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The agile methodology succeeds when the members of the team in their various roles work in harmony together. In the agile team, there is not a hierarchy between roles. The order that I will discuss each role is not representative of power over any other role. Product owners work closely with the stakeholders to define the requirements of the project. These requirements are gathered as user stories. It is not up to the product owner to solely decide how to accomplish these user stories. The solutions to these features will be reached by the team together during the development process. The product owner also manages the product backlog, shifting the priority of user stories as needed to ensure the team focuses their efforts in a way to ensure the timely output of a finished product that meets the needs of the stakeholders.

Scrum masters serve as facilitators for the team. One main responsibility is to lead meetings such as the daily scrum or sprint retrospectives. Besides making sure that these meetings take place, they also make sure that the time is well used. Discussions are kept on track, and any tangents are noted so that anyone interested can return to those topics later, if needed. Scrum masters observe the development process outside of these meetings as well. They support the team in a multitude of ways that can ensure optimal flow and velocity are maintained.

Developers work on the team to accomplish the user stories in the product backlog. They’re the members of the team that are outputting the product. With the support of the rest of the team, they can focus their efforts on tasks that have been broken down into small pieces and organized by priority. The developers must remain flexible to changes that may occur during the development process, however, they should also trust that they will not be expected to meet unrealistic deadlines as a result of these changes.

Testers can help clarify the requirements of each user story, which in turn makes clear the definition of done for the developers and team. Testers can take each user story into finer detail to ensure that the product meets the needs of the stakeholders.

In relation to the SNHU Travel product, the Product Owner contributed to the success of the project by facilitating a focus group of potential customers. They listened to this brainstorming to gather information that was then used to create the user stories. These user stories were then revised by the Testers as needed. The Testers helped the team adapt so that they could create a product that met the needs of the stakeholders through these changes. The Developers were flexible when the goals they were expected to meet changed. The scrum-agile approach tended the user stories in our project from conception to completion. A waterfall based approach would not have lended to the changes that arose during the development process as easily. There was less wasted work as a result of using the scrum-agile approach.

When the Product Owner returned with the news that the SNHU Travel agency would like to focus on detox/wellness vacations, the team was able to accommodate this substantial shift in plans. The Tester was able to revise the user stories in the product backlog to adapt to these new requirements. Luckily for everyone, this did not mean starting the entire project over from scratch. As the original schedule would still be followed, the Developers were able to voice their input about how much functionality they would be able to create in the time remaining. The Product Owner revised the product backlog so that the Developers could best utilize the time they had left on the project.

Communication amongst the team is vital in the scrum-agile approach. The team met in person, as simulated by the animations throughout the project. To supplement this face to face communication, specific questions were relayed by e-mail between the Product Owner, Testers and Developers. The Testers were able to clarify requirements as the user stories were revised. My example of communication between Product Owner and Tester involved expanding upon the sort functionality. Developers brought attention to any concerns that arose as they worked to complete these user stories. In my example, the Developer became aware of a flaw in the user interface of the slideshow, so they brought this to the attention of the Product Owner. This opportunity for improvement could then be incorporated into the project.

For the SNHU Travel project, a vital scrum event was the in person meetings. This gave the team a regular opportunity for face to face communication and helped the team respond to the changes that arose mid-project. The test cases for each user story made sure the developers knew exactly what was expected for each of these tasks. This made sure that every requirement was met, without wasting time on additional unnecessary features. In agile, this is often referred to as “just enough” planning.

Overall, I believe that there were more pros than cons to utilizing the scrum-agile approach for this project. By using this methodology, the efforts of the team were well utilized to meet the needs of the stakeholders. The team was able to shoulder large changes to the project even when they came mid-project. Insight into possible improvements was discovered along the way since working software was produced during each sprint. The small team size of this project was well suited for the scrum-agile approach. Some possible cons I observed revolved around the burden placed on the Developers as they responded to changing requirements. Large shifts in the project could be very stressful, but this was offset by allowing the Developers to voice their opinion about how best to adapt to these changes. This non-hierarchical methodology eases the pressure that would normally come with the waterfall approach. This approach requires trust in the commitment of the Developers. If the integrity of the team is compromised, the success of the project may not reach full potential.