

SNHU Travel Sprint Review and Retrospective

Jonathan R. Miller

Abstract

The contents of this essay will include a discussion of the SNHU Travel project. This will be a Sprint review and retrospective on the work that was completed throughout the development of the SNHU Travel project. As the Scrum Master of the SNHU Travel project, I will first be discussing the various roles of our Scrum-agile team and how they contributed to the success of the project. I will then discuss how the Scrum-agile approach to the SDLC helped us complete each of the user stories. After that, I will describe how a Scrum-agile approach helped us complete the project after there was a major change to the direction and vision of the project. Then, I will provide examples of our ability, as a Scrum team, to effectively communicate under a Scrum-agile process. Organization tools and Scrum-agile principles will be discussed, and how they effectively helped our team be successful. Lastly, I will assess the effectiveness of the Scrum-agile approach for the SNHU Travel project.

Scum-agile Roles

There are three main roles that contribute to the Scum team. These roles are the Product Owner, the Scrum Master, and the Developers. Through effective communication and close collaboration, we were able to successfully complete work on the SNHU Travel project.

The product owner was responsible for communicating with the stakeholders, managing and prioritizing the product backlog, creating user stories for the developers, and evaluating the progress of the product throughout each iteration of development. The product owner defined the vision for the SNHU Travel project. They met with key stakeholders to get an understanding of what they wanted the product to be. After this meeting, the product owner drafted many user stories that contained the tasks needed to deliver the features of the product. Throughout development the product backlog was refined, and the items in the product backlog were reprioritized by the product owner to deliver maximum product value at the end of each sprint. This prioritization of items in the backlog greatly helped the team when the direction of the project changed.

As the Scrum Master, I was responsible for helping the team understand and apply Scrum practices to our process. I also helped the team maintain a steady workflow by effectively removing any impediments that the team had throughout development. I coached the team to become self-managing and to practice collective ownership of the product. I assisted the product owner, and the rest of the team, in refining the product backlog and planning for the sprints. I helped keep the team organized and helped facilitate the daily scrum meetings for our team. I joined the product owner in meetings with the stakeholders so I could ask the appropriate questions regarding our Scrum process. I also helped our team maintain continuous improvement throughout the project by facilitating various sprint reviews and retrospectives. Overall, my job

was to keep our team on a Scrum-agile process and help drive development forward through these Scrum practices.

The development team was the driving force for the successful completion of the SNHU Travel project. They are the ones that got the work done. As a team, they collaboratively converted the user stories from the product backlog into working pieces of software. After the product owner gathered information from the stakeholders and created user stories for the product backlog, the development team autonomously came up with implementations for those user stories. These implementations were continuously integrated and tested by the team. The team was responsible for helping groom the product backlog by providing estimates for each user story to the product owner. This greatly assisted in planning for each sprint. The development team also demonstrated the value of the product to the stakeholders in various sprint retrospectives. Throughout the development of the project, the developers became a self-organizing, cross-functional team that practiced collective ownership of the product.

Scrum-agile SDLC Approach

The Scrum-agile approach to the software development lifecycle greatly aided in our completion of the SNHU Travel project. This approach to development allowed the team to realize each user story in the product backlog. We wanted to produce a product of high value to the customers. Therefore, we needed to continuously develop working products, in iterations of development, that demonstrated maximum value to the stakeholders and customers of the product. The Scrum-agile approach allowed our team to continuously gather feedback from the stakeholders so that we could effectively create and estimate user stories throughout development. This continuous communication and transparency with everyone involved in the

project allowed us to iteratively gather requirements, produce tested and working implementations, and provide a high-quality product at the end of each sprint.

For example, in an initial meeting with the product owner, the stakeholders had mentioned that they wanted a top-five list of vacation destinations that catered to their preferences. The product owner created a user story for this feature and added it to the product backlog. The development team came up with an estimate for this user story, and this high-priority task was added to the sprint backlog. The development team came up with a working implementation and tested it thoroughly before considering it done. This added to the team's velocity. The constant communication and collaboration between this cross-functional team allowed them to successfully implement this user story, adding further value to the product.

