**CS 250: Sprint Retrospective**

James Porter

Department of Computer Science, Southern New Hampshire University

CS 250: Software Development Lifecycle

Professor Washington

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Throughout this term we discussed the benefits of working with a Scrum-agile team by working on a mock team. This team worked on the SNHU Travel project and is making the transition from the waterfall method to a Scrum-agile approach. Though the transition to the Scrum-agile method may be complicated and lengthy, the transition can be very beneficial to most teams. This is indeed the case for the SNHU Travel project, and I will discuss why in the following paragraphs.

There are multiple roles in the Scrum-agile team that all contribute to effectively complete the project. The first member of the team is the scrum master. This individual was very important to managing the SNHU Travel project backlog. The scrum master also worked closely with our product owner to manage what the client needed with their project. The project owner held meetings with the client and focus groups to see what would work best for the SNHU travel project. From these focus groups, they wrote user stories to help keep the project on track. After these stories were written the tester took over. In the next phase the tester wrote test cases for each story that wrote our exactly what needed to be done for each story to be marked as complete. Lastly, the developer worked on the user stories until they passed all the test cases that the tester wrote out.

Of course, this process was not free from delays and setbacks. During weeks four and five, we discussed and reacted to some changes brought up by the team. In week three we developed some aspects of the SNHU Travel and during week four we had some questions about these dilemmas and reached out to the client. The questions were passed on to the client via the product owner. Once the client responded with the answer the story points and test cases were updated accordingly and the project proceeded as usual.

In the above example we executed a change using the Scrum-agile method. Because we used this approach, we were able to reach out to the client and effectively handle this change. This change was also completed more efficiently than the waterfall method because of the use of the Scrum-agile approach. If we were using the waterfall method, this change would have taken more time to complete and the change would have had to wait until closer to the conclusion of the project.

The Scrum-agile approach does require a level of communication higher than the waterfall approach. Without it, the approach is useless, and the project would never come to fruition. Throughout this term we took some time to discuss communication techniques between various members of the team and the client to ensure the project was completed to the highest standard possible.

During the first couple of weeks of the term we looked at the SNHU Travel project in the eyes of the scrum master and product owner. These two members of the team discussed the project with the client, stakeholders, and potential users of the project. The information that was learned in this meeting was passed on to the other members of the team through user stories and test cases. As the team begins to work on the project and has questions about the work they are completing, they can reach out to these members to talk to the appropriate party and figure out what the answer to these questions are. In our project this is demonstrated during weeks three and four when the question arises whether the top five vacation list should be in list form on one page or PowerPoint form with one vacation per page. After we had talked with the client, it was determined that they wanted the list to be in PowerPoint form and this change was made in the project.

The next point of communication discussed was between the team members. There are different ways to communicate, but in the Scrum-agile method there is a focus on daily scrum meetings. At these meetings individuals discussed what they had just completed with their projects, what they were doing next, and lastly what they needed help with. We didn’t run a scrum meeting this term however, we did discuss what techniques work best for this meeting. Some of these techniques include keeping the meeting on topic, limiting the time for the meeting, among others.

Lastly, in our sixth week of discussions we talked in a group discussion session about how we would interact with our different roles. This discussion showed me how chaotic group messages could get, but also how effectively they could be used. It showed that messages between two individuals should be emailed or sent privately, whereas messages that would be pertinent to the whole group should be sent in a group message.

Beside communication there are a couple of tools that were used to benefit the team and further improve the project. The biggest tool I found to help the Scrum-agile approach was the Kanban board. This board is one that I really didn’t like at first but is one that I have warmed up to. This board shows the tasks that need to be completed, are in process, and are completed. In our group discussion during week six, this was one of the first things that we decided on first. Another tool that we discussed was using focus groups. This tool is a little less traditional, but very useful none the less. In week six, as product owner I had mentioned that I would be making meetings for a focus group in the early phases of our project, and it seemed to be a popular decision. If we go back a few more weeks to week three we also went through the process of running a virtual focus group and translating what the users wanted out of our project.

Principles are the next important part of the Scrum-agile method. During week four we read an article written by Ellen Leather that discussed 12 principles that amazon considers most important. Among these are some that I consider most important are, the primary focus should be on the customer, strategies are highly adaptive, and the best results are from small teams (Leather, 2017). Though this isn’t an extensive list these are the principles that I find most important from the entire list.

There was only one user story that we took to fruition was the one about the order of the top vacation packages. I am assuming that this is the path we would take for a typical user story, but some of the steps could, in theory, be left out. In the story about the top vacation packages, the first step was to talk with the client to figure out what the client wanted. From there a list of user stories was made and added to the project backlog. Following this there was a scheduled focus group to get user input. This step is not always necessary but is very beneficial and could provide great insight to the project and potential issues. Next updates were made to the user story and test case according to the suggestions by the individuals in the focus group. Finally, the developers and testers work on the project until it is complete.

The Scrum-agile method is a major development in the software development world that has led to leaps and bounds when it comes to software development. Though this method is talked up so much, it is not a perfect method and there are some negatives with this method. Because this method is very focused on the client, the timetable for the development of software is weird and way harder to estimate. The Scrum-agile method allows for the customer to have the upmost visibility of the project and gives them the opportunity to make changes as necessary. This is different than the waterfall method that is very structured and there is little wiggle room for adjustments, but the timeline is set in stone.

In the end the decision to switch to the Scrum-agile approach was an easy one. Being able to work closely with the client, quickly change the focus of the project as the clients needs change among others are huge benefits. Another major benefit of working with this method is being able to test the project as it is being developed rather than all at once at the end of the project like the waterfall method would. This testing allows for problems to be found earlier in the development phase and increases the speed that projects are developed. When everything is weighed there are a lot of benefits for using the Scrum-agile method is the best method for developing the SNHU Travel system. This is evident by the changes to plans in weeks three and four. These changes would not have been possible using the waterfall method.

Sources

Leather, E. (2017, April 7). Amazonian Agility: The A to Z of Agile fuelling the future of Amazon. Medium. https://medium.com/frontira-collection/amazonian-agility-e3720ff004f7