The different roles we have on our team all contributed to our team’s success. Our product owner worked on our backlog and helped shift focus to new requirements when they came up. For example, when we shifted our focus to exclusively wellness destinations out PO reprioritized our backlog, and created additional stories to move our focus and get us moving in the right direction. Our developers took stories to complete and worked on building the travel site based on the particular story. Also, from when we shifted to focus on wellness destinations the developers work had to be adjusted and they had to take on additional stories to shift to the new vision. Our testers were responsible for making creating test cases that ensure every piece of code is being tested. This is especially important when you have changes, again like the wellness focus. The tester first needs to reformulate their tests that would be impacted by the change but they also need to retest the app to confirm everything is still working as it should as sometimes small changes can create bugs that running a robust testing suite can catch. As scrum master, my duties chiefly through this process were to make sure everyone else has what they need to do their jobs. I have assisted the PO with the backlog, I have hosted our daily scrums where we have identified some blockers that I was able to help resolve, and I have tried to show the team how to best integrate the agile method into our workflow.

There are many ways the agile method helps get the user stories completed. One of the main things that helps agile move project toward completion is the flexibility of the method. Take the detox/wellness vacation shift, when the PO came to let the team know there was a big shift it didn’t spell disaster for the project. There are many reasons why but speaking specifically to the agile process it was because in meeting with the team the PO is essentially priming them to expect a change. Once the meeting is complete and everyone knows the new direction and has raised their concerned its time for the PO and Scrum to work to refine the backlog to get additional stories and amend ones that have been affected. The developer and testers have their chance to bring up potential pitfalls in the meeting AND during story pointing or refinement. Doing in this way not only give you (in my opinion) a more stable and tested product, it also gives you the ability to change which is a huge benefit.

Our team implementing an agile approach helped move the overall product forward. After our team had a demo model of the vacation slideshow, we were hit with a major shift in focus to wellness destinations. In our old waterfall model this shift could likely have shut down production and we would have had to restart from the beginning. Thankfully agile offers an easy way to course correct, or to adjust as different requirements are discovered. We held a team meeting to discuss the change and what it would mean for the team. From there we were able to generate new stories that more closely matched the shift and were able to refine our backlog. After that we went back into our sprints. There was additional work caused because of the shift definitely, but because of the flexibility of the agile method and the flexibility of the team to adopt it, we were able to successfully shift our focus.

A key for agile to work properly is communication. In that same instance of the shift to detox vacations, how different would the outcome have been if the PO has sent just an email? I imagine the rest of the team would have a lot of questions and frustrations and that would fester and effect productivity and the final produce. With agile having open communication through the roles, it’s a very different story though, each member of the team is a valuable asset and their opinion matters. During the open communication about the shift to wellness, the roadblocks that may be encountered by any member of the team are discussed and handled. Furthermore, when you feel like your opinion matters on a team you are more apt to invest yourself in the team’s future.

When we talk about our team’s success we need to talk about open communication and flexibility. When we meet all opinions and valid and needed for us to move forward. Once we can get an understanding of our teammate’s roadblocks (in a scrum) or the reason the pointed a story so differently than we did helps us to have a more complete view of the issue(s). Once we can see if from a wider perspective, we gain a deeper understanding of the issue. The other this I attribute to our team’s success is flexibility. Agile is build with flexibility in mind but even so we had a big shift part way through the project. Agile tells us to be iterative and got through the process of discussing and refining how we can approach this but its is ultimately our teammate’s who execute this and I appreciate their willingness to discuss the change and what we can do to better handle it.

Overall, the scrum approach to this project is great. For the size of the team and the nature of the project the waterfall approach would have been very clunky. The agile approach allows all the teams members to have a stake in the outcome and provides us the flexibility to adapt as we tackle unforeseen issues.