I find it easiest to start at the top of the ‘chain of command’ that we see in this new agile method so let’s start there. Our product owner, Christy was incredibly effective in communicating not only her ideas to the rest of the teams so they could work at the level she was envisioning, but she was also rather effective in asking the right questions and being able to discuss with the client and other potential customers of the product to see what SNHU Travel might be able to do better. Right away she was really helpful in explaining her steps and what she was doing just so the team knows how her role fits into everything, even when she may need to go to meeting frequently to discuss different parts of the product with the clients or potential customers.

During the change in the fifth week when SNHU Travel communicated that they wanted to focus on detox and wellness vacations, Christy was also effective in calming the team down, ensuring they do not overstress about a rather small change, and she communicated that she would make it easier on the team by deprioritizing some other tasks so they could focus on getting this change and product delivered. A product owner is not only responsible for ensuring the product is delivered, but they also have to make sure their team is in the state to deliver a product of this nature. What she did here allowed the team to keep their motivation and kept the project running as smoothly as possible.

Next, as the scrum master, I felt it was important for me to be able to work with the team more than the product owner was going to be able to. It was often up to me to keep everything running smoothly while the product owner may be off in a new meeting trying to set up different projects for us to tackle or ensuring changes are made to the customer’s wants. It was my job to bridge this gap between owner and team when she couldn’t necessarily do it herself. This required good communication between the two of us so I could take the ideas she wanted and run with them. I feel it is my ongoing duty to follow up with the team here in this meeting to ensure we communicate what the team could do better or if there were any issues we could not solve in the middle of a sprint but maybe can address now.

The developers and testers took these changes we made for the team and structure and just ran with them. We saw benefits from both areas, especially when it came to the amount of work each member of both teams had on a day-to-day basis. No longer did we have only a few people working on certain tasks every day because they were the only ones who knew how. In switching to the agile method, we were able to better promote collaboration between teams and team members to ensure more people would be available for these ‘specialized’ tasks in hopes we could make these tasks no longer that specialized for us. Our testers were no longer so volatile in the amount they had on their table and could instead get a solid idea of work to be done from each team member and could be proactive in developing their tests to collaborate with developers rather than the developer waiting on the tester then the tester waiting on the developer.

Having the Scrum-agile approach assisting us throughout the project was probably most prevalent in the top five destination list and going from regular travel to detox and wellness trips. We figured out through multiple meetings with our clients and potential customers how to make the best application for those users and how we could take up more market share. We saw through the potential user meeting that they would like to see a top destination list for them, and maybe a separate tab for top destinations that people have been going on recently. With the information that we got in the client meeting, we were able to prioritize this list and fill it with popular detox and wellness trips, so we were able to complete both of those tasks in one easy segment so we could recommend the most relevant trips to the users from information the client’s research team had gathered.

I have found the classic big board to be quite useful for the team to know what each member is doing. It was clear to see that this easily substantiated one of the agile principles of collaboration. The daily scrum meeting using this board made collaboration a breeze because we could directly ask the coworker if they were available and if they were not, we could ask the rest of the team for a potential solution. As I mentioned before, it also ended up being an average relief to the testing team as well since they knew what was coming at them throughout the coming days. Those slower days may have been nicer for them, but I was assured that an even and consistent workload every day was much better for their morale than a ‘day off’ here and there.

Through switching to the agile methodology, I would confidently say each team felt more comfortable and less overwhelmed with their work than with the waterfall methodology. Setbacks can feel like such a disappointing event and switching from what the team had already developed to focusing on detox and wellness travel would have felt like quite the setback with waterfall as dates would need to be pushed back causing a delay in when the product could be delivered. This can be such a moral killer for a team that had been working on this one product for weeks now. With the agile method, changes like these are not ‘setbacks,’ but rather slight changes for the team to work through. It does not cause all this delay in timelines because other tasks can be deprioritized to feel good about the product they are putting out. Agile works because of communication and every aspect of the method fuels this idea.