CS – 250

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Final Project 7.1 – Sprint Review and Retrospective

SNHU Travel is a travel agency that approached our company with the need for an application that could expand their client base and improve relationships with its current customers. With the desire to improve on our company’s own development and productivity, this is our first project that we have adapted to use Scrum-agile methodologies to improve efficiency, enhance project transparency, and form a more team-centric approach to product development. After, our first sprint for this project, I want to take some time to look back and reflect on what our team has accomplished as the first deliverable for SNHU travel.

Our sprint started off with a meeting with the client, our Product Owner Christy, and me. This initial meeting is to get a general idea of what the client wants, so that the Procut Owner can start making a back log of user stories and features that can be translated into sprint tasks when we started the sprint itself. These takeaways from the meeting were also brought back to the team so that we could make our agile team charter, defining team roles, and rules to keep the team on task and moving in a forward direction. These roles each had their own responsibilities to the team and project that contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel project.

As the Scrum Master, my main role is to teach the team of agile methodologies, making sure daily standups and other Scrum related meeting are scheduled and acting as a liaison to others outside of the Scrum team that could be detracting or pulling team members away from focus. Christy, the Product Owner, is the key contact point with the client and she keeps up and maintains the backlog of user stories so that it is organized and prioritized properly throughout the sprint. Her role was key when the client wanted to go a bit of a different direction with a focus on health and detox travel destinations. She was able to help pivot the team without having to completely restart from square one. Questions and concerns about user stories or ambiguous details not well defined gets clarified by the client so that the developers and testers can continue to pull tasks from the log to make the finished product. The Team, which is made up of developers and testers, are responsible for working through user stories and turning ideas into a tangible, functional product. When problems did arise with questions about backlog items or testing failures, communication is vital between all members to get back on track and move forward in the sprint.

In an agile environment, the primary focus on transparency and communication is what drives the success of the sprint and the overall process over a waterfall method approach. Having the product owner constantly updated and organizing the backlog, especially using a program like JIRA, gives the development team a refined list of user stories to work through and complete. Daily Scrum standups also gives the team to voice what they worked on the day before, what their plan is for the day, and what concerns they might have that might be holding them back or slowing down progress. This give the rest of the team to opportunity to tackle user stories together and learn from each other. These meetings also give the product owner questions and concerns to take back to the client so that they can add, update, or remove items from the backlog. The Scrum meeting after the client big change in the product was a great example of how consistent communication with the team is vital in moving the sprint forward. Keeping these lines of communications open are key because if issues do arise, they can be corrected immediately without slowing down the development process.

As previously mentioned, the team experienced a change in the direction of the project from the client’s request. Instead of focusing on a top destination search, they wanted to highlight the rising tread in detox and wellness retreats in hopes to keep current with the trend. In a waterfall model approach, it’s quite possible that the project could have had to be completely restarted from scratch. After the Product Owner came back with the updated requests from the client, user stories were reassessed, and test cases were corrected to match the new user stories. This allows changes to certain aspects of the project to happen simultaneously instead of people waiting for the cascade to eventually reach them to do their part.

Communication in an agile model is probably one of the main aspects that set it apart from the waterfall approach. Instead of leaving detailed annotation, daily Scrum standup meetings, consistent real time chatting through different applications, real time project visualizations, really drive the agile approach to be as successful as it is. The key to communication, especially when it’s not a face to face conversation is to be short, but precise in what is needed from the person. For example, in my emails I sent to my team throughout the testing and development process, I kept them professional, to the point, and a general idea of when I needed a response by if it was a time sensitive sprint task. I also like to lead with a general check in with the individual and ending with “What do you need from me at this time?”. This helps gauge where they are with workload as well as opens to door for dialogue if there might be something on their end I can help with. Staying positive, asking precise and direct questions, giving necessary timelines if needed, and facilitating open dialogue will help with collaboration.

During this first sprint of this project, we used a few different organizational tools that helped keep our processes organized and our intrateam communication optimal. The JIRA program helped keep our user stories and sprint tasks labeled and updated real time to reference whenever needed. This helped during daily meetings and during the pre-sprint meeting as a means to layout the scope of the project. The three Scrum-agile principles that helped our team be successful was the communication being mostly face-to-face, agile methods harnessing change for the customer’s advantage, and working software is the primary measure of progress (Beck, 2001).

Overall, the Scrum-agile approach to the SNHU travel project was a very effective way in taking a client’s vision and turning it into a deliverable solution in a relatively short period of time. The agile approach was a great option because it facilitates open communication between the members of the team as well as the Product Owner with the client, every step of the way. This not only helps with keeping the team on track during the sprint but allows quick adaptability when problems or changes to the project arises during development. It also provides project transparency not only to the team, but management and the client as well. The only con of this type of approach is that it can be tough to manage a backlog with a team that is consistently changing members as timing is a bit arbitrary in the agile world. But, the flexibility of this approach is what makes this the best option for this type of development project.

References:

1. Beck, K. (2001). Manifesto for Agile Software Development. Retrieved December 08, 2020, from http://agilemanifesto.org/