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Software Development Lifecycle

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As Scrum Master, one of my jobs is to summarize, analyze, and draw conclusions on the work the team has completed during the course of the product development. This document will serve as a summarization of our Sprint Review and Retrospective.

The various roles in the Scrum-Agile Team are Scrum Master, Product Owner, Developer, and Tester. All of these team members play a crucial role in all Scrum-Agile projects, and this SNHU Travel project is no exception. Starting from the beginning, the Product Owner has the essential task of developing and maintaining the product backlog, in collaboration with the rest of the team, and outside entities such as end users and stakeholders. Without a well-maintained product backlog, the team would not have an idea of what functionality to implement, and what priority to give each item. Naturally, it’s the Developers and Testers that are the ones creating the actual product in conjunction with the rest of the team. A core tenet of the Agile methodology is allowing the team to manage themselves and trust that they will be able to handle what needs to get done. The developers and testers communicate within the team to implement each item within the backlog, as well as coming up with the tests with clear pass/fail criteria for an item to be considered “done”. These requirements and tests can be revised and updated as necessary as the project moves along. Finally, the Scrum Master helps keep the entire team on task. They work closely with the Product Owner, relaying the expectations for the project to the rest of the team. They will be the ones heading the Daily Standups, as well as making sure the team is adhering to the principles of Scrum-Agile.

One of the areas where Scrum-Agile shines is in relation to the product backlog. The product owner takes user stories and distills them into individual items of functionality that need to be implemented. One of the most important things the product owner is responsible for is categorizing each user story by priority and amount of time and effort it will take. Accurately estimating these items is key to getting a good picture of what the team can get done within a sprint, which in turn allows us to estimate how long the entire project will take.

A Scrum-Agile approach expects and even encourages iteration and change as the project moves forward. One example is when the Product Owner had a meeting with SNHU Travel management, who wanted to change the project to focus on detox and wellness vacations. In some older ways of doing things, such as waterfall, this could have been a huge issue for the team and required a lot of work to be scrapped. Because of the Agile approach we have been using, we focus on providing a minimal working product every sprint, so changes such as these are not as big of a deal as they could have been in the past. Because Agile encourages iteration and changes, it was easy to accommodate the new focus with minimal changes to work that has already been done.

The Scrum-Agile approach emphasizes iteration, and one of the ways that is accomplished is by the developers and testers reaching out to the product owner for clarity and more information about the various user stories. We have seen an example in previous journals of how to draft an email asking for specific details in order to get the most concise information. Communication is key in any team, but that is especially true for an Agile one. Another key communication aspect was using the discussion boards in the previous learning module to act as an information radiator. We were able to work in a group and communicate in a way that the information is up to date and available for anyone in the team to see at any time.

As mentioned above, an information radiator was a key organizational tool that helped the team have open lines of communication with something up to date that can be referenced at any time by anyone on the team. Open communication is a key Scrum-Agile principle that helped our team be successful. Perhaps the most important Scrum-Agile principle is its focus on iteration and being welcoming of change. The pivot to detox and wellness vacations was easy to accommodate due to the iterative nature of this framework. The Daily Standup was a very helpful way to keep the whole team apprised of what work has been done, what work will be done, and what roadblocks each team member may have.

I am thankful for the opportunity for our team to spearhead the company moving forward with the Scrum-Agile methodology. I believe that this way of doing things was instrumental in our success with this project, and I think the company will agree. I believe the only con to adopting the Scrum-Agile methodology is getting everyone used to a new way of doing things. Sometimes people can be stubborn and set in their ways, embodying the phrase “we’ve always done it this way”. Luckily, our team took to the new ways with ease and grace. I recognize that not all teams will have it so easy, but with perseverance and someone experienced in using Scrum, I am confident that we can get the whole company to adopt this new way, with great results. This con is far outweighed by the pros, which include allowing teams to take risks, constant iteration, and prioritizing the most important aspects in the backlog to provide the most value. These tenets all contribute to a better final product, and being more adaptable as the project moves along. I wholeheartedly believe the Scrum-Agile approach was the best way to handle this project, and I look forward to using it for future projects in our team, and any other teams I’m a part of.