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Sprint Review and Retrospective

The various roles of our Scrum-agile Team contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel project through collaborative efforts and self-organization. Each team member owned their work and applied agile methodologies in order to adapt to meet the changing requirements of the project. Christy, the Product Owner, initiated the work when she and I met with the client to discuss the project. Our meeting allowed her to ask questions to understand what the client wanted the project to achieve and the deadline. She then met with high valued customers to understand what they wanted to see offered by SNHU Travel. She was able to translate these needs into user stories that helped the development team envision the project requirements. She continuously prioritized user stories in the Product Backlog to optimize the team’s throughput and to meet deadlines. As an intermediary, Christy also played an important role in redirecting the project by communicating the changing needs of the client to the development team when the focus shifted to “wellness/detox” vacation and travel.

In my own role, I, Ron the Scrum Master, contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel Project by facilitating the Scrum events and assisting the Product Owner with Product Backlog refinement. Once I understood the epic goal of the Project I assembled the Scrum-agile team and scheduled the Scrum events like Sprint Planning, Daily Standups, Sprint Reviews, and Sprint Retrospectives. I met with Christy to refine the Product Backlog throughout the project so that we could maintain deadlines. It was important that we all made an effort to apply Scrum-agile methodologies and I was able to guide our team whenever they were in need.

The Development Team also contributed to the success of the SNHU Travel Project by using the Product Backlog items to develop and output increments of work that satisfy the requirement of the client. The developer, Nicole, designed and created code that applied software engineering best practices. Brian, the tester, developed test cases to ensure that acceptance criteria was being met. Using an agile approach, the Development Team also adapted to the new focus of “wellness/detox” vacation and travel by updating test cases and reprioritizing their work.

A Scrum-agile approach to the software development lifecycle helped each of the user stories come to completion by organizing them into sprints and effectively distributing work. Christy determined the size of each user story and prioritized them in the Product Backlog. The User Value Statement provided the team with specific requests from the point of view of the end user. Acceptance Criteria outlined the requirements necessary to implement to fulfill the overall Product Goal. The development team uses the User Value Statement to determine what work must be done before distributing it and the Acceptance Criteria is used to formulate User Testing. The autonomy of the Scrum-agile approach let Christy focus on managing Product Backlog and communicating with key stakeholders while the Development Team built increments of the final product. I helped out wherever I was needed. Utilizing sprints to complete user stories let us efficiently divide work into manageable iterations to meet SNHU Travel’s deadline and requirements.

A Scrum-agile approach supported project completion when the project was interrupted and changed direction by allowing Product Backlog items to be reprioritized. When Christy informed the team that SNHU Travel would like their new booking system to focus on “wellness/detox” vacation and travel, there was some concern that the work that had already been done would need to be scrapped and that the deadline would be out of reach. Christy reassured the team that the current work could be modified to reflect the new requirements instead of starting over and that she would deprioritize other user stories to facilitate the change. This aspect of the Scrum-agile approach helped us meet the client’s needs upon project completion.

Effective communication was necessary to keep the team aligned on project requirements. A sample of communication is from Brian, the tester, directed to Christy, the Product Owner:

“For the second user story, should the minimum and maximum price limit values be manually entered in by the end user or should there be a sliding bar? For the third user story, where is the "Special Limited-Time Offers!" link located? In what order are the offers displayed? Does clicking an offer open a new tab or change the page? Once I receive this information I can fine-tune our test cases.”

This correspondence exemplifies collaboration in order to better understand the client’s needs. Clarifying questions were asked to ensure that there was an alignment between expectation and output. Following this communication, Brian was able to finish creating test cases that more accurately reflected the desired functionality. Another example of effective communication is from Nicole, the developer, to Brian:

“I wanted to know what changes you made to the test cases and the expected results so that I can make sure that I align my code to meet those requirements. Perhaps you could send me a copy of the new test cases if they are available and we could meet in-person if I have any questions? If you have not made the updates yet, I could even make time to meet and help you out.”

This sample of communication encouraged collaboration among team members because the developer offered to assist the tester in creating new test cases following the changing requirements of the booking system. It was effective in allowing the developer to understand what changes they needed to make to their code to meet new demands.

The Agile Charter and Product Backlog were organizational tools that contributed to the team’s success in conjunction with the Scrum-agile principles of welcoming changing requirements, having face-to-face conversations, and being self-organizing. The Agile Charter was an agreement used to communicate the project’s Business Vision, Mission Statement, Success Criteria, Key Risks, Rules of Behavior, and Communication Guidelines. This tool kept the team aligned toward a common goal and created a foundation for their work. The Product Backlog was used to organize work that needed to be completed for the fulfilment of the project. It helped the Product Owner manage the project’s workload and prioritize user stories to meet requirements and deadlines. The Product Backlog Refinement meetings allowed the Product Owner and Scrum Master to change the priority of user stories when changes came up. The Sprint Planning meeting used the Product Backlog so that the team could determine what user stories could be completed in a sprint. In the future, a tool like Azure Boards can be used to visually represent the Product Backlog and the team’s progress on each user story. The Daily Standup promoted face-to-face conversations. The team was able to directly communicate their progress and challenges which allowed help to be allocated where it was needed and kept team members accountable. Welcoming changing requirements helped the success of the team because we were able to modify the product to meet the client’s needs. Customer satisfaction is critical and the application of this principal helps deliver it. The principal of being self-organizing was also applied to help the team be successful. It allowed team members to own their work and seek out the answers they need to complete it. During the Sprint Planning meeting, the development team decided what user stories would be worked on during a sprint, what the work would entail for the user story to be completed, and who would be responsible for each task. Instead of a project manager deciding all of the work needed to complete the project and divvying tasks, the development team was able to take it upon themselves to define and distribute the work. Empowering the team members this way significantly contributed to their success.

The cons that the Scrum-agile approach presented during the project were estimations and documentation. It was difficult to estimate the work necessary to complete a user story because the project requirements were not fixed and the project requirements were loosely defined. Clarification was needed for Nicole to understand how to change the product to align with the new focus because there were few details about how it should be carried out. More documentation would have provided better guidelines and saved time. The pros of the Scrum-agile approach are that it is flexible and inclusive. During the project, the client and key stakeholders were involved in the product development process which made sure that a high quality and customer satisfying product was delivered in the end. The flexibility of the approach allowed the team to redirect the focus of the booking system after work had already begun. In order to appease the client, it was critical that the team implement this change. The overall goal of the project was to assist SNHU Travel with increasing their clientele by expanding the functionality of their website through the development of new online tools. If “wellness/detox” vacation and travel booking system were going to fulfill this objective, then flexibility in the development process was mandatory since this detail was only discovered after work had commenced. This shows that the Scrum-agile approach was best for the SNHU Travel development project. In addition, the loosely defined requirements from the client also made the Scrum-agile approach most appropriate because of the client and key stakeholder involvement throughout.