CS250 Sprint Review and Retrospective

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Table of Contents

[CS250 Sprint Review and Retrospective 3](#_Toc95493478)

[A. Demonstrate how the various roles on your Scrum-agile Team specifically contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel project. 3](#_Toc95493479)

[B. Describe how a Scrum-agile approach to the SDLC helped each of the user stories come to completion. 3](#_Toc95493480)

[C. Describe how a Scrum-agile approach supported project completion when the project was interrupted and changed direction. 3](#_Toc95493481)

[D. Demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively with your team by providing samples of your communication. 3](#_Toc95493482)

[E. Evaluate the organizational tools and Scrum-agile principles that helped your team be successful. 3](#_Toc95493483)

[F. Assess the effectiveness of the Scrum-agile approach for the SNHU Travel project. 3](#_Toc95493484)

[Describe the pros and cons that the Scrum-agile approach presented during the project. 3](#_Toc95493485)

[Determine whether or not a Scrum-agile approach was the best approach for the SNHU Travel development project. 3](#_Toc95493486)

[References 4](#_Toc95493487)

CS250 Sprint Review and Retrospective

During this semester, we focused on a new project for the SNHU Travel company. Throughout this project various changes came up. The Scrum team was able to quickly adapt because of the agile methodology. Having a Scrum team contributed greatly to the success of the SNHU travel project and delivering a product that met the client’s requirements.

In a Scrum team there are various roles. This aids in the team remaining organized and focused. The structure of a Scrum-agile team helps lay the foundation for a successful project. The first major player in a Scrum team is the Product owner. They are responsible for delivering a usable product to the client. They are also responsible for communications to the client and team. Throughout the SNHU travel project the project owner helped the team succeed. They set up the initial contact between the client and scrum master. This helped get the client’s vision and requirements to be stated clearly and relayed back to the larger team. The product owner continued to help with communication throughout the entire process.

The Scrum master also plays an important role throughout the agile process. Essentially, the scrum master manages the whole team. During this project the scrum master played a huge role. In the SNHU travel scenario they met with the client and product owner to discuss which direction they wanted the project to go. The scrum master then was able to clearly communicate back to the team what needed to be done. In videos we watched, the scrum master often kept the team on focus during their meetings if things started to move off topic. They were also present during the meeting with users and gathered information on what they would like to see on the website. Their communication back to the team allowed new features to be implemented into the website.

The rest of the agile team consists of developers and testers. They played a critical role throughout the project. The agile team here set up various user stories as well as created the priority list of items that needed to be completed. For example, they set up user stories for each new requirement, like having a top five destination list. During this set up they also kept logs of any bugs or issues that were encountered. This helped the entire project move smoothly. The testers and developers also worked on and prioritized the backlog of the project. Theses team members were the backbone of the Scrum team.

During the SDLC of this project, the Scrum-agile approach assisted in seeing each of the user stories come to completion. The Scrum master and Product owner gathered the requirements for the project from the client. They then set up a meeting to analyze these and then communicate them to the rest of the agile team. Once the scrum team was notified, all members worked on development of the project. The Scrum format allows everyone’s ideas and opinions to flow and be heard. From here development and testing were performed. This is where we set up user stories and backlogs. Throughout the project, that can be seen in previous submissions, user stories were thoroughly explored as well as discussions on the best way to tackle backlogs. We discussed different ways this could be accomplished such as planning poker, which I found to be time consuming but fun. Alternative backlog planning was also investigated such as dot voting. This allowed the team to work as one large entity but with many moving parts.

The final stage was testing, and deployment followed by maintenance. The Scrum team was able to deliver a successful product because of the constant communication. Throughout the project the team was able to adapt as well as communicate across all platforms. Each specific role on the team kept everybody focused. The testers ensured that the product worked flawlessly. The developers also ensured that there were sufficient maintenance plans in place to keep the website running well. The Scrum team all took on different roles during the SDLC to ensure that everyone knew what they had to accomplish.

One major advantage of the Scrum-agile approach is its adaptability. This came into play when late in the project’s lifecycle the requirements changed from a list to a slideshow. The agile approach pushes the mindset to accepting that changes will happen. Because of this, the team was already in the mindset to take on this change. Having set roles in the team allows the work to be shared amongst the team and overcome any obstacles. If we were using a waterfall method this change could have been a major problem. Waterfall methodology is more fixed and only tested at the end. With this late stage change the whole project may have had to be reworked if using the waterfall methodology. Because this change was so late in the project, the entire software for the project may have needed to be changed as well. This is because in the waterfall method the software is not produced until late in the lifecycle.

