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When it comes to software development, there are several types of approaches that can be used in order to fulfill and succeed in a project. Every approach comes with both strengths and weaknesses, but it has become clear that there is a prominent approach that reliably leads the team to success. This approach is called the Scrum-Agile approach, and it involves adaptability, clear communication, and several other aspects and principles that make it excel above others approaches.

One of the big aspects that make scrum-agile so appealing is its use of roles in a development team. For instance, in the traditional case of a product owner, the product owner is strict and rules over his/her team by having direct control over them. Alternatively, with the scrum-agile approach, it is less about control and more about being someone that can support and enable a team to do even better. The product owner should be someone that encourages the team to tackle their tasks in the best way they see fit, as long as it follows company and stakeholder guidelines. The effort in showing control over the team is instead put into communication with the stakeholders. The product owner is expected to be able to translate the desires that stakeholders have into readable and understandable stories and tasks that the team can tackle. The product owner essentially makes it so that the team just has to focus on working and developing rather than on other aspects like communication with the stakeholder. In the view of the development team, they are there to feel empowered in the work that they do as long as they can effectively communicate and embrace changes as they come. There should be a sense of openness and transparency among team members and the product owner because it helps everyone stay on the same page as each other, so no time and effort is wasted on guessing. Aside from the development team, there is the tester who is there to make sure that the product ends up working as it is intended. The tester is responsible for creating test cases that can adapt as the project evolves. In order to do this, the tester must be communicative not just with the development team, but also with the product owner. Another key role of the team is the scrum master which is what I am. I am there to assure you that the team can stay on track and at the right pace to complete the project on time. I essentially make sure that the team is practicing agile principles while also making sure that any obstacles and hinderances stay at a minimal.

When it comes to user stories in the agile and scrum approach, user stories are an extremely effective and valuable tool to utilize. While user stories might not be as effective for a newer team, user stories provide good indicators of how long a set of tasks will last for. In a sense, they are used as estimators, and the estimate is based off how the team feels. Not only are they good estimators, but they are also easy to understand for the development team. Before a user story is even made, it comes from a raw desire that the stakeholders have for a product. The product owner is the one that takes those desires and creates user stories which achieve in fulfilling those desires. In a way, user stories are used as documentation for the project, which ultimately ends up saving time and efforts on actual heavy documentation that would come from a more traditional approach like the waterfall model. They are also easier to follow along with for the entire team compared to formal documentation of an ongoing project. To be more specific about the way that they work, they conveniently start by mentioning what the customer wants specifically. It is a brief statement relating to a feature that is desired followed by a short list of tasks relating to the implementation of that feature. These user stories can be ranked by the team in terms of the amount of time it would take to complete, and the priority it has.

As a scrum-master, I am there to make sure that the team can remain efficient by keeping them on the path to success and preventing interruptions and obstacles from getting in the way. What I mean specifically by this, is when there is an instance like for example, the stakeholders desire to pivot on the integration of a new feature that has been worked on during the sprint in favor of another, I have to be prepared. I have to be able to help the team shift its focus onto the new priorities by refining the backlog with the team. When the team refines the backlog, we also redefine our stories and tasks so that they can align with the new desires. Once this is taken care of, the team can get back on track. As long as communication is open, we can stay on top of any interruption that arises to stay productive and minimize the loss of time and effort. Even when there is no interruption, constant communication is key to making any agile team work successfully. During events like daily stand-ups the team is expected to participate while preferably standing in order to engage in topics surrounding the current situation of the sprint, like what is to be completed, and what has been completed. At times like this, it is the perfect opportunity to highlight anything that may cause a hinderance so that we spot it early and deal with it before it jeopardizes our productivity. People are expected to feel pride in their work, and even in their failures because failure is also a way of improving as a developer.

For tool that have helped and benefited the team heavily, I have to credit Jira. Jira is the perfect tool to support an agile team like ours since it provides features like boards and timelines. There is openness and transparency when using Jira because depending on the desires of the product owner, everything can be on display for the entire team to see. Team members can see and track each other’s work, and can communicate all through Jira. A big feature that sets Jira apart from something like a whiteboard is that it allows the team to communicate even from long distances, which means we do not all have to constantly be in the same building, using a whiteboard or wall to track our progress. Another massive feature is its real-time updates that show up for the entire team as the updates occur, so everyone is constantly being given the latest information and status of the project.

Overall, when it comes to the scrum-agile approach, it heavily benefits most teams in most situations, but at the same time, there may be situations where it is not the best option. For instance, for teams and companies trying to embrace the scrum-agile approach, they must fully embrace the approach in order to make it work. There have been failures with companies pursuing this approach because they do not fully commit to having a scrum master, or they only train a section of the team to be scrum-agile while the rest is not. This will only work if there is full commitment, and even then, there may be struggles with a new team. An unexperienced team will not have a good idea of how to estimate things like the amount of time a user story will take. In scrum-agile, things are constantly evolving and changing as the project progresses too, so the members of the team have to be good at keeping their composure and being content with change. At the same time, even though there are these downfalls in the scrum-agile approach, there are also massive benefits. For one, empowering the development team rather than showing direct control will allow for better, more efficient work. The team can appreciate their work because it comes from them rather than a guiding figure that tells them what to do. Another massive benefit is that the rapid delivery of features allows for constant feedback from stakeholders, which allows for constant improvement and rapid growth. With that being said, I believe that the scrum-agile approach is the best approach for a project like the SNHU Travel project because of the constant improvements that can be made throughout the course of the project, which is far better than only making improvements at the end, like in a traditional approach.