

First Sprint Final Activities Report

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Introduction

This is a report containing concise descriptions of the first Sprint Review and Sprint Retrospective. Due to the unofficial “Didactic Scrum” we’ve been following, we have decided to merge our reports for the Review and the Retrospective in a single document, even though they’d be intended for different purposes and different readers. The document has a simple structure: in the first part we’ll consider the review, and in the second part we’ll take on our retrospective. Most of the content of the two meetings has no place in a formal document, so I only gave an overview of the points discussed and focused on how to better the two processes in the future.

As with most other “official” documents, we decided to write the final report for the first sprint in English. Please let us know whether we should change this in the future.

Sprint Review

Duration and General Approach

We decided to hold the sprint review on Sunday the 1st of November, although the sprint officially ended on October 31st. Since the sprint review is intended to include the PO, we made a short video outlining the main features of the increment. We understand the time the PO can dedicate to each team is limited, so we decided to delay PO approval until the next Sprint Planning to avoid having to schedule two separate meetings. We found it challenging to properly time the sprint review, as we ran into (multiple) technical issues, but it took approximately 1h 30min. We had two activities we wanted to tackle for the review: making the video and discussing the current state using essence cards. We considered adding other “serious games” and activities, such as the “responsibility game”, but we decided against it, as we found it could have easily become an “agreeableness” contest while providing little chance for insights.

Product State

We decided to describe the current product state (although product is the improper term) using essence “Alpha State” cards. As the Scrum Master, I found that these provided the shortest possible path to the resolution of the two main issues I could foresee: clearly describing the product state from various angles, and finding concrete measures to better those states. We won’t go into details here, as we believe the cards with our added short comments are clear enough, but we’re ready to explain if anything is unclear.

From the practical point of view, we provided, together with this Report, a short video with light editing that should help form a clearer picture of what we’ve achieved so far, and what we focused on. As we outline in the video, we preferred making a minimal viable product to completing a complicated interface with map capabilities but being unable to provide a proof of concept for backend code. Lastly, as points on Taiga show, a sizable chunk of our time went directly into the setup of the development environment, for which we have little to show except our working services.

Problems completing the Review

As I mentioned in a previous paragraph, we ran into a few issues. I’ll outline the main ones here and describe how we resolved them.

1. Picking a video conferencing app. We assumed this would be an easy task: we've been using Discord among ourselves and we use Teams in class every day, but since the spirit of the project is to strongly prefer open-source alternatives we tried Jitsi Meet. We knew there were some open servers on [iorestoacasa](#), but we had various issues, ranging from connections problem (a classic) to some members being unable to hear everyone else, so we switched to Discord. In the future, we may try Jitsi again, but I, as scrum master, will need to take some time with the team to test it before we need it.
2. Picking a collaborative editing diagram maker website. Since I had been looking for a while, I knew of a few different alternatives: we settled for [this one](#), and then it took us quite some time to share the document with the whole team.
3. Recording the video. Because of our remote nature, we had to record the video by recording the screen. This made things easier for what concerns the "video" side, but complicated the audio, for reasons I won't go into here. We recorded a few different versions with varying presets and then I ended up splicing together different pieces to avoid rambling and long pauses.

As one can see, we struggled quite a bit with every step of the process. Surely, it was a learning experience for all of us (especially myself, who thought that, just by knowing the name of the services we'd be using, we'd have no problem setting them up quickly), but I must admit I would much rather have avoided these issues completely. Personally, as the Scrum Master, I'd like to point out a fourth issue, more fundamental than those raised so far: while the past three are technical, mine concerns the way remote work is completed.

4. Scrum as a remote work development framework. I found scrum as a collection of techniques and beliefs extremely interesting, but I don't think they generalize well "directly" to the remote environment. All our activities feel a bit forced, and it's honestly quite hard to coordinate tools that are made to emulate what in real life would just be physics and a whiteboard. I'm sure, as COVID keeps on ramping up, new suggestions will come up, and I will get better as a Scrum Master; at the same time, I wanted to underline that I truly wish we could do this in person. Tools shouldn't make it harder to get stuff done, but during our review and retrospective I've felt this way multiple times.

Sprint Retrospective

Structure and activities

We held the retrospective the afternoon following the review. This was meant to help the team voice their doubts about the current state of the product, but ended up putting a strain on all of us due to the amount of time we had to dedicate to both processes. This led to some adjustments by me, the scrum master, in order to shorten the retrospective and make it less painful. I decided against formally implementing the PO approval process with essence cards: I introduced this in class and was hoping to complete it during the retrospective. Instead, after quickly introducing the retrospective as a process, we jumped into [practice patience](#), which took some time due to (a) the team being very vocal about what they cared about and (b) the selected tools, once again open source in the form of [diagrams.net](#) (formerly draw.io), couldn't deal with my horrible internet connection. We included the result in the bottom half of the pdf file on Taiga. Then, we focused on giving actionable feedback to improve on the problems we found, by pretty much following this ["Follow Through"](#) advice. We decided against writing down every probability and suggestion and focused on communication and dialogue.

Issues and Solutions

Once again, we struggled with emulating what would come perfectly natural in the real world with online tools, which made the process, already difficult due to the novelty of it, somewhat tedious for all parties involved. Due to the multiple meetings we needed (Review and Retrospective), not all members were available for the retrospective, which obviously hinders the usefulness of the process itself. In addition, I couldn't get through to part of the development team: I had hoped everyone would see the advantages of working like this, but clearly, I couldn't convince all of them. I firmly believe the retrospective is a fundamental part of development process, especially when working with talented individuals such as our team, as developers often already have a workflow which is rarely focused on team effort. As a scrum master, I want to be able to convince them not of the importance of scrum or essence themselves, but of having a moment to look back at the way we worked recently and realize, together, how to better ourselves and our workflow.