During this project, I worked with my team in the role of the developer, so the experience of working with the tester felt most important. Having a strong working relationship and understanding of how each other works is critical to maintaining the sprints timeline and hitting goals. Without downplaying the importance of these two roles working well together, the support from upper management such as the Product Owner and Scrum master is equally vital to maintaining this pace. Having Product Owners and Scrum Masters who aren’t able to effectively articulate their needs and expectations will result in having a team that is spiraling out of control with little to no sense of direction.

Utilizing the Scrum-agile tools throughout this project helped the team to maintain focus, deliver results quickly, and effectively address the user stories. When looking at a medium level user story, the sorting of results by price, we saw a request to allow the user to define the sorting method used on the results page. This feature is a relatively small task that when brought up at a daily Scrum meeting could be addressed, developed, and tested within a day or two. If developers break off to take advantage of pair programming, the team can find solutions to these user stories in a more efficient way.

Throughout the project life cycle, we were asked to remain fluid and flexible as the Product Owner would submit updated user stories. Early on in the project, the PO had submitted an updated user story requesting a feature change to allow the user to view their top 5 recommended travel destinations. While the implementation of the top results was already in the process of being developed, the value of this change couldn’t be denied by the development team.   
 The developers then set to work changing over how the recommended vacation results were returned to the user. Changing the return values for the vacations allows us to better customize the customer experience in a way that provides a unique tailored list. By using the tools given to us through Agile, we were able to quickly pivot the focus of some of our development team to work on the implementation of these features. If we had been using a different project management approach such as waterfall we wouldn’t have had the flexibility afforded to us through using Agile.

While working with the other team members, my two primary concerns were the implementation of an organization chart to define the team hierarchy, and to cement the communication. From other work experiences I understand the value of clear lines of communication, knowing who to bring questions and results without stepping outside of your role can have a monumental impact on the success of the team at large. These two topics were what I mainly focused on in my direct responses to other team members as seen below.

“I think all of these outlined daily scrum meetings sound great to help maintain open communication through the sprints. I think the two week time period for the sprints will be perfect to help maintain a steady pace for finishing user stories. Do you have any ideas on how we can best present completed stories to the stakeholder? Will we be sending the features off to the testers before sending off to the stakeholder?”

“This all sounds good to me Alexander, what type of dialogue do you intend on maintaining with the development team to ensure we are testing thoroughly? I don't have much experience with Azure but am quite familiar with Slack, how do these communication platforms differ? I think it's a great idea to build a complete communication team-wide to ensure everyone can get the information they need. I will say it's important to maintain the structure to ensure that everyone stays within the bounds of their role.”

With both of these examples, I’m responding to team members outside of the developer role, one who is responsible for organizing what work needs to be completed, the Scrum Master, and one that is responsible for checking the work of the development team, the tester.

Through my experience on this project, the tool that held the most value had to be the user stories. From the initial examples, we were provided with a handful of user stories, these work so effectively at conveying what the product owner wants, as well as provide contextualized real-world examples. Developing based on the ideas of how users will be interacting with the final product instead of developing on the idea of how the product owner wants the user to interact with the product is excellent.   
 The value that comes from these user stories I believe is the explanation of how the user is functioning within the parameters of the product. Having the separation of the action from the desired result also provides a much more thorough view on what the user is hoping to do. This pair, the action versus the result, gives great insight into how the users naturally believe the website should function. Developers should look at the information provided to not only build the desired functionality into the site but also utilize the user’s perspective to help define the flow of the site at large.

Overall using a Scrum-agile approach to this project I believe helped it be completed in a more timely manner. This methodology is primarily a positive approach to this project, it provides all team members with clearly defines roles and tasks paired with actionable steps to completing user stories. It empowers all team members to take hold of a part of the project while all working towards a collective goal. The largest con of utilizing Scrum-agile is the learning curve of the project management style. If you’re currently working with a team that uses a different project management methodology it can be difficult and time-consuming to adapt an entire team over before or during a project.   
 In this example, however, Scrum-agile was the best approach to complete this project. Regardless of the learning curve and the team challenges that can come from that, the versatility provided to the team far outweighs any learning pains. Working within an industry such as travel, the needs, and expectations of the user change so frequently and abruptly that having a project management tool that caters to flexibility is pivotal.