From the Product Owner to the Development Team, every single role involved in an Agile production is absolutely necessary. Scrum Masters are crucial in the daily scrums as they get the ball rolling and keep everyone on topic when led astray. They also are excellent communicators who will keep the team in contact with the Product Owner and Stakeholders so that the development team can continue doing what they do best, develop. The development team is of course crucial to the project being completed as they are the ones with the skills and knowledge to actually write the code to put life into the PO’s vision. They are self led and take ownership of their work, they are the most knowledgeable about every little corner of their code and without them, there would be no product. The Product Owner of course is extremely important too since that is where the product starts. They are the ones with the idea and they are the ones who will eventually create user stories to layout the project’s requirements for the development team to create. Even the tester is a very important role during the Agile process since they are responsible for writing test cases and directions for how the product will work and since they work closely with the PO when they make user stories, they are also extremely knowledgeable about the product.

User Stories in an Agile framework were an immense help in getting the product completed. The Product Owner provided us with incredible User Stories that included user test cases and test inputs which ended up being a big factor into the success of this project. The team was able to read the user inputs and test inputs to debug their code and fix mistakes that they hadn’t foreseen initially and they showed them features that needed to be added in the future. The only thing that I wanted to be included in the user stories were user personas which I feel would have helped the team empathize with the website's users. I believe that if the developers had been able to see user stories and associate them with real people, the product would have turned out even better. I even wrote an email to the Product Owner requesting that they provide us with user personas because I so strongly believed in them.

The product owner had informed us halfway through the product’s development that they wanted to change direction and instead focus on specific “Detox Travel” trips since it was an upcoming trend that would give them the upper hand when advertising their website to newcomers and give the current users new travel ideas. Since the website was not initially intended to go this route this ended up being a large interruption and we had to adapt on the spot to meet these new needs. I wrote an email to the PO requesting new user stories and user inputs to adjust our code and have time to test the new test cases. Because we were working in an Agile environment we were able to adjust very well and make the necessary changes on time without any issues. The PO and the tester gave us new user stories and test cases and we were able to change our focus onto Detox Travel and included many new suggestions for spa trips in Bali, or therapeutic getaways in Thailand.

An important part of working in an Agile team is our communication. It was extremely important to communicate clearly and precisely across teams especially. As the scrum master, I had to communicate clearly with the PO often to make sure everything was going okay and to voice the development team’s concerns as to not make them concern themselves with anything that wasn’t their job. A part of my job is to take the stress off of the backs of others and I accomplished that very well through emailing the PO and testers as well as leading the daily scrums to make sure the team stayed on topic to lead everyone to success. As mentioned previously, I had to send an email to request user personas for the development team and to request new user stories for when the direction of the project changed during the introduction of Detox Travel. My communication across teams ended up being very helpful for everyone involved and our work got done because of it.

Some effective organization tools that the team used was Kanban which I really enjoy using. Kanban is a visual management tool that helps the team organize their thoughts by adding sticky notes or cards on a board to visualize the work that needs to be done/already has been done. By having a large physical board that you can physically add to move ideas from is huge for organizing your thoughts and keeping the team on track and on time. It is far more intuitive than having someone explain what has to be done, or than sending out an email with a list of things that have to be done. It is also good during the daily scrum meetings since everyone can interact with the board during their fifteen minutes. We also utilized Planning Poker to improve our estimates and determine the complexity of tasks so that the team wouldn’t fall behind on schedule.

Overall the Scrum-Agile approach was very effective for this project. We had the proper amount of people working on the project for Agile to make sense to use and everyone involved was comfortable working in an Agile team meaning the team knew what to do and how to get started. If this were a new Agile team, it may have taken longer to get everyone situated with the new development philosophy and to actually start working. This is a con for new Agile developers, but ends up being a pro for seasoned Agile developers. Another pro is that during the development we were hit with a complete 180 and had to change a good amount of the project. In a typical waterfall based approach, we might have had to restart the project and planning from the beginning. However since this was Agile, we were able to adapt and change on the fly without needing to stop and restart everything that we have already done. I believe that the Agile approach was the correct approach for the SNHU Travel development project since we had a team large enough to properly utilize all of Agile’s strengths. If it weren’t for the size of the team or the complexity of the project, I think we could have gone with a different approach, but that wasn’t the case and we ended up fully utilizing Agile’s strengths.