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Sprint Review/Retrospective

Each member of the Scrum-agile team was instrumental in the success of the SNHU travel project. The Product Owner was responsible for meeting with the various stakeholders, customer requirement intake, being the customer’s voice, and supplying the vision to the team. The customer requirements were then translated to user stories and were properly ordered in the product backlog. As changes in direction occur, the Product Owner has the final decision on priority. The Scrum Master worked closely with the Product Owner on backlog refinement as well as supported the developers and testers in removing any impediments. The Scrum Master led the various sprint ceremonies and kept the team on track within the allocated time frame. A good Scrum Master will empower the team to be self forming and to be able to meet on their own when required. The developers further refined their user stories and delivered initial iterations based upon prioritization. When the customer requirements changed to focus on a detox/wellness theme, the developers were able to easily port their code with little changes. As a result less user stories were required. Similarly the testers required less test cases due to reduced user stories. The testers were able to ensure expected functionality and provided test results back to the team.

When choosing the waterfall method, changes are not accepted and planning is not re-visited until after the entire deployment has been completed. With Agile, deployments are completed in short iterations. When only deploying an MVP (minimum viable product), you can quickly deliver new features to your customer and begin inspection and planning all over again. When SHNU Travel completed their first sprint and had decided to go in the detox/wellness direction, they were able to quickly pivot and still meet the customer’s delivery expectations. If the team would have gone down the Waterfall path, the customer would not have received the product early enough to request the desired changes within the allocated time. When dealing with a project that has a level of un-predictability, Agile is preferred as it supports continuous planning and continuous delivery.

Communication within a highly functioning scrum team is key. Daily standups were scheduled allowing team members to discuss their progress, next steps, and any blockers. These meetings are typically very short and encourage openness and transparency which leads to trust. During the stand up, a Kanban board is reviewed and updated keeping the entire team on the same page. At the end of the sprint, a sprint review session is held in which user stories are reviewed to ensure they met the definition of done. If the team felt that a story was not completed, it would be pushed to the next sprint. Burn down charts can be reviewed to determine story point completion, story point addition, as well as the team’s velocity. Similarly to a sprint review, the team also holds a retrospective. Retrospectives are not held every sprint but review what is going well, what is not going well, and how things can be improved. When the team is open and honest with each other, the team can only then become highly functioning. Other events such as sprint planning and backlog refinement may not be required every sprint as long as the Product Owner and Scrum Master are practicing continuous planning and backlog refinement. When this occurs, this gives the team time back to focus on completing their own perspective user stories.

The Scrum-Agile methodology turned out to be the correct choice. While the project was not very complex and unpredictable, it allowed a working product to be delivered to the customer much faster while also allowing inspection and change within the committed time frame. Less time is spent on planning and documentation, but more of a focus on what needs to be completed within the sprint. If the Waterfall method had been chosen, by the time the customer would have received the product, it would have left no time for any changes. While Agile does require a lot of meetings and less time to do “actual work”, it has become necessary to be able to communicate over multiple projects at a high rate of speed while also limiting risk. Individuals must improve their time management or end up routinely working additional hours.