Scrum-agile Approach to Change

Late in development of the SNHU Travel project, it was decided by the stakeholders that we were to focus on vacation destinations that were based on detox/wellness. It was also decided that a slideshow layout would be the best way to present the vacation destination lists. The Scrum-agile approach welcomed these changes in the vision of the product! The product owner met with the stakeholders to determine the cutting-edge features to include in the SNHU Travel project. With Scrum-agile, it was possible to make such drastic changes to the product because customer feedback was regularly integrated into the project and the product backlog was continuously groomed.

To accommodate for these changes in the project, the product owner deprioritized many of the user stories in the product backlog that did not pertain to the new vision of the product so that the development team could focus on the implementations of the new user stories. The scrum master made sure that there were no impediments to the team while they planned for the

features to be added into the next sprint. Once the newly requested features were added into the sprint backlog, work continued in an agile manner. Test cases were updated to make sure that the implementations for the new features adhered to the special requirements laid out by the stakeholders. Changes in the test cases made sure that previous user story implementations were adjusted according to the new requirements, and that any new implementations moving forward would satisfy the new requirements. Since work is done in iterations while using the Scrum framework, feedback from the customers could be regularly integrated into the product, thus ensuring that the product continuously provides maximum value.

Scrum-agile Communication

Throughout the development of the SNHU Travel project, it was crucial for the team to communicate with each other openly and transparently. In demonstrating this communication, I will provide two sample emails of communication between the team members.

Email 1:

TO: Christy (Product Owner)

SUBJECT: User Story Clarifications

Dear Christy,

I have developed initial test cases for each user story that I have received.

However, I am unsure about some of the details regarding the user stories. I have some questions for each user story that was sent to me.

User Story Two:

I am unsure of the layout for this Customizable User Profile page. Can you please provide a wireframe view of the webpage so that I can create more precise inputs for my test case?

User Story Four:

I am unsure if the user preferences are applied by default for the list of “Hot Deals” that is presented after clicking the “Hot Deals” link. This will help me more accurately define the expected results for some of the inputs for the test case.

User Story Eight:

Does the “Vacation Type” filter apply on all vacation destination lists generated on the SNHU Travel website? If so, how would this affect the list if the user’s preferences are applied to it? Do only user-preferred vacation types show up in the “Vacation Type” dropdown menu when user preferences are applied to the displayed list? The answers to these questions will affect the inputs and expected results for this test case.

Thank you for looking into these questions! Looking forward to hearing from you,

Tester

This email demonstrates effective communication between the development team and the product owner. This email was written by a tester so that they could get some clarification from the product owner about some requirements for the product. This openness with the product owner allowed them to effectively communicate what was impeding their progress towards developing complete test cases. This email demonstrated collaboration between the tester and product owner in developing the test cases.

Email 2:

TO: Christy (Product Owner)

CC: John (Tester)

SUBJECT: New Product Requirements

Dear Christy,

I need some clarification regarding the latest changes to the vision of the project. Currently, the SNHU Travel project was based around finding personalized vacation destinations that the user would want to visit. This included a customizable user profile with user-defined destination preferences that were used to find the best possible destination for that user. Now, the SNHU Travel project seems to be headed into the direction of recommending the latest trendy vacation destinations.

Christy, do we still need to include vacation preferences in the user's profile page? If so, should we apply these preferences to the Detox / Wellness vacation types to provide some personalization to the vacation destinations that we offer? Can you please provide updated user stories with detailed acceptance criteria so we can proceed with the planning for the next sprint?

After the user stories in the backlog have been re-prioritized with the new user stories, I will need John to create some new test cases for those new user stories. I would like the test cases to make sure that only the correct destination types are displayed. I need to be sure that only Detox / Wellness destinations get listed. This is especially important if user preferences are to be applied to the list of Detox / Wellness vacation destinations. We want to be able to provide Detox / Wellness packages to the user that also match up with their user-defined preferences. I also need updated test cases for the

new layout. I need to make sure that every item in the list is displayed in the slide show format.

