Final Retrospective Paper

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Throughout the project I took on many different roles in the process to create the product the customer wants. The Scrum Master was the first role I took on. The Scrum Master is the leader of the Agile development team. The Scrum Master facilitates in how information is exchanged throughout the team. One of the ways this is done is during a daily meeting, sometimes called a Scrum Meeting. During these meetings every team member is to attend and asked three questions; “What did you do yesterday?”, “What will you do today?” and “What is impeding your progress?”. I found these meetings were helpful in opening the lines of communication throughout the entire team. The Scrum Master is there to help the team get the job done and help in any way they can. Being a Scrum Master isn’t just about helping the team, they also coach along the development team in understanding Scrum theory, practices, rules and values. Along with Scrum meetings the Scrum Master is also responsible for leading the Sprint Planning meeting.

A Sprint is a timeframe of one month or less within a project where at the end something is done, usable and hopefully a project increment is completed. Sprints consists of five parts, Sprint Planning, Daily Scrum Meetings, the work, Sprint Review and the Sprint Retrospective. A Sprint has a goal of what is to be accomplished during this time frame. During the Spring Planning meeting a flexible plan is created to meet this goal. The plan is created by the whole team and facilitated by the Scrum Master. The Scrum Master’s job is to make sure the team understands its purpose and teach the team to keep the goal of the Sprint within the time frame. Once the Sprint is completed a Sprint review is held. During this time the team collaborates on what was done during the Sprint, what has not been done, what problems there were and how they were solved, and what to do next. The Sprint Retrospective is where the team comes together to look within and see how it can improve during the next sprint. The Scrum Master is responsible for making sure the meeting is positive and productive! Agile is about improving things quickly and this is one of the ways that it lets the team see where improvement can be made.

Being the Scrum Master really fits my personally because I really enjoy helping and teaching others. The Product Owner and the Scrum Master work closely with each other and that is the next role I took part in. The Product Owner is the face of the Agile team, dealing with the client and is a sort of upper management. During my time as the Product Owner I was responsible for creating user stories and creating a product backlog. I did this by meeting with potential users and finding out what features they would like to see. I then took this information to make five requests and wrote them in a way that the development team could understand what task was wanting to be performed, what is the goal and kind of user. Once the information was gathered it was then put into a product backlog, ordered by priority. The product backlog is then groomed by the whole team to be agreed upon. This allows open communication and creates vested interest in the project between all team members. The Product Owner is responsible for making sure the backlog is read and understood by everyone. All of this is to optimize the value of the work the team is doing and setting clear requirements for the project.

The next role was the Tester. The Tester’s job is to take the user stories from the Product Owner and makes test cases that decide when the user story meets the requirements of being done. Testing is done from the start of development in Agile and is constant throughout the inter development process. This provides immediate constant feedback to the development team; this means the team can fail fast. Failing is not a bad thing, if it is done fast; it provides quick fixes of what won’t work, saving time and money. Failing fast also has another positive, it leads to more experimentation and innovation in the development process. Building those test cases for the developers gave them the understanding of what the product needs to provide to be accepted and pass the test cases. This leads to the next role developer.

This week the project took a major turn. The requirements for the project changed, with the Agile mythology I was able to adapt as the developer quickly. With Agile one of the key elements of developing is to get working code quickly not perfectly. It is expected that the requirements are changing, with Agile these changes are encouraged and creates a higher quality product to the client. When the changes happened, I was able to use the revised user stories and test cases to understand what the new requirements were. Not spending a lot of time getting the perfect code meant that I saved time and energy when the changes happened and was able to adapt quickly to still complete the project on time.

During my time in this course going through the roles I learned that clear, constant, and transparent communication were key to a successful project. It also takes a whole team coming together and collaborating to give the client the best product possible. One of the other development methods that is used is the Waterfall method. The Waterfall method has a vastly different structure than the Agile method. Waterfall divides the development process into distinct different phases. These phases are not done in an incremental approach and instead done through a sequential design process.

When a Waterfall project is started all the requirements are set at the beginning and once the project starts it is quite rigid and is hard to change them. Agile on the other hand is a collection of mini like projects within in the bigger project known as an epic. These differences are some of the things I like about Agile and how it sets up the team for success. Throughout the phases of development with Agile I felt it free how flexible it allowed me to be. With the testing being throughout the entire project instead of at the end it made finding what would not work faster and relived stress through the development process. Within Agile everyone is responsible for the final project; this gives real ownership over the whole development process. Instead of developers writing code and handing it off to the quality assurance, the entire team must work together to deliver the best product to the client.

The Waterfall method also has different roles. The first role is the Project Manager, which is like the Product Owner, both oversee teams and work together to complete a project. The Project Manager’s role in a Waterfall environment is to set robust structured plan with well-defined deadlines and goals. The framework is thought up by Business Analyst in the very beginning and the Project Manager is responsible for shepherding the team to meet those goals. The Project Manager is also like the Scrum Master in the way that they both remove obstacles for the work to be completed. But the Project Manager also gives direction and tells the development team how something should be developed. The Scrum Master on the other hand facilitates the team but doesn’t provide direction. This leaves the development team to think for themselves and to be empowered.

The Business Analyst works alongside the Project Manger kind of like the Scrum Master works alongside the Product Owner. The Business Analyst in the Waterfall method sets the requirements for the project and focuses more on getting things signed off as completed. They tend to dictate solutions instead of letting the team problem solve on their own. They have a more hands on approach to everything and are very keen on meeting specific requirements instead of being flexible.

The Scrum Master and Product Owner both have similarities to the Business Analyst. After the change in the project I got to experience this, as the Tester I was able to reach out to the Product Owner to revise the user stories to meet the new requirements. Having leadership that are flexible made this transition easier. The other roles in Waterfall method are the Testers and developers which are basically the same in Agile with small differences.

Learning about the Waterfall method and experiences the Agile method, I prefer the Agile method. The main reason for this decision was that Agile really focused on a one team mentality instead of separate teams working towards a common goal. The Waterfall method is not flexible and doesn’t give room for creativity. As the developer I found it empowering to be able to know the requirements I had to meet but was not told how to do it. This leads me to another particularly important difference on how a project is completed, that Agile does small plans and meets those goals. Waterfall sets all the development plans at the beginning and then makes a product and at the very end it is tested. Having testing done throughout the process saves time and frustration at the end when big changes are made.

Within Agile there are certain tools, some of them I already mentioned, like the Sprint process, standup meetings, user stories, backlog, and test cases. These tools were extremely helpful in opening lines of transparent communication. One of the other tools I wanted to mention was the Team Charter I made in second week as the Scrum Master. The Charter is a document that lays the foundation for the team throughout all the phases of the project. The Charter is built by the project team, and applies to team dynamics, behavior and communication. It also lays out the vision for the project. I found this really help to communicate to the team early, so they knew what was expected of them from the very start.