Sprint Review and Retrospective

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate everyone on their hard work, and I would like everyone to know that it could not have been done without a team effort. This is because that is how we work in an agile environment, as a team. It wasn’t easy moving from your old method of thinking and working to a much more independent and fluid work ethic, but everyone did excellent in the transition so far. The project for SNHU travel has been on time and even with the few bumps in the road we achieved exactly what we intended at the beginning of the Sprint. For our first Sprint Review and Retrospective we will go over how each part of the team contributed, how we used the Scrum-agile approach to complete our stories, and how we used Scrum-agile principles and organizational tools that helped this project be successful.

Throughout this project we have had many gears working together. One of these was the Product Owner. The Product Owner of our scrum team was the face of the team for the stakeholders. It is the role of the Product Owner to get the ideas of the stakeholders and formulate them into a plan for what needs to be done by the rest of the team. When the stakeholders decided to move towards detox/wellness travel type, it was the Product Owner that relayed this information to the rest of the team and made sure that any questions regarding this change were answered so that the team would understand what changes need to be made, how much time they have to make these changes, and what they can reuse for this new direction. The developers and testers of the Development Team are our worker bees. Everyone was well structured and empowered to organize and manage their own work and it showed that everyone was able to handle that. The Development Team was able to adapt well to the changes when the stakeholders went into a new direction. The testers immediately were ready to update their test cases to accommodate the new changes and the development team refactored the work they have completed so far to reflect on what the stakeholders wanted. The Development Team worked together to adapt to these changes and still delivered the product they needed at the end of the Sprint. As the Scrum Master, I was always available for the Development Team and the Product Owner and answered any questions that came my way. I made sure the Development Team had everything they needed when they were working on the project and I made sure I always asked questions of the Product Owner regarding what the stakeholders were looking for to make sure the product they were getting is what they wanted. When the changes came, the Development Team was already focusing on what changes need to be made but I made sure that the major shift in content stayed on the same schedule and helped the rest of the team to be able to deliver on the deadline that had already been decided. Overall, it was a very strong team effort that achieved what we have at the end of this Sprint.

As I had said, it was not easy to transition to such a different approach as agile, but everyone did an amazing job doing so. When the user stories were created by the Product Owner, the team was able to start working on the priority stories immediately. The Product Owner did an excellent job creating these user stories using the focus group consisting of some of the best customers of SNHU Travel. Their feedback was important in understanding what are some of the expectations of the SNHU Travel customer base. Even though the stakeholders want to appeal to the customers and have the best product they can have, it is very important to get an idea of what the customers want themselves. A company can create a product that they think is the best and incomparable to other products in their minds, but customers may not think it is as great as they do, so it is important to get this kind of feedback directly from the customers. Once the stories were created, the Development Team was then able to assess what the priority stories are, how much time and work each story will be, how to break up the teams to finish each story and how many stories can be completed in the Sprint. The Scrum-agile approach helps the team to work more cohesively so that they are all aware of what is needed to be done and how much they can do through each Sprint. It allows for open communication amongst the team to relay to the Product Owner what the technical side of these stories is to better understand what to expect from the product.

The best thing, and arguably the most important thing, about the Scrum-agile approach is adaptability. Before, you had a very rigid plan that must be followed, expectations that must be met and everything that was planned out ahead of time must be done by a decided deadline. This is not necessarily bad project management as much as it is inefficient project management. Nothing ever truly goes as planned, just like how midway through the project the stakeholders decided that they wanted a wellness-based travel service. That wasn’t the initial plan at all and could have halted the project entirely if it were not for our agile approach. The Development Team was able to adapt to these changes, see what they have already, how it can be changed to what it needed now and continue working. The use of these Sprints is what truly makes this development cycle efficient. You have a certain number of stories that you work on in a Sprint and you have these 3 to 4 weeks to work on these stories. In this period, if any changes occur, they can be worked out during that Sprint. The point is not to overload on work but to work efficiently and so everyone is able to manage their time wisely when working on these stories. Some may be further ahead and can help others when finished. It all comes down to working together and communicating and that is exactly what was done during this Sprint. You came across a speed bump and managed to work with the flow to still deliver a finished product for this Sprint.