Thank you,

Developer

This email demonstrates effective communication between multiple members of the development team and the product owner. This email was written by a developer so that they could get clarifications on the new requirements set forth by the change in the product vision. The developer had asked the product owner for updated acceptance criteria, and the developer had asked the tester for updated test cases for the new user stories. This collaboration between the developers and the product owner demonstrates an open and cross-functional team.

Scrum-agile Tools and Principles

Many organizational tools were used in our Scrum-agile process. These included user stories, scrum boards, product and sprint backlogs, and burndown charts. User stories were greatly beneficial in creating tasks for the developers. They were a way to organize tasks into items that could be added into the product backlog. They also helped in determining estimates during sprint planning. The team utilized planning poker to determine estimates for each user story, which then aided in creating the sprint backlogs.

Scrum boards were used to track the progress of sprints. The scrum board was a way to visually radiate information to the whole team during sprint development. This allowed team members to track the amount of time spent on tasks, and it allowed them to redistribute work among the team members so that they could make deadlines.

Product backlogs were used to create an ordered list of user stories from highest priority to lowest priority. The product backlog was constantly refined through the reprioritization of items along with the addition and redaction of items in the backlog. The product backlog helped with project-level planning. It helped the team gain an understanding of what still needed to be done and how long it would take until their product was finished. The product backlog was adjusted regularly in reviews and retrospectives as seen fit by the product owner, scrum master, and even the developers. A refined product backlog led to effective sprint backlogs. Only the appropriate, highest-priority items were pulled into sprints. This led to effective and efficient sprint planning that allowed us to meet our deadlines.

We also utilized burn-down charts as another information radiator amongst the team. These burn-down charts allowed our team to gain an understanding of the velocity for completing our sprints. We had the y-axis represent the remaining amount of work for the project, and the x-axis represented time in sprint intervals. Over time, this chart allowed us to adjust our process to effectively plan our sprints.

Effectiveness of Scrum-agile

I believe that a Scrum-agile approach to the SDLC greatly enhanced the throughput of development. It allowed for changing requirements, effective communication, creative approaches, high-quality work, and rapid development of working project deliverables. The Scrum process enabled the team to maintain a high morale through open and transparent communication within the team. This higher moral also led to a higher-quality product because the team took pride in their work through collective ownership practices. The organizational tools and agile principles led to effective communication and collaboration between all members involved in the project.

There were some downsides to the Scrum-agile process. Scrum is not an easy framework to implement from scratch. As the Scrum Master, I had to coach each member of the team on the agile practices that we were to incorporate in our process. This would be hard to do with a very large team as coordination would need to be very tight. Every member will need to be properly trained on the Scrum methodology in order for effective operation of the development process. Also, failure would be high unless each team member is properly educated on the Scrum process and follows the agile principles.

Sprint planning, daily scrum meetings, backlog refinements, sprint reviews, and sprint retrospectives were all used to create an iterative approach to the development of the SNHU Travel project. Since the project was divided into sprints, the product could be incrementally developed. After each iteration, a working product was produced by the team. Since the project was split up into iterations, feedback could be gathered after each iteration and then incorporated into the next iteration. This is what allowed for the changing requirements in the project, and it is ultimately what enabled us to create a product of maximum value for the stakeholders.

I do not believe that a classic waterfall approach to the SDLC of the SNHU Travel project would have worked. This is because the requirements were not completely defined before the project. The project was also experimental and greatly relied on customer feedback for requirements. This would not have worked with a waterfall approach because the requirements would have needed to be completely defined before development of the project had started. Everything would have needed to be planned ahead of time, and this would not have worked with the SNHU Travel project since we wanted to provide a product that contained the most up-to-date trends.