**Sprint Review and Retrospective**

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The SNHU Travel project was the first instance of our company applying Agile methodologies and the Scrum framework, restructuring the team as a whole and redefining how we work on products and projects. The most prominent application was the implementation of Scrum roles: the Product Owner, the Scrum Master, and the Development team, which included a Developer and Tester. Each of these roles served a vital purpose as cogs in the wheels of the project, bringing their own contributions as they work together to see a shared goal come to fruition. For example, during the Sprint, the Product Owner not only provided the items needed for the Product Backlog but was prudent in providing any and all information needed to perfectly encapsulate the end user’s needs. When the Development team worked on the ‘top five destination list’ from the Product Backlog, the Product Owner provided insight directly from stakeholders that allowed the Development to tailor their work to better fit the product in line with the actual vision of the stakeholders. By communicating specific requests and requirements of the stakeholders, the Product Owner helped ensure that the backlog was sufficiently understood and upheld the interests of the end user. While the Product Owner focused on the product, business, and interests of the stakeholders, the Scrum Master acted as a facilitator that bolstered the Development team. During the Sprint, the Scrum Master was vital to leading the charge on the Scrum focused process and removed impediments to the team for them to work efficiently. The Scrum Master assisted in writing the Agile team charter, which provided the goal, the team roles, practices, and values to be upheld, and the communication guidelines. Most prominently, they lead the daily standup meetings, allowing all members to address work done, work in progress, and work to be started on. The Scrum Master allowed the team to be efficient and keep work steady, showing their role as both a leader and servant within the Scrum framework. Through the help of the Product Owner and Scrum Master, the Development team was able to shine as they put their efforts into producing “done” work for the Sprint. The best example would be their combined efforts in applying size value to the user stories from the Product Backlog to measure the work to be done. Through this, the team helped organize the work into manageable pieces. In addition, the Development team provided the bulk of the work, as they used their software knowledge to complete all the user stories and provide test cases to ensure the product’s quality. The Development team’s thorough work ethic allowed the project to move along smoothly with communication and collaboration between the Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Development team being the key factor to success.

The Scrum-agile approach to our team’s software development lifecycle provided numerous merits that enabled us to demonstrate our efficiency within the project itself. Thanks to the approach, the team was able to accurately obtain and measure the needs of the end user and provide a streamlined approach to address all requirements of the project. The team followed a cycle of obtaining feedback, applying feedback, doing work, and testing the work that cumulated in the delivery of the product. Through meetings, the Product Owner was able to garner and distribute critical information and feedback that helped accurately shape the stakeholder’s requirements. As stakeholders noted the features they wanted, the Product Owner would write user stories to reflect those needs and wants. The Development team was able to prioritize the user stories, noting their acceptance criteria and rating their sizes, which allowed the user stories to be organized into bite-sized pieces that allowed for easier undertaking. Test cases were written to ensure each feature properly worked and interconnected with the rest of the project. Focus on the collaboration, communication, quality, and the end user were the foremost principles of Agile the team upheld and proved most effective when completing each user story.

When work on the user stories had begun, the Development team addressed their requirements and were able to effectively produce a “Top 5 Destination List” feature that fit within the user story’s terms. However, after further communication from the Product Owner, it was revealed that the visual and graphic design of the user story was vastly different than what was assumed. This meant that acceptance criteria and test cases had to be changed. Thanks to Agile principles of adaptability and flexibility, change was not out of the question; the team was able to revise the test cases and code early on to reflect the changes discussed with the Product Owner. Flexibility and the ability to adapt to new information, alongside frequent communication, and clarification, helped the team overcome this problem and create a product that aligned with stakeholder views.

When communicating with other members of the Scrum team, such as the Product Owner and Tester, one asset was being able to effectively express my inquiries regarding the project via email. An excerpt of my email to the Product Owner and Tester below demonstrates my ability to reach out to other members to work in a more informed environment:

“*Christy – Please let me know if the stakeholders have a specific vision or direction the SNHU Travel website is to be associated with. If they want the product to only pertain to certain items, it will help to know now so that I may include it in development. In addition, any other details that must be added to the final product would also be necessary to know so that I may include it.*

*Brian – Please let me know any issues that may come up during testing so that I may promptly fix them. Any visual or graphic inconsistencies that you find would also help – I want to make sure the product is visually in line with the overall vision*.”

This sample from my email shows how collaboration is the most effective way forward when working on a project. Email is useful because I can address multiple members and can detail what I need to know or how I may need their help. Reaching out when I needed clarification for what I was about to work on showed my willingness to collaborate and communicate, and they invited other team members to utilize their unique skills to help contribute to the project.

The success of our team was aided by organization tools and adherence to Scrum principles; it facilitated collaboration, communication, and transparency amongst members of the team, and allowed us to regularly inspect and adapt our work to changing information. For example, during Sprint planning, Kanban boards helped track the team’s progress by visualizing the workload, which allowed us to address our work easily as we tackled them one by one. Some of the most prominent Scrum-agile principles we fostered included the idea of “work in progress” and openness. Utilizing the concept of “work in progress” for the user stories allowed the team to size each piece of work in a way that was economical; the work could be divided evenly, and the development cycle was quicker because of it. In addition, openness in terms of transparency and communication between team members served the team well as nothing was withheld and everyone had the information necessary to do their work – and if they didn’t, they had the means to ask for help from their team members. Scrum-agile principles and the organizational tools that work in conjunction with them allowed the team a degree of self-organization and adaptability, fostering an Agile-friendly environment.

When it came to the SNHU Travel project, the Scrum-agile approach proved itself highly effective, and held many merits as opposed to other approaches that could have been taken. Considering the nature of the project, which was composed of a website with no defined graphical interface and only a myriad of wanted features, I believe the Scrum-agile approach was the best method to work with. One reason is flexibility; because of a certain lack of information, the approach allowed the team to be able to adapt sudden changes in requirements without a huge hit to workflow. In addition, because Agile focuses on customer needs, using its methodologies benefitted how we approached the Sprint goal considering the website values the customer foremost, allowing us to focus on a constant stream of feedback. Thanks to the feedback, we were able to release a deliverable in a short timeframe. Additionally, the Sprint process allows us to have a retrospective process that we can evaluate, fostering continuous improvement for future iterations.

Some cons of the Scrum-agile approach also prove themselves prominent, however. One example is less predictability, as degrees of uncertainty with the outcome of the project can arise because requirements are constantly changing. In addition, there is a challenge to applying the Scrum-agile approach for companies who are only recently moving into Agile, as Agile requires dedication and involvement from many parties which may be challenging to those new to it. Overall, the approach’s cons are something teams should be aware of.

I believe that given the scope of the project, the necessary engagement from stakeholders and customers, and the time constraints, the Scrum-agile approach was the most effective method to use on the project. All the values of Agile applied well, helping us address the uncertainty of requirements, the focus on customer needs, and the quicker release cycle via Sprints, proving itself the best method for the project.

References

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