Jonathan Wolanyk

Sprint Review Retrospective

     A well-organized Scrum-agile Team is quite effective in producing successful products and features consistently. In the case of the SNHU Travel Project, this was especially true; each member of the team played an integral role in the success of the final product.

     The Product Owner was useful in directing the overall flow of the project. She met with stakeholders and boiled ideas down into actionable stories. In the initial meeting with Amanda (the client) and Christy (the Product Owner), the questions asked of Amanda were kept open. This pattern of asking open-ended questions to get the most information for the team was clear in the first question; “Can you tell me a bit about what you are hoping to achieve?” (MethodologiesPPT, 2021). Amanda’s response provided quite a bit of detail about the timeframe SNHU Travel was operating under, the reason behind creating the new product, and the stakeholders that the product would cater to. With the information gathered, Christy organized a comprehensive Product Backlog that helped our team begin working on the new website’s features.

     Ron, our Scrum Master, clarified what was being asked of the team and organized a group of individuals that would be able to complete the task in the given timeframe. He ensured that, in addition to himself and Christy, that there would be a tester and developer added to the team that would be able to complete a project of this scale. He set the conditions for the team, and which events the team would take part in. Specifically, he was responsible for creating the agile team charter and schedule. Ron also brought forth the plan of utilizing the following Scrum events: Sprint Planning, Daily Scrum, Sprint Review, Retrospective, and Backlog Refinement.

     In Module 5, I took on the role of a developer. The role of the developer goes beyond simply writing code that is being requested; a good developer also gives valuable input about realistic timelines and understands the context of the project at hand. As a developer, I requested additional information from Christy, including the specifics regarding additional filters for the search tool as well as the necessity of certain story points.

     In Module 4, I assumed the role of a tester for the SNHU Travel project. A good tester works with the rest of the team to refine code throughout each sprint. Good testers also identify ambiguity in the user stories, which helps ensure that the development team will deliver the proper results in the eyes of clients and end-users.

     Clearly, each role has an integral part of a Scrum-agile Team. The Scrum-agile approach to software development makes user stories that are robust and completed in a way that is tailored to the client’s expectations. For instance, our team was directed by the clients to create a travel website that was meant to cater to the niche travel market. Christy spoke directly with clients who gave tips on what they would like to see in a niche travel website, such as a search tool that would allow clients to filter trips based on price, location, or previous travel. Christy ensured that her accounts of client expectations were accurate and passed her newfound information to the team through user stories. Our developer and tester worked closely with Christy to refine the user stories and updated them after we were given new direction from the client halfway through the project to account for the detox/wellness directive. In a waterfall approach, the result would not account for the drastic change in the project’s direction halfway through and the client would not have been as happy with the result. Ultimately, our team created a product that satisfied all elements of the given user stories. We were able to do so because the team worked together to gather the information to create the stories and used story points to organize the Product Backlog in a way that allowed the team to work in an efficient manner.

     As mentioned previously, our team did encounter an interruption when the client decided upon a different direction for the project. We were given an update that the product should focus on detox/wellness locations, rather than simply focusing on price or previous destinations, as directed by the end-users originally. We were also asked to ensure that the destination results were shown in a slideshow rather than on a static page. Because we had defined user stories that were able to be updated before our team had started work on them, we were able to easily update the stories to accommodate the revisions. Our tester reached out to our Product Owner to ensure the revisions were correctly recorded before our team began working on the updated features.

     Below are two examples of communication that took place during our work for SNHU Travel (each listed on its own page):

Good afternoon Brian,

     My team is quite excited to begin work on SNHU Travel’s newest website addition. We have been reviewing the notes from our prior conversation with your team and have realized that a bit of further clarification would be great to ensure we create the best product possible for your team. I have included each separate question below for clarity:

1.      We noticed that your team is hoping for mobile compatibility, were you hoping for mobile devices to have separate features, or simply hoping to scale the website to a device's dimensions?

2.      For the “deals based on price” section, how would your team like for the deals to appear? For instance, we could have a slideshow appear of the top deals in ascending order by price, a collection of thumbnails to choose from, or a list with embedded links (or a different feature that you could think of).

If you are able to elaborate further on these topics, I would be greatly appreciative!

Best regards,

Jonathan Wolanyk

(2) Good morning Christy,

      I am excited to begin work on SNHU Travel’s website with the revised focus on detox/wellness destinations. There is some vital information that would help the development team in implementing some of the changes outlined in your request. For instance, in previous Sprints we implemented a search tool to sort destinations by price and rating; should we replace these filters with detox/wellness filters, or simply add the detox/wellness filters in addition to the current filters? Secondly, we are aware that the project is to be completed on the same schedule, including the new revisions to the project. Our team is unsure whether we will be able to implement the changes and the additional requests in time, even if they are reduced in scale. Are there any story points that we are able to remove from the project in order to ensure we can complete the project on time? Thank you in advance for your help.

Best regards,

Jonathan Wolanyk

     Each email was crafted with a clear goal in mind; to gather additional information about story points that the team was struggling to grasp. In contrast to the initial meetings with the clients and end-users, these emails primarily included closed-ended questions to avoid drawn-out changes in plans. Because Christy had gathered information initially through open-ended questions and recorded all the relevant information, I could confidently pose such questions knowing that we had all the preliminary information out of the way. To ensure we were clear with our communications, I provided context to each question to show that our team understood the motive behind each feature. In the first email, this showed that we were fully committed to the project’s success. In the second email, the context was meant to ensure that the Product Owner and the rest of the team were on the same page.

     The most useful tool for our team was Jira. Being able to provide cross-functional collaboration in a central space is essential to a highly productive team, and Jira provides this functionality in a modern way. We were able to access all story points at any time from any location. All aspects of Scrum are accounted for through Jira and it ensures that all team members are kept up to date, even if they are not able to make it to a particular meeting.

     Overall, the Scrum-agile approach was quite effective in tackling the SNHU Travel project. The major benefits included the cross-functional collaboration in the approach and the well-defined goals through user stories. The support of Scrum-oriented tools such as Jira was essential in keeping all team members up to date regarding the project’s status. User stories were filled with great information gathered from our Product Owner and refined through communication from our Tester and Scrum Master to our Product Owner. As a result, we were able to tackle changes in the project as they came. The only drawbacks of using a Scrum-agile approach were that the Product Owner was the only member that spoke to stakeholders and clients, as well as the fact that the project was open to changes throughout. While this may sound contradictory, the project being open to changes is a benefit for the client, while being a drawback for the development team; the client received a better overall product, but the development team had to stop and re-evaluate the direction of the project as a result. The waterfall method, by comparison, would not have had to deal with the changes, since the product would have been contractually defined beforehand, but the client would not be as satisfied with the result.

     Because the client would be more satisfied with the direction taken by the team in this project, the Scrum-agile approach was the best way to handle the SNHU Travel development project. Although more tedious for the development team, we did right by the customer and end-users by accommodating their requested changes. By creating the best possible product for our clients, we give our company the best chance at having a repeat customer and having referral business come our way. If we were to take the Waterfall approach, we could not confidently say we would have SNHU Travel’s business in the future.

References:

CS250 Classroom PowerPoint, Module 1 (SDLC Models and MethodologiesPPT)