Jarrid Kamphenkel

SCRUM retrospective

During this sprint cycle, every position on this scrum team really knocked it out of the park! As Scrum Master, I had a blast with my team here on the SNHU travel project this sprint. I look forward to our next batch of daily and weekly scrums! I also look forward to writing the next retrospective, as they greatly help influence our sprints moving forward. We didn’t have a lot of stops or impediments this sprint, just one tester, who was confident in his testing skills, but found he had a hard time communicating what he was testing to the dev team. After he expressed his problem at the scrum, we hired a communications coach that helped him through some of his difficulties, and he was also able to shadow the developers for a day to analyze their process more thoughtfully. These together helped this tester become a much better and more confident employee in the long run and were well worth the investment and time.

During the scrums this sprint, going over the sprint backlog, user stories, and tasks went very smoothly. As you know, the sprint backlog is a visual representation of the user stories and tasks that have been chosen for the current sprint, as well as their priority. The product back log does this same thing, but in the scope of the entire project.

Let me use “Top 5 Destinations List”, a user story we received this sprint, as an example of this process. When we get a user story in a sprint, we analyze the acceptance criteria and user validation. From there the scrum team starts breaking the user story into tasks that can then be categorized throughout the sprint as ‘new’, ‘in-progress’ or ‘complete’. This is one of the many ways agile methodologies helped up get through these user stories so efficiently. We broke this user story down into tasks like: Add a link to home page that takes you to top five destinations page. Develop logic that retrieves popular destinations from database. Develop logic to dynamically sort these destinations into an interactable top 5 list. Develop a display for the items of this list that includes: destination name, a short description, destination picture and imbedded text to link the user directly to a popular vacation package to said destination.

Once these tasks are realized and isolated, we prioritize them in the sprint backlog. From there we let the developers develop and get their deliverable to the testers. Which is precisely what happening this sprint.

The developers and testers did a great job working together with user stories and test cases. Without the developers, none of the user stories would have ever been implemented, and without the testers the implementation would almost certainly be riddled with misunderstandings, under-optimizations, and bugs. The tester this sprint really made sure the user had a smooth experience when the product was released. For every task a developer implemented, the testers swiftly made a new test case to add to the sprint backlog, until the feature or task was properly implemented.

The product owner was a large key to the success of SNHU travel, which is good since a product owner’s role is to maximize the product’s value for the company. The product owner did their job well, delivering a clear vision of how the product should look, and how it should function to the scrum team. Another big help the product owner provided to the scrum team, was the well-managed, prioritized, and up-to-date product backlog.

There is one point this sprint where I look back and I am especially proud of my team and their application of scrum and agile. One week 5 of our sprint, our product owner requested a rather sharp change in the direction of the content of the project. Had we been using waterfall, we either wouldn’t have been able to accommodate the change or would have had to begin much of what had been done over, but with agile, the team was able to transition our ‘niche vacation bundle’ goal, into a ‘wellness-detox’ focused direction, while still maintaining the original timeframe.

Often in a daily scrum we will use a physical medium like a white board or a construction paper while we’re prioritizing and making tasks for a sprint, but what happens outside the daily scrum when someone needs a reminder, or needs to check up on a task or user story? Luckily, in addition to all the conceptual tools I talked about earlier, like sprints and our scrum events, we also have the help of some handy software that was designed with agile principles in mind. There are many to choose from, such as Confluence and nTask, but for this project, our team chose to work with Jira. Jira was a great software for anyone on the scrum team to get an instance look at both the product backlog and the sprint backlog. In addition to that, the team members were able to keep track of specific bugs and issues. If that wasn’t enough help, Jira also had tools specifically to help me manage my sprints.

Throughout this retrospective, I have gone over many instances where agile made this project thrive. From scrum events keeping everyone in the loop and confident, to developed tools like Jira helping us stay reminded virtually by being designed with agile, scrum and Kanban teams in mind. We also went over how manageable a change in workflow can be when you have a responsible product owner that updates and shifts the product backlog accordingly. However, there are some downsides people note about agile.

One con to agile scrum that I noticed work its way into SNHU travel, is feature creep. I feel like anything that has a user story-based workflow will ultimately be subject feature creep, and in the case of SNHU travel, it apparently wasn’t detrimental this sprint, as we reached our goals! Other disadvantages some teams point out are difficulty in large groups, and poor resource planning. Since this team went by the two-pizza rule, we had no problems communicating with a scrum framework or an agile methodology.

In closing, after reviewing and assessing the information put forth in this retrospective, I believe the pros heavily outweigh the cons, at least for this sprint. Agile scrum is without a doubt the best framework and methodology we could be using for SNHU travel. Thanks for coming to this retrospective. See you next sprint!