Sprint Review and Retrospective

The SNHU Travel project has been an excellent learning experience in how to operate within an Agile environment on a development team. Now that the current sprint has come to an end, it is time to reflect on the process and discuss ways in which the team might improve upon our framework moving forward.

**Applying Roles**

As with any Scrum-Agile development team, the work to be accomplished by the team was split up by the roles of the team. These consisted of the Scrum Master, the Product Owner, and the Development Team (who could be further split up into Tester and Developer, though all Development Team members are expected to have some experience in either role). Though the team may be split up into various roles, it is made explicit from the start of the development process that no one role on the team has a higher degree of authority than any other. Each role is vital to the success of the project’s development and should be viewed as an essential part of a collaborative whole. From a broad perspective, the Product Owner functions as the expert in terms of customer expectations and the go to person of what the final resulting product should have, the Development Team is responsible for the actual design, deployment, and quality assurance of the product being developed, and the Scrum Master functions as a sort of Team Cheerleader / Coach to ensure that the entire development process stays as productive and efficient as possible and maximizes the collaboration between team members to facilitate progress as effectively as possible through the Scrum-Agile framework.

**Completing User Stories**

In a Scrum-Agile process, User Stories are one effective tool used to gauge the progress of development on a project. They are a guide to ensure the work of the team is staying on track to address the needs and desires of the end users of the final product, and they are designed to be broken down to as concise a form as possible in order to be able to modularize the progression of work, so that as each task is completed, it can be updated on the team’s Information Radiator (usually an online tracking tool or a white board in the team office). In the context of the SNHU Project, the User Stories allowed the team to organize the development of the booking app around specific desires that the Product Owner collected from interviews with SNHU Travel’s most loyal customers, which were then used to design the test cases for developing the major functionalities that went into the app. This acted as a kind of developmental “litmus test” to know if a certain functionality was properly implemented: if the targeted desires of a user weren’t present in the design, then it was a good indication that more development on that specific functionality still needed to be worked on.

**Handling Interruptions**

A natural part of any development process (no matter what framework your team chooses to operate under) is handling change. No matter how much planning goes into the process, there will always be disruptions to the original vision, and the resulting process will have to be changed to deal with that. The benefit of operating in a Scrum-Agile environment is that the framework is designed to handle interruptions and adapt to the flow of changing needs. During the middle of the development of the SNHU Travel booking site, the Product Owner reported back to the development team that SNHU Travel had decided to shift their focus in offerings to cater towards the Wellness and Health sector and wanted their vacation packages to reflect that new focus. This required the development team to reassess the prioritization of their User Stories, so that the app’s design could revolve more around the specialized destinations. Because a Scrum-Agile team breaks down their work into small and specific functionalities, the new requirements that were introduced did not require a major overhaul of the design process to implement them.

**Communication**

Communication is one of the most vital tenets of the Scrum-Agile framework and is largely what sets it apart from other more traditional development styles. To summarize the many responsibilities a Scrum Master has on the team, it could be said that their most important job is to facilitate communication between every member of the team in order to improve efficiency and productivity. The section above described one way in which the team was able to effectively communicate amongst themselves in order to adapt to the shifting requirements from the client organization, but effective communication was used in many other ways throughout the project’s development. This included both through various emails amongst team members to clarify confusion when working on specific test cases, as well as full team communication during the Daily Scrum each morning to fill everybody in on the overall progress of the development and what each team member was currently working on. The emphasis on communication is a vital part of ensuring collaboration and productivity during the project.

**Organizational Tools**

Mentioned earlier in this Sprint Review was the use of User Stories to guide the development of the SNHU Travel project. This is just one example of the many tools that can be used to organize the workflow of a Scrum-Agile team. Some other tools used in the process of developing the SNHU Travel app included Daily Scrums (as mentioned earlier) to help keep everyone on the team up to date on the progress of development, a Kanban board in the central office so that anyone on the team could easily check in on the current state of development of individual test cases, and the use of a Product Backlog (and the grooming of it) to maintain the priority and order of the User Stories. All of these different tools and processes worked together to increase the overall efficiency of the team’s workflow.

**Evaluating Agile Process**

No process is perfect, and that applies to the Scrum-Agile framework as well. Although the process helped to boost productivity and foster collaboration between teammates, it is still a deviation from more traditional production methods, so many involved in a Scrum team must slowly adapt to the change in methods from what they are used to. This in itself can take time and feel uncomfortable for many who are new to it. Some team members may also naturally prefer to work in an environment where they feel there is one obvious leader among the team, rather than the leadership being equally distributed amongst all team members equally as it is in a Scrum-Agile environment. However, for the context of this project, that was largely driven by the needs of the end users of the product, I believe that the Scrum-Agile framework worked best, as it allowed the process to be flexible and change quickly as new requirements became evident along the way.