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CS-250 Sprint Review and Retrospective

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In working on the SNHU Travel Project, I had to assume several roles on the Scrum-agile team in order to not only understand how each team member’s role works, but also to develop a deeper understanding of how the team forms a cohesive unit to produce successful results. The first role I assumed was that of the Scrum Master (as I am once again for this Sprint Review and Retrospective). The role of the Scrum Master is incredibly important, as it is the glue that holds every other member and members’ actions and products together. The Scrum Master is tasked with formulating goals and vision alongside the Product Owner, creating user stories, facilitating the Daily Scrums, and preparing the product backlog. The Scrum Master must be trustworthy and positive in order to develop cohesiveness and collaboration among the Scrum-agile team.

The next role I assumed on the Scrum-agile team was the Product Owner. The Product Owner is responsible for communication with all stakeholders in a project. It is very important for the Product Owner to invest in the needs, interests, and preferences of the stakeholders. This way, the Product Owner can maximize the product and the corresponding value for the client. A Product Owner must meet with stakeholders to gain important insight on their needs and interests. One way to do this is to form a focus group to ask questions and understand desires. The Product Owner can use the information gained to assist the Scrum Master in developing and refining user stories, and then communicate them to the Scrum Team(s). The ways the Product Owner can use this information is through the organization of priority level, size, and specificity. Each request is broken down into categories such as type of user, the task to be performed, and the goal to be achieved. The Product Owner is also largely responsible for the management of the Product Backlog; even if tasks dealing with the Product Backlog are issued to others, the Product Owner assumes all responsibility for the final results.

Following the Product Owner role, I next assumed the role of Tester. This is a very important role that resembles the QA role using the waterfall model. The key difference, and one that really makes a Scrum-agile team unique and more successful, is the fact that a Tester works closely with developers, testing code as it is created and not at the very end of a process. In this way, the code can be modified more quickly and accurately, with much less work and time constraints. A tester’s main responsibility is to ensure that the code complies with information detailed in the user stories. The tester can create a test specific to each aspect of the user story, even sometimes in advance of the product being completed. If the results of the tests are not successful, or if more information or developing is needed, the tester can communicate quickly with the developer to ensure that all code is written to the standards of the user stories.

Next, I assumed the role of the Developer. The Developer’s primary role is to be sure that all estimating, planning, and managing tasks are well-thought out to prepare for a successful product. The Developer must work closely with the Product Owner by meeting with him or her on a regular basis. This does not have to be daily, but could be weekly or bi-weekly so that both members of the Scrum-agile team are in understanding of what is expected and needed by all stakeholders. Although a developer’s main role is creating code, the developer understands that every member of the team is vital in creating a successful product, so he or she must work closely and cooperatively with everyone. He or she must have excellent communication skills and be flexible during each Daily Scrum. If there is ever an issue with the development process, the Developer can reach out to any other member of the Scrum-agile team and get the needed information to produce successful results in a timely manner.

To help each of the user stories come to completion during the Scrum-agile approach to the SDLC, I needed to create and update certain artifacts. One artifact in particular was the Agile Team Charter. This team charter described the specific role of each team member, the mission, vision, success criteria, risks, rules for the team, and the communication guidelines. This is an essential part of any formation of a Scrum-agile team so that all stakeholders are in complete understanding of not only their particular roles, but also to whom they need to communicate with in order to keep the project moving and not creating setbacks. The following is an example of an Agile Team Charter.

Text

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Another artifact that demonstrates a successful application of the Scrum-agile approach is the use of user stories. At the beginning of a project, in order to satisfy the needs, interests, and preferences of the client, user stories are put into a list so each member of the team knows what needs to be completed during a sprint. The following is an example of a user story list and the details involved in a particular user story for the SNHU Travel Project.

Table

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Finally, test cases must be created and then updated as new details are formulated and needs change. There will always be a first draft test case, followed by regular updates until the test case is finalized and the product is complete. The following is an example of a first-draft test case and its revision.

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At times, a project can quickly be interrupted and change direction. In the SNHU Travel Project, this did happen. When the Product Owner met with the SNHU Travel Development Team, they had several changes in mind, including a huge about-face with regard to the type of vacations they wanted to feature on their booking site. Because of the way a Scrum-agile team works, the Product Owner was able to meet with the other team members quickly, inform them of the changes, unruffle any feathers by letting them know that all the work they had done previously was still necessary work, but that it was to be simply put on hold so that the new changes could be placed on a higher priority level. The Product Owner could then modify the user stories and change the order in which each one was to be developed, tested, and finalized. In other models, this type of about-face may not have worked, simply because the entire project may have had to be scrapped due to a team having to start over from scratch.