In my opinion, the most vital part of the agile methodology is communication. The reason this is so important to me is because I have been on projects before that have been delayed due to poor communication. In the agile process there is constant communication between multiple parties. This allows everyone to have 360-degree coverage when it comes to the dissemination of project communication. In module six I worked in a group where everyone took on the scrum positions. I find the agile approach the most fun because it is centered around people and their roles and communications. Talking to others in module six was great and it was very nice to see how everyone’s ideas started flowing once conversation was started. During this I took on the role of scrum master and sent this communication to the team:

*“Vision Quest has recently taken to the agile methodology. This a major shift from the previous waterfall method. After learning so much about agile I feel this is a very good move. There are some great aspects of agile that I would like to focus on. The daily meetings outlined by the agile process are a great way for information and communication flow. By having these meetings, it is possible to discuss changed, problems, or concerns as they come up because of the frequency of these meetings. These meetings are short and precise. This also helps every member of the team to update the larger team on their progress. For the Scrum master role, it is important to focus on communication. By keeping communication respectful and streamlined, it can help the agile team tackle constructive criticisms and convey information in the most efficient way possible. For the product owner I find it important to convey their images and visions on the outcome of the project. It is very important that you speak up if something is not done to expectation. Even, if you are worried it may cause some friction, bringing this up will help the team become more adaptable and used to change. For developers and testers, it is important that you keep clear and concise logs on bugs and issues that are found. As a team we can also work on backlogs and visualize the best ways to tackle them. For developers it is also up to you to come up with a plan for sprints. I feel this switch will help the company function better!”*

This helped everyone start a conversation, and it led to great group communication and the flow of ideas. Everyone had great input! Therefore, communication is such an important part of the agile process.

The Scrum-agile process has many great tools that help everyone succeed. The agile team charter was very helpful to me in understanding each agile role. The team charter helped set up a loose outline for the project. This also helped in the success because it very clearly laid out the vision and direction of the project. The charter showed who would be taking each role and a description of each role. This helped clear up any misconceptions or questions I had about the Scrum-agile team and methodology.

Another great tool used in the agile process was user stories. This tool helped look at things from the perspective of the user. This change of perspective helped look at things in a simpler view than that of a developer. During the semester user stories were tackled on two different occasions. This assisted the agile process by laying out different actions needed to be taken to complete each one. There was also a revision stage where the team had to update the stories for each user. These were very important because it helped assess the priority of each point and helped the team move forward. I also enjoyed how they were in a natural language instead of more technical terms which made understanding and discussing them easy.

The final tool I would like to discuss is product backlogging. This is a very important part of the Scrum-agile methodology. The product backlog helps the Scrum team prioritize deliverables. There is a large amount of estimation in this process. These estimations affect timelines. Throughout the course we discussed different estimation techniques. One that constantly showed up was planning poker. This idea seemed fun, and it allowed all team members to voice their opinions. The downsides to this were the set-up time and the time it takes to explain it. Another object I brought up was dot voting. This is a little more streamlined compared to planning poker. This is where post it notes are put up with each backlog item, then the team members place dots on them to help visualize where everyone places their priorities. Product backlogging is an extremely important part of the Scrum-agile format.

During the SNHU travel project, the Scrum-agile approach was very effective. This methodology aided the team in being ready for any change or hardships that arose during the process. The Scrum-agile process has many positive sides. Because this was a relatively large and complex project, the scrum methodology worked well. It helped keep everything organized. It also fostered a good flow of communication. The scrum methodology also kept the client happy by involving them in the project. They were asked their opinions as well as updated constantly with the progress of the project. The nature of the agile methodology is very flexible. Because of this our team was ready for any changes encountered. This became important because parts of the project shifted late in the lifecycle. Because there is always an updating of priority items in the backlog, this allows changes to be more forgiving.

There are some disadvantages to the agile methodology, however. Because the output of software and other aspects of the project are fragmented this can lead to a non-cohesive product at first. To deliver a full product there may be a level of “stitching” together each part of the output. When moving into a larger project the level of communication can be hard to maintain. There are mitigations to this, such as the two-pizza rule that Amazon has implemented. Finally, the agile methodology can easily be sidetracked or drift from focus if the scrum master is not strict enough. This can happen slowly where it is hard to recognize. That is why the Scrum master needs to always ensure the team is focused to avoid these pitfalls.

The older methodology of Waterfall also has its positive sides. The waterfall method provides a sequence of steps that is easy to follow. This allows teams to focus on completing each step before moving onto the next. It also uses a clear end goal statement early on. This allows teams to understand what they are working towards. Waterfall methodology also allows clean information transfer at each step keeping it organized. There are some major disadvantages to the Waterfall methodology, and therefore many modern companies are moving to the agile process. There is no working software until late in the lifecycle. Also, because the process is very methodical, it is harder to plan for the unexpected. The waterfall method can also be slower because of this. The client is also not involved in the process, which means if they do not like the final product, there may be much more work to do.

Overall, I feel that the Scrum-agile methodology was best suited for the SNHU travel project. This is because it allows more communication and flexibility. This method also allows for constant output of a partial project so success can be measured in each release. Doing this can also motive the team because they are constantly making parts of a working product. I find the agile method important for every project I have worked on, not just the SNHU travel project. The agile process has many moving parts, but it is organized. This maximizes a team’s resources and time. Although it can seem chaotic, the agile process fosters teamwork. There is no power or seniority hierarchy, and everyone works on a level playing field. No single person’s ideas or input is better than anyone else’s. I compare agile to a flowing river that moves quickly and can change paths and direction, compared to the one-way flow of a waterfall.