As the Scrum Master for the SNHU Travel Project, I have put together this Sprint Review and Retrospective to summarize and analyze the work completed during this development cycle. The purpose of this is to cover the various aspects of our Scrum-Agile approach, including team roles, user stories, handling interruptions, communication strategies and just an overall evaluation of the Agile process for this project.

I believe the large success we have achieved so far is due to the effective communication we had within our team. Each role played a crucial part in driving the project forward and ensuring it all came together. As the Scrum Master, my primary focus was to ensure the implementation of Scrum practices to ensure a seamless and productive workflow within our team.

For Sprint Planning Sessions, the Product Owner and Development Team worked closely with me to establish clear sprint goals and prioritize backlog items. This demonstrated a collaborative effort that involved discussing requirements, breaking down tasks, and estimating the effort needed for each item. The benefit of the Sprint Planning we did was that is aligned the team on a shared vision for the sprint, which provided a roadmap that guided our efforts along the wat to deliver the most valuable features.

I facilitated Daily Scrums, which were short, focused 15-minute stand ups. Each team member shared their progress from the previous day, what they were planning for the current day and any anticipated hold ups. To keep the team engaged and having fun, I introduced the beach ball technique where I would start my sharing my own progress, plans and impediments, then pass the beach ball to a random team member to continue. This approach enhanced communication and collaboration amongst everyone on the team.

The Scrum-Agile approach really aided us in the completion of user stories throughout our project. During sprinting planning sessions, we made it a priority to break down complex user stories into smaller and more manageable tasks. Doing it this way allowed us to finish the user stories within a single sprint. In the SNHU Travel Project, I found the use of user stories to be very effective. It wasn’t until we started creating the user stories that I realized just how much detail was actually needed. Within the user stories, I made sure to provide a clear goal for the development team to follow. This practice was very effective because we were able to focus our efforts on the user’s perspective and clearly define the features’ purpose and expected outcome. For example, we wanted the user to be able to list vacations based on the best “deals”. We made sure to include what the end goal was (to see the best affordable deals), the specific action they were to take (list top destinations based on price), and what the expected outcome was (having the list update to show the best priced vacations). This level of detail was crucial for our development team to be able to do what they did.

The Scrum-Agile approach proved itself when dealing with project interruptions and direction. Specifically when the Product Owner decided midway through the project that we needed to now focus on detox and wellness vacations instead. It was a little frustrating because of all of the work the teams put into specific features that wouldn’t really be used because we focused on a new direction now. However, the flexibility from Scrum-Agile allowed us to adapt to the changes quickly as soon as we received urgent feedback. Instead of the changes derailing our project we just re-prioritized our sprint backlog in our next sprint planning session we had to accommodate them. Had we been using the waterfall method, this potentially would have required us to scrap much of our work.

The decision to work in short sprints was one that was advantageous for us because there was an interruption which is likely to happen. The short time between the sprints allowed us to pivot quickly without losing too much work. Instead of scrapping entire workloads we simply were able to do some slight restructuring.

In addition to the beach ball method we used to help with effective communication and collaboration amongst the team, we also used the two pizza rule and planning poker.

The “Two Pizza Rule” made famous by Jeff Bezos, is essentially a rule to keep teams small enough so that there’s just enough people on a team to eat two pizzas. This makes it so that teams are smaller and smaller teams can really enhance collaboration amongst everyone. Planning poker was used as an estimation technique and proved to be worthwhile promoting an equal voice for everyone. For Planning Poker, a user story is read along with acceptance criteria, then the team would discuss the story and ask any questions to clarify requirements. Once all of that is finished each member of the team would select a numbered card representing how long they estimate it would take to finish the task. If all numbers match or are close, then everyone is in agreement on how long it will take, if not, they discuss their position and then reselect cards and this would keep going until everyone is in consensus. Planning poker really enhanced communication as it gave everyone an equal voice to be heard and empowered the team.

For the pros of the Agile-Scrum approach, I believe it provided flexibility, enhanced collaboration, transparency, and continuous improvement. As noted we were able to quickly pivot once we received notice that we would be focusing on wellness and detox due to Agile-Scrum. The Scrum events (Daily Scrum, Sprint Planning, Sprint Reviews, and Retrospectives) brought a high level of collaboration with them between the team. Regular sprints allowed us to reflect on our progress regularly and make incremental improvements throughout the project.

As for the cons, there is an initial learning curve that makes it hard for new team members to navigate the process initially. Time is sometimes hard to manage especially for someone like the Product Owner or the Scrum Master. This is because they need to be highly available to the team anytime they have questions or when meeting need to be held. Because of this, it makes it hard to balance their schedules sometimes.