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CS250 – Mod 7 – Final Project – Sprint Review and Retrospective

**Applying Roles**

In the SNHU Travel project, the various roles on our Scrum-Agile team (Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Tester) were integral to the project's success. Each role had distinct responsibilities that collectively ensured the project stayed on track and met user needs.

As the Product Owner, my primary contribution was to act as the voice of the customer. This involved translating the high-level, sometimes vague, feedback from the SNHU Travel focus group into a clear and prioritized Product Backlog of user stories. For example, the customer's request for "top 5 or 10 locations" was transformed into a user story: "As an End User, I want to see a curated list of top 5 or 10 popular travel destinations so that I can quickly browse attractive options for my next trip." This specific artifact provided the development team with a clear, actionable goal and ensured we were building features that delivered real value to the customer.

My role as the Scrum Master was to facilitate the process and remove impediments. This involved running our Daily Scrum meetings, as documented in our Daily Scrum Reflections document. In these meetings, I ensured the team remained aligned and that we could quickly address any issues that arose. For instance, when a team member expressed concern about the new design for the "Top Destinations" display, I facilitated a conversation between the team and the Product Owner to clarify the new requirements without disrupting the rest of the sprint. This demonstrated the Scrum Master's role in maintaining momentum and protecting the team from distractions.

Finally, in the role of Tester, I contributed by ensuring that the user stories' requirements were well-understood and testable. By creating detailed test cases, such as the one for the "Filter by Price Limitations" user story, I provided a clear definition of what "done" looked like. My communication to the Product Owner, which led to a new wireframe for the "Top Destinations" slideshow, was a direct example of how the Tester's role helps to clarify ambiguity and improve the product's quality before development even begins.

**Completing User Stories**

The Scrum-Agile approach to the Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) was instrumental in guiding user stories to completion. The iterative and incremental nature of the process allowed us to start with high-level ideas and progressively refine them into a shippable product.

The process began with the Backlog Grooming phase, where we took the initial, rough user stories and refined them. For example, the user story for filtering travel options was initially a single item. Through collaboration and discussion, we realized it was more valuable to separate it into two more focused stories: one for filtering by vacation type and another for filtering by price limitations. This breakdown into smaller, more manageable units is a core tenet of Agile, making each story easier to complete within a single sprint.

Once a user story was selected for a sprint, the team collaborated to define its Acceptance Criteria. For the "Filter by Price Limitations" story, we defined specific, testable criteria such as, "All displayed options are now priced between $500 and $2000 (inclusive)." During the Implementation phase, the development team built the feature, with the tester running continuous tests against these criteria. This cycle ensured that when a developer marked a story as "complete," we had a clear, objective measure to confirm its functionality and that met the user's explicit needs.

**Handling Interruptions**

The Scrum-Agile approach proved to be a major advantage when our SNHU Travel project was interrupted and a significant change in direction occurred. The specific interruption occurred when new wireframes were provided for the "Top Destinations" feature, changing the initial plan of a simple list to an interactive "Slide Show" format. As the Tester, I received this new information and in our Revised Test Case documents, I adjusted the test steps to reflect the new user actions required by the slideshow format.

This was possible because Agile embraces change. The Sprint Planning session at the start of a sprint allows for a re-evaluation of priorities, and the Retrospective at the end provides a platform to discuss what went right and wrong. The incremental nature of our development allowed us to adapt without losing all the work that had been completed.

**Communication**

Effective communication was a cornerstone of our team's success, and Agile provided the framework to make it happen. As the Tester, a key communication was my email to the Product Owner, which led to the clarification of user story requirements. By asking clear, concise questions about potential ambiguities, I initiated a collaborative process that refined the user stories. This communication was effective because it was proactive and focused on ensuring a shared understanding before development started, preventing costly misunderstandings later. It encouraged collaboration by inviting the Product Owner to provide more detail and context, demonstrating that the entire team had a stake in defining the final product.

**Organizational Tools**

Several organizational tools and Scrum-Agile principles were vital to our team's success. The User Story and Test Case templates were invaluable organizational tools. The user story template, with its "As a [type of user], I want to [perform some task] so that I can [achieve some goal]" format, forced clarity and a focus on customer value. It provided a common language for everyone on the team. The test case template, with its detailed steps and pass/fail measures, made our acceptance criteria concrete and objective.

The Scrum events were equally important. The Daily Scrum was a vital tool for short, daily inspections of progress, which helped us to quickly adapt. The Sprint Review provided a formal opportunity to demonstrate our working software to the Product Owner and other stakeholders, gathering crucial feedback that could be incorporated into the next sprint. Finally, the Sprint Retrospective was our tool for continuous improvement, allowing the team to reflect on what went well and what could be changed to make the next sprint even more effective.

**Evaluating Agile Process**

The primary pro to the Scrum-Agile approach was the flexibility to adapt to change. As evidenced by the new wireframes for the "Top Destinations" feature, the Agile process allowed us to adjust our plans without significant rework. The iterative nature also provided early and continuous feedback, enabling us to confirm with stakeholders that we were on the right track at every stage. This approach fostered a strong sense of collaboration and ownership within the team, as every member was directly involved in defining and completing user stories.

Daily Scrums, Sprint Planning, and Retrospectives, while valuable, take time and require discipline to be effective. For a small team or a very simple project, this could sometimes feel excessive. Additionally, without a very clear vision from the Product Owner, the flexibility of Agile could lead to a lack of long-term direction or scope creep resulting in negatives for the process.

Despite the minor cons, a Scrum-Agile approach was undoubtedly the best approach for the SNHU Travel development project. The project was inherently susceptible to change, as it was a new product being designed based on customer feedback. Requirements in any competitive market can evolve quickly, and the ability to pivot and adapt to those changes is critical. The incremental delivery of features and the continuous feedback loop are far more valuable in this context than the rigid, upfront planning of a waterfall model.