Communication, communication and again, communication. This is probably a word most will be entirely tired of hearing, but it is such an important aspect of the agile approach that it must be continuously mentioned. The floor is always open in the Scrum-agile approach and it is encouraged that questions get asked and people are kept informed. It is why we hold the daily standup and why we have this review and retrospective. It is to make sure everyone is on the same page and that if any changes need to be made, everyone is aware and ready to work alongside these changes. There cannot be improvement without communication. Anything can change in a project along the way and often these changes are unexpected. The daily standup allows a time for this to be discussed and noted so that going forward the team can figure out a way to solve the problem together. Maybe someone has more time or is more experienced, this is all opening the floor for communication among the team. It also brings everyone closer so that they all get to know each other’s strengths and weaknesses as well. During our Sprint we had a team meeting regarding the changes that SNHU Travel wanted to make regarding detox/wellness travel. This team meeting allowed the entire team to hear what SNHU management wanted from their product, but it also allowed time for the team to get clarity on what they wanted. Such as if the entire product needs to be restarted, if the test cases need to be updated and whether the timeline is the same. This allowed everyone to get their questions and concerns out of the way immediately so that they can all be on the same page and work on how they will go forward from that point.

Agile project-management tools are a great way to keep track of everything that is happening with the project. In this project we have been using Azure Boards, which allow users to see what everyone is working on, what has been completed and what still needs to be completed. It is a visual representation of the team itself so that the Product Owner and I know where the team is and can relay this information to the stakeholders if needed. It also allows for collaboration with the team members, so it influences communication and it is a great way to make sure people are not doing double the work as well. When you finished something, just grab the next task off the backlog and the entire team is aware that the task has been picked up by you, it is no longer in the backlog and the next person is able to do the same but it also leaves time for people to be able to help others as well. When there was a change in development, the team had to work together relay what needed to be done and what changes needed to be made going forward so the use of this tool was a great way to do that. Along with this we used agile principles to achieve success as well. We welcomed changing requirements when the stakeholders wanted to change direction in the middle of the Sprint. We delivered working software at the end of the Sprint, even with the change. We built this project together with support from one another and trust in each other. We used face to face conversation along with the project-management tools to convey information between each other. Even now, we are following agile principles by reflecting on what we have done and how to become more effective in the future. This are all very important parts of the agile method and even though you are all new to this, you have excelled greatly in a short period of time.

The Scrum-agile approach worked perfectly for this project and will continue to do so. It allows for fluidity and independence while also achieving a working product by the deadline. Some pros for this approach in the project was building a team that works well together, using stories as a basis of what is requested by the stakeholders, teaching adaptability and facilitating communication with each other constantly. In this project this worked very well and can be seen by what was achieved but this is also due to the simplicity of the project. Since this project is the first agile project everyone has worked on, it was a good way to be introduced to how it works. The cons of using the agile method for this project is that it didn’t really give a strong enough example of how to adapt to larger setbacks, working with a much larger demand, or with a much larger group of people. When we have a smaller group it is much easier to work together but once we work on larger projects that require more Product Owners and Scrum Masters working with their own Development Teams, it can be a much more different experience and some setbacks aren’t as easy to remedy as we did during this project. As I said though, this was a great introduction to how this method works though. It is the experience from this that should be the biggest takeaway. For this type of project, the Scrum-agile approach was the best approach. Using customer feedback, working closely with the stakeholders, updating the team on changes and adapting to those changes to create a finished product is what the agile method is all about. Larger projects will require much more work when overcoming changes and sometimes there will be so many people on a development team that you cannot possibly communicate with everyone but it is important to take everything that you have learned so far working on this project and keep moving forward and to continuously improve. So far everyone has done an excellent job on this project and will continue to do so, I’m sure. I look forward to our next review and retrospective after our next sprint.