Roles carry a lot of weight in a successful agile team. Each person needs to understand their role in its entirety and fit within it. Through the collaboration of the various roles, we can then create a successful team. The first role, that is perhaps the most important, is the Scrum Master. Many people get this role confused as a simple supervisor position when in fact it represents a lot more. The Scrum Master is a subject matter expert on scrum methodology. This is very important in a new team like ours. Many team members might have an idea of scrum but it’s up to Scrum Master to teach them exactly what part to play. The Scrum Master also helps all parts of the team to work effectively. An example of this is from early in the course where the Scrum Master spoke to maintenance about a broken window in the office. This shows that the Scrum Master takes their role seriously and is removing impediments to the Scrum Teams progress. Another important role to consider that is very close to the Scrum Master is the Product Owner. The Product Owner oversees the vision and goal of the project. They are part of the team to maximize shareholder value through effective use of scrum. Their main goal is to make sure the project is aligned with its goal and is transparent. This means that the whole team understands the product backlog and project goal. As well as the reasoning behind these things in pursuit of stakeholder expectations. The Product Owner is the key decision maker for the project. In many ways they are responsible for the project, and they need to make their decisions clear to those above them and below. Another responsibility of the Product Owner is to get feedback on the product from customers. This was done on our SNHU Travel project when the Product Owner spoke with potential customers to get user stories. User stories are important to the team because they provide feedback that could have been missed to the team. They inform everyone how users could potentially use the product and features that are desirable to them. The Product Owner is in charge of taking this feedback and processing it in a way that everyone on the team can understand.

On the topic of user stories, it is essential for your team to understand them to produce a appealing product. User stories start as simple suggestions of comments from people who are freshly using the product. It is then the Product Owners’ job to shape those suggestions into meaningful suggestions that the team can consider. It is also their job to organize these stories by a priority system so that the development team doesn’t get overwhelmed. These user stories can then help the development team and testers to understand how users will interact with their product. This can help shed light on glaring accessibility issues or major errors that were missed in the project so far. It shows the usefulness of the Scrum-Agile approach as the team adapts to these stories and incorporates them into the product backlog. Completing these can enhance the end user experience and give the product an advantage over the competition. In my experience with the SNHU Travel project user stories helped to add personalization that was missing from the original pitch. Through use stories we found that people wanted their travel search to have more personalized options. Adding search filters and profile settings added to this experience and helped improve the product as a whole.

Interruptions are a common occurrence in projects and are a major reason why the Scrum-Agile method works so well. Interruptions are baked into the framework so that they are easy to manage with Scrum. Primarily it is the Scrum Masters responsibility to deal with interruptions or redirections. As the obstacle remover they need to create a plan to counteract interruptions as they come up. Many times, this means removing items from the product backlog that are low priority. An example of an interruption is when the shareholders at SNHU Travel decided to shift the product from a general traveling site to a health and wellness focused one. This interruption could have caused major delays with the waterfall methodology. It might have even restarted the project since the waterfall method doesn’t provide flexibility. With our new Scrum methods, we were able to handle the interruption very effectively. To account for the new time, it would take to develop and test the new features we were able to drop low priority tasks from the product backlog. This allowed us to maintain our deadline with only minor complications to the project.

Communication is an integral part of any team, but it is especially important to the scrum framework. Since each team member has specific responsibilities communicating between these roles becomes even more important. Scrum boards and scrum meetings are designed to help with this. In the class I’ve found the best way to communicate as via email. This adds accountability to all messages and provides all parties with time to digest information. An example of this is in the week four journal. I wrote an email as the product tester to the product owner about the importance of user stories. A professional email like this helps suggest ideas in a constructive way and opens discussion between team members.

In my limited time working with agile I’ve found Jira to be the most useful organizational tool. It provided an easy-to-use space where the whole team can clearly see each other. Transparency is an important part of getting Agile to work effectively and being able to see other statuses helps a lot with that. Jira even has pair programming tools so that team members can work together even across the world.

Agile as a process has some clear advantages over our old waterfall methods. The primary benefit in software development is its adaptability. Technology is constantly improving in this information age and revolutionary technology can be popularized overnight. As well trends are shifting faster and faster as consumers are exposed to more products than ever. This makes adaptability paramount in the tech space. Agile provides this in many ways. Sprint reviews are a great tool for adapting as it allows the team to review their progress. Everyone gets involved in the Sprint Review and Retrospective. This helps the team to look objectively at their progress and to adjust the project as needed. Adjusting the project is made incredibly easy as any profound critiques can be added into the next sprint. Blocking out a project like this and being able to go backwards is something missing from the waterfall method. This has already been a major pro in our project as we were able to easily pivot to our new health and wellness focused travel sight. The agile method also increases performance across the board. Proper scrum encourages communication, collaboration and divides the work into meaningful chunks. This increases understanding between team members through techniques like pair writing, product backlogs, scrum boards, scrum meetings and many others. It is clear that the Agile methodology has only been beneficial to our project. With the waterfall method we would not have been able to keep to our deadlines, the team would have remained divided, and the specialist would be doing the lion’s share of the work. As we work towards using scrum properly, we can see these advantages and why it is an integral part of modern development.