Sprint Review and Retrospective

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During the SNHU Travel project, we used a Scrum-agile approach. This approach worked for this situation because it was able to account for the changes that were made and helped break the project up into smaller tasks. Throughout the SDLC, the different roles in our Scrum Team focused on different parts of the project and contributed to the success of the project. The roles that I took on consisted of Scrum Master, Product Owner, Tester, and Developer. The use of Scrum-agile principles, organizational tools, and effective communication were also fundamental in completing this project.

The Scrum Master role was the first role I took on and allowed me to set guidelines for the project through the Agile Team Charter Template. This template outlined the Vision, Mission Statement, Success Criteria, Key Project Risks, Rules of Behavior, and Communication Guidelines. Stating that the vision of the project was to, “Help SNHU Travel expand their audience by updating their website to include new vacation packages,” helped remind the team of the main purpose of the project, while the Mission statement gave a clear goal of the project. By viewing the Success Criteria section, the team could see the start date, expected completion date, what the final deliverable should be, and a few key objectives. The section containing Key Project Risks showed any risks to the project such as time, scope, miscommunication, and meeting the client’s goals and helps the team see where possible issues might arise. The Rules of Behavior let the team see which Scrum-agile values and principles were most important to implement during this project, which was especially important as the team was not accustomed to using agile. Lastly, the Communication Guidelines discussed the scrum events and rules that should be implemented throughout the project. This gave the team a better understanding of the structure of the agile development process and what they should expect.

The second role I took on was that of the Product Owner. In agile, the Product Owner is the “middleman” between the Scrum Team and the Stakeholders and is responsible for the product backlog. During this project, I created User Stories based on the requirements of SNHU Travel. These user stories were fundamental for the rest of the team so that they understood the project requirements. Each user story was given a size, priority, a value statement, and acceptance criteria. The size was an estimation of how much time would be required for the story while the priority showed which user stories should be completed first. The Value statement put into words who the requirement was for and why it was needed, and the acceptance criteria provided detail as to what the feature needed to be able to do to be considered good enough. The scrum-agile approach was helpful in the completion of the user stories by allowing one person, the Product Owner, to focus on this step as they have the most information about the requirements. With these user stories, we were also able to break the project into smaller parts to be developed and tested, supporting the agile concept of producing working software more frequently.

I took on the role of Tester third and was able to use the User Stories to create test cases for each feature. Each test case provided specific inputs and their expected results. For example, for the input of “Scrolling down from top of page,” the expected results were “More destinations should appear after scrolling to end of list, extending the page.” This information is important when determining if a feature can be considered “done.” During this process, I was informed that some changes needed to be made to the requirements, and therefore, my test cases. The new requirement was that the destinations should be shown in a slide-show format rather than a typical webpage view. This is a good example of how the Scrum-agile approach supported project completion when there were changes. Due to the new information, several of the inputs needed to be changed to allow for the new format. Rather than “Scrolling down from top of page,” some of the new inputs were “Click ‘begin slideshow’,” “Click ‘next’ button,” and “User reaches ‘end of results’ slide.” If we had been using the waterfall method, this change would be much more difficult to implement as previous steps would have needed to be completely redone, such as the user stories. With an agile approach, we were able to quickly implement these changes without repeating steps and falling behind.

The final role that I took was that of the Developer. This role allowed me to create functional software based on the requirements shown in the user stories. During this phase, I found out that the client wanted to change the type of vacations that their website focused on to detox/wellness vacations. This was another situation where an agile approach was helpful for the team. Rather than having to start over, we were able to just replace the information in the slideshow so that it reflected these changes. By following the agile principle of embracing change, we expected changes to occur and were able to work with them rather than being resistant to change the work they already completed. This helped keep the project on track for the estimated delivery date.

While implementing agile principles and having team roles was a huge part of this project, the ability to communicate effectively with the team and client was also important. Without proper communication, it would be difficult to create a product that the client is happy with. The animations provided throughout the course were effective because they allowed me to get the information I needed to create requirements, make changes, and get an idea of what the client wants. During my time as Scrum Master, I was able to use the animation provided in module two to learn about the client’s goals and vision to create the Agile Team Charter. In module three, I was able to get information from the end users about what they would like the product to do and possible features it might have. This helped me to create user stories which were the guidelines for the rest of the team.

Another thing that helped the team during the SDLC was the use of organizational tools and implementing Scrum-agile principles. As I was the sole person on the team, I was able to use the white-board approach when it came to tracking my progress rather than online tools that might be more convenient for other teams. Each day I was able to see what I’d already finished for the project, what I needed to work on that day, and what needed done to complete the project. On a team with multiple people, the use of organizational tools is vital for success because they encourage better communication and understanding of everyone’s roles and responsibilities. I’ve already mentioned how accepting change and breaking up the project into smaller pieces is important in an agile environment, but there are a few more agile principles that helped my team succeed throughout this project. One principle is to measure the progress by functioning software rather than leaving all the testing for the end like a waterfall approach does. This helps get a more accurate estimate of completion as the software has already been tested and been considered “done.” Another principle we used was minimal documentation. While documenting is important, agile does not require the large amount of documentation that other approaches do. This time is better spent on other tasks that have more of an impact on the end product, helping the team to complete the project on time.

Overall, I believe the Scrum-agile approach was well suited for the SNHU Travel project. While there were some disadvantages such as difficulty estimating how long a task will take and learning how to implement agile, the advantages vastly outweighed them. The main advantages of this approach were the ability to adapt to changes, effectively communicate, and break the project down into smaller parts. If we had used a waterfall approach, the two major changes the client presented would have been much harder to adapt to and it would have taken longer to go back and make these changes. This would have pushed the timeline back, which was not really an option in this situation. By breaking the project down, we were able to focus on completing smaller tasks rather than trying to finish the entire project only to discover one part was not ideal and needed to be fixed. For example, if the testing occurred after everything had been “finished,” and a bug was found, it would take extra time to go back, figure out the issue, and make sure the rest of the program was not affected by this change. If we had not been able to effectively communicate with the client and end users, we would have presented the original idea of a web-based display rather than the use of a slideshow, and the content would be different than what the client wanted. These factors add together to show that a Scrum-agile approach was the best approach for the project.