Sprint Review and Retrospective

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The SNHU Travel project required contributions from all roles in the Scrum-agile team. As the Scrum master, it was my role to manage and coordination teams and their work. The scrum master was also in charge of scheduling meetings. These meetings were during the planning process as well as throughout the sprints to make sure teams were on the same page and had time extra time to communicate. These meetings are important to keep team communication healthy so they don’t only do it during the meetings but have and understand of what each other are doing so they will communicate when otherwise needed.

As the product owner, the job was to understand user stories and be able to relay any of that information back to the development team. Going through the user stories, it was the job of the product owner to not only try to understand the user stores and put that information into a format for the developers to know what to code, but this was a crucial time to also make sure the importance of each issue was. That way the more important stories were tackled first, and production stayed efficient. Reading these user stories and understanding what the customer wants is very important for the product owner as they are the liaison for everyone when it comes to the vision for the project.

The developer was a role where I got to see some of the user stories come to life. In our development we adjusted and created parts of the program that the users and product owners asked for. The user stories asked for things like having a top 5 list and that list consisting of certain locations. As the developer, I had to add and adjust code to make sure that was the output. That part of the project had to then be altered again later. The product owner came to us and asked for the list to be specific to detox and wellness travel locations. The code had to then be adjusted again. Throughout these processes, however, there were some questions that arose.

As the tester, we were able to ask or answer any of those questions. It is the obligation of the tester to not only look at what the developers give them but be able to know what the product owner and users want so they request adjustments quick. The tester will do this in many ways throughout the cycle, but I believe a good tester will know what new questions to ask if they truly understand how the users or product owner think about the vision of the project. I had opportunities as the tester to ask questions to the product owner via email to make sure we were on the right path and that any ideas they may have assumed we were going to implement were talked about.

This communication with the product owner and the client is what allowed the user stories to come to completion. Using the waterfall method, we would have done this communication after a lot of other work, unrelated to this issue, is finished. The Agile Software Development Life Cycle allows us to ask these questions during development and testing of each sprint so we can tackle issues quicker. Also, because release of these sprints happen faster, user feedback is fast as well. In the emails described above, we were able to ask questions to the client right after finishing a sprint and any answers would have been easily added to the product.

This same benefit of the Scrum-agile approach was realized when asked to change direction. When we were approached to make changes to the program to allow for detox and wellness travel locations, there was a worry by a developer that we were being asked to change a lot. The product owner assured the team that we did not need to make drastic changes, we only need to adjust this one outcome of the program. It was an easy fix to make in real time.

Samples of my communication as the Scrum Master are explaining clearly to each team what their goals are and why. It is important to start with the right understanding, so you don’t start producing down a path that is detrimental to the rest of the teams and product. A big question I look to ask the teams and team members is: “What do you need from me?” I think this question is very important because it can open a dialogue with team members when they may have been afraid to speak up about certain things or ask questions to get back on track. It also lets everyone know that as the Scrum Master, I am always looking to assist and be there for them. I believe the scrum master has a very critical role as the support for the development team and upper management simultaneously.

The organizational tools that were useful allowed for a backlog that was visible by everyone, the overall portfolio for the project, issue tracking and progress reporting. JIRA is a tool we used that has great organization of user stories. User stories were very important with the work for the Travel Site and Jira could be used to help map out those User stories.

The waterfall method was forcing the team to be slow, inefficient, and not have the ability to properly communicate. The Agile Methodology fixes these and more. The ability to cut production up into sprints and start getting those parts out to testing is vital to the speed of production. It allowed us in the SNHU Travel project to assess issues early and then know what questions to ask or assume what the user or client would want going forward based on what we learn. This allowed for more efficient work which was facilitated by great communication between all parties.

There are cons but they have the ability to be worked around with good leadership. Difficulty with making proper predictions and planning may happen. It is often hard to make the right plans when parts of the program are done before others, but with good communication between the teams, scrum masters, and the product owner this can be fixed. As parts are pushed out to the end user, issues can arise when they feel like they are only getting some of the product and not the whole. This can be a big drawback depending on what your product is and could turn some users off. In the case of the travel project, I believe we can use this to our advantage as we can make adjustments based on that user feedback quick and give them the product they desire.

The Scrum agile approach makes the most sense for the SNHU Travel Project. It structures the team in a way that allows for quick production. It creates an environment where all teams communicate well and understand the vision of the project. It creates the ability for testing to happen at a faster pace and bugs to be fixed in real time instead of waiting for them all to pile up when everything is done. Overall, there are too many pros for Scrum Agile for it not to be the correct choice.