SNHU Travel Project Sprint Review and Retrospective

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Abstract

As part of a pilot project for ChadaTech, a software design company, a small team undertook the task of implementing a Scrum-Agile methodology to complete the development of an application for a client, SNHU Travel, who sought to create a platform that improved its services for their customers. The team consisted of a Product Owner, Scrum master, Developer, and Tester. This paper delves into these roles within the Scrum-Agile framework, how they contributed to the overall project, and the other scrum-agile principles that assisted in the completion of SNHU Travel’s platform. Through the use of Scrum-Agile principles, the team was able to effectively navigate through the software development lifecycle while still managing to adapt to sudden changes. In this paper, the lessons learned from this experience are outlined.

Keywords: Scrum, Agile, Software Development

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# Roles in Scrum-agile Team

Throughout the lifecycle of developing the SNHU Travel project, several roles performed crucial functions necessary for the completion of the work. The Product Owner, Christy, acted as a necessary bridge between the Development Team, the client, and key stakeholders including management in the company. The Product Owner provided critical information gathered from not only the client, SNHU Travel, but also potential customers in the form of customer stories. The Product Owner led initiatives that led to discerning the key requests of customers. Using this information, Christy created several User Stories that distilled the most important requests into a format the development team could then use. This led to the creation of the Product Backlog the team would use moving forward. In addition to the user stories, the Product Owner also communicated with the client, gathered feedback, and was the first to know of any changes that occurred, including SNHU Travel’s decision to change direction from the gathered Customer Stories and instead focus on Detox Travel plans.

Another important role was the Scrum Master, who facilitated the team’s adherence to the scrum-agile principles throughout the project and led the initiative to create the team’s Agile Charter. The Scrum Master helped create the backlog, manage daily Scrum Meetings, and helm Sprint Planning. After hearing about the sudden change in plans requested by the client, SNHU Travel, the Scrum Master coordinated a plan of action with the Development Team to quickly and efficiently pivot into the new direction of a Detox Travel platform.

The Tester provided essential services by reviewing the user stories provided by the Product Owner and Scrum Master and determining a way to put those into action, test how they would work, and figure out what constraints exist for the requested features. The Tester reviewed the user stories, created a user story value statement, acceptance criteria, and assigned a size of the request made. The Tester also requested clarification on these user stories as needed to ensure a solid understanding was gathered before the development team would begin working on these requests. This was seen when the Tester had to reach out to the Product Owner and ask probing questions to better understand the features requested.

Lastly, the developers put together the information that had been gathered by the Product Owner and Scrum Master, and further refined by the Tester. Using this information, the Developers put together the code required to create a slideshow of the top destinations to demonstrate what this feature would appear as for the stakeholders to review and provide feedback for. The Developers were also tasked with changing the product to match the sudden change to being a Detox Travel platform instead of a niche travel platform like the customers requested. The Developer also reached out to the Product Owner to clarify crucial information regarding the sudden change of the platform, as little to no information was actually given to begin with.

## Scrum-Agile Approach For User Stories

The Scrum-Agile approach places and emphasis on collaboration and iterative development. The Scrum-Agile approach is particularly effective when dealing with user stories, as it requires each team member collaborate when working on smaller tasks that can be consolidated into shorter sprints. The process could be seen when in the SNHU Travel project when user stories were gathered by the Product Owner, distilled and refined by the Tester into acceptance criteria and constraints, and created by the developers. Each member of the team had to collaborate with effective and open communication to clarify points of confusion and format the requests into smaller chunks that could be completed in an iterative development process. This allowed for quick feedback, which led to a customer-oriented solution that could be completed in an agile method. The Top Destinations list is an excellent example of how the Scrum-Agile approach helped complete the user story it originated from. The Tester requested clarification, tested constraits, and broke the request down into smaller components the Developer could then use to create an example of it and demonstrate to stakeholders for quick feedback.

Scrum-Agile Approach to Project Interruption

In addition to the completion of user stories, the Scrum-Agile approach can be particularly helpful when dealing with unexpected changes in a project or when a client suddenly changes the direction of it. A major principle of Agile is adaptability to change. When the requirements for the project suddenly shifted from what customer’s expressed they were interested in and instead pivoted into Detox Travel, the Scrum-Agile framework facilitated a smooth transition. The Scrum Master took the initiative by holding a meeting amongst the team to determine the best course of action forward, what each team member needed to revise or plan, and how to refine the backlog to accommodate the sudden change. By promoting open communication and utilizing incremental development, the team was able to make the changes necessary while still maintaining the original deadline provided by the client, SNHU Travel.

Effective Communication

As communication is at the heart of the Scrum-Agile framework, effective communication can be seen in several examples. An email was sent from the Developer to the Tester when the client made a sudden shift that deviated from customer’s original requests and instead pivