Sprint Review and Retrospective

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Each of the Scrum-agile roles has played a part in the success of the SNHU Travel project. The Product Owner gathered important feedback from SNHU customers to find out what features people wanted. Through active listening, she identified that a Top 5 Destination List was a popular and then then passed that information on to the team to implement. The tester had to ask for clarification as to specific features to build into the Top 5 List to create a product the customer desired. And he used that information to develop test cases for quality and performance of the website. The developers expected clear, concise communication from the Product Owner so they could give realistic timelines for work completion. One example of this was when the Business Owner asked the team to change the Top 5 List to a Top 5 Wellness/Detox packages. The Scrum Master worked to facilitate all this communication to through Scrum meetings and with one-on-one touch bases. The Scrum Master also set each sprint’s expectations and goals. This ensured the team stayed focused, worked together, and delivered results.

The Scrum-agile approach streamlined our communication which helped us adapt quickly when changes were requested. Initially, the Business Owner wanted to focus on creating a Top 5 Destination List for clients based on personal preferences and past bookings. However, in the middle of our second sprint, SNHU Travel discovered that Wellness/Detox packages were becoming an emerging trend. They informed the Product Owner who then shared this change during the next Scrum meeting. The developer and tester quickly asked for more details because we were in the middle of developing the Top 5 List. The developers wanted to know if we were going to start from scratch or would we be able to use what we had already built. The Product Owner told them that we would keep most of the existing product but would need to adapt it for the new focus. The testers then had to reconfigure their tests accordingly. The Scrum Master and the Product Owner worked together to update the Product Backlog to account for these changes and updated deadlines based on feedback. Despite this change in focus, the team was able to pivot and make the changes and complete the project on time.

Even with the original Top 5 List, the testers asked for more information to determine what exactly the Business Owner wanted and to create user stories to add those features including trip name, hot deals, price, and location. In my email to SNHU President Amanda, I explained to her that the team was “excited for the chance to work with you to create a fantastic product that you and your customers will enjoy.” By expressing my enthusiasm for the project, I show my commitment to creating a quality product and show my interest in partnering with her and her team. I listed each of the possible features to ask which they would like to implement along with a request to respond “within 2 business days” so we could make these changes and still meet our deadline.

The Scrum meetings were the most useful tool the team utilized. In these meetings the team could identify challenges quickly and ask for assistance from other roles. In a waterfall approach everything would have been planned out from start to finish which would have made making changes in later stages of development more difficult and even lead to delays. Communication and collaboration are key principles of Scrum, and you can see them in the Scrum meetings. Time-boxing is another key principle in agile. Creating goals and timelines for each sprint allowed the team to focus on each sprints’ tasks and have the flexibility to change when needed.

Using an information radiator like a Kanban board was a great tool for the team. It provided a visual representation of each sprint and our work—what was completed and what was in progress. We could update user stories during Scrum meetings or when new information was shared. Having the ability to see the user stories fostered discussions about expectations and how to address different situations.

Overall, the Scrum-agile approach worked well for our SNHU travel project. The timeline for this project was 5 weeks which is tight. We needed a framework that would allow us to be flexible and be able to respond to change quickly. Agile promoted communication across the team and allowed for more collaboration with all team member than a waterfall approach might have. Using a physical Kanban board gave us a visual representation of our work for each sprint to keep us focused. If we have a hybrid office as is the case so much these days, I would invest in an online information radiator for a similar impact on the team. One of the downsides that I identified was when changes were requested the team seemed to get frustrated. When the Product Owner informed the team that the Business Owner wanted to pivot to Wellness/Detox vacation packages, the Product Owner should have asked more probing questions to understand exactly what the Business Owner wanted. This would have helped the developers and testers to implement the changes more quickly and reduced stress on the team. You will never be able to eliminate stress in every project, but we need to have a system in place to account for as much uncertainty as we can. In the future, the developers and the Product Owner need to have a meeting to work out such a system that works well for the team and will prevent unnecessary disruptions in the future.