all led to a better finished product, less scrambling, and a more effective process than the waterfall approach.

Despite the streamlined nature of the Scrum-Agile approach, there were some communication issues and unexpected changes along the way. For example, the client at one point mentioned a slideshow view that was not communicated in the user stories provided, and the whole team had been assuming SNHU Travel would be using a list view, which is standard for most similar applications. This threw off the team’s expectations and forced a design change well into the process, but the Agile methodology is designed to adapt to changing circumstances, and once clear communication was established between the layers of the Scrum team, a new plan was in place and the necessary changes could be made with no impact to deadlines or budget.

Effective communication and organization are key in any productive environment, and the Scrum-Agile framework makes these priorities in its principles. The Scrum Master is responsible, above all, for making sure that teams communicate and organize well to achieve their goals. During this project, the Scrum Master organized Daily Scrums, quick meetings with the Development team to get insight into the important questions of the day from each team member, such as “What did I do yesterday to help meet the sprint goal?”, “What will I do today to help meet the sprint goal?”, and “What impedes us from meeting the sprint goal?” The meetings were time-boxed to 15 minutes and the Scrum Master kept every contribution on topic, while moving off-topic items to a sidebar board to be addressed later. It is common in an environment without a rigorous system in place for meetings to go wildly over their expected time limit and for team members to leave feeling like they didn’t accomplish anything. With focused daily questions, teams are able to share key points about their work, roadblocks that they might need help with, and their progress so far without wasting anyone’s time. This is just one of several Scrum events that take place during a sprint, and all of them are held together by a Scrum Master with a strong foundation in Scrum methodology to maximize the ability of their team to communicate and organize amongst themselves.

Overall, the Scrum-Agile practices in place benefitted the SNHU Travel project. It led to better understanding of the project between different administrative layers of the company as well as within the development team. It created clearly defined goals that were also clearly prioritized. It provided a framework for clear communication and organization, as well as the means for a knowledgeable Scrum Master to enforce that framework. Most importantly, the process allowed for change and adaptation, the primary benefit of any Agile methodology. It could be argued that a framework as robust as Scrum was unnecessary for a relatively short-term and small scale project, and could have been finished more quickly with a waterfall approach, but due to some miscommunications and interruptions during the course of development, it is equally likely that adhering to a waterfall-based plan would have caused massive problems in getting a finished product delivered by the deadline. While the Agile method could be even more effective in a larger project, it was also effective for SNHU Travel due to its adaptability, focus on teamwork, and organizational practices.