All members of a Scrum-agile team must be communicative. In addition to the Daily Scrums, the teams must learn to communicate in other ways, such as via email. By using different ways to communicate, the team can ensure that each member receives correspondence, and must expect confirmation and clarification in a timely manner. The following is an example of an email sent from a Tester to a Product Owner asking for clarification on the round one user stories created for the SNHU Travel Project. This type of communication is effective because it asks for specific details that can be immediately implemented upon the response from the Product Owner.

To: Samantha

Subject: User Story Clarifications

Dear Samantha,

I took a look at your user stories. Thanks for getting them to me so promptly! I am working on developing test cases for each feature and to determine whether each feature will pass or fail. I need a little more information on some of the test cases to better define them. Would you be so kind as to answer the following questions?

**User Story One**

* Can the preference list be edited?
* Should the “hot deals” be viewable as a scrollable list, or as a slide show?
* Will the hot deals include a short description or a detailed one?

**User Story Two**

* Can headers be used to make navigating the site clearer for the user?
* Will there be a drop-down menu listing the price ranges the user can select?
* Can the user click a separate link to navigate to a listing that contains more trip details?

Thanks in advance for the info!

Kelly

The following email is an example of needed clarifications from a Developer to the Product Owner and the Tester regarding the proposed changes to the SNHU Travel site. This is effective because the Developer relies on information from two people, making the responses and information garnered more specific.

To: Samantha, Product Owner

cc: Kelly, Tester

Subject: New Development Plan

Dear Samantha and Kelly,

I am diligently working on developments for the new wellness and detox travel plans. To be able to move forward, however, I have some questions for you both. Can you please get back to me as soon as possible with clarification? Thank you so much in advance!

1. What is your vision for hot travel destinations that include wellness and detox information?
2. Can you give me deadlines for particular deliverables you require?
3. Is there anything you would like prioritized?
4. What is the final outcome you are visualizing? Would you like a webpage with a list, slide show, etc.?
5. Please include any additional questions or comments to better aid the team and I with the new developments.

Thanks again,

Bob

The communication practices and project management tools were vital in the successful operation of the Scrum-agile team. The use of communication created openness and transparency among all stakeholders. The key ways that the Scrum-agile team communicates is by conducting Daily Scrums, sending and receiving emails, and having certain team members pair up, such as a developer and a tester. It is in this way that each Scrum team can build a sense of openness and trust with each other. This makes the team strong, and in turn, helps them to create strong products for their clients. At times, a project can be very large, and can incorporate many Scrum teams. Because of this, Daily Scrums and emails may end up being too difficult to schedule and too overwhelming in their amounts. The use of project management tools then comes in very handy. One project management tool that is incredibly versatile and successful in the agile world is Azure Boards. Azure Boards are outstanding because all facets of a project, no matter how large or small, can be viewed by all members of every team. For example, a member of one Scrum team is able to view what another Scrum team is working on in regard to particular User Stories. Products can be clicked on to reveal information such as what is currently in progress, what has been finished, and what will be worked on in the future. Additionally, specific details about products can be accessed. For example, work item discussions, commits, builds, and changes can be accessed with just a click. Azure Boards also include links to Kanban boards, the product backlog, and sprints that are currently in progress. Lastly, the query engine is a handy tool that allows communications to be posted for all to see and respond. This aids in the reduction of emails, meeting scheduling, and phone calls that may have had to happen in other situations.

When utilizing the Scrum-agile approach for the SNHU Travel Project, I found that I really liked using this method much more than the waterfall approach. In the past, I used a waterfall method, and found that it took a lot of time and revisions that could possibly have been reduced or eliminated entirely by using a different method. The biggest pros to the agile method are the fact that each aspect of a project is organized through the use of the user stories, and that the tester is involved in the process throughout the project instead of at the end. One con to the agile method is the fact that not all team members are great or comfortable when it comes to communication; this could impact the results of meetings and the way information is handled and revised. As far as the SNHU Travel Project, using a Scrum-agile approach was absolutely the best tool for the job. There were many facets of this project, and by being able to organize them using user stories and the product backlog, the development process was more streamlined. In addition, because of the change that the SNHU Travel Development Team made after much of the project was already underway, the ability for the Product Owner to easily communicate with the Scrum Team was ideal for a quick turnaround of a new product. Had this project been worked on using the waterfall method, it could very well have had to be completely started over, losing a company valuable time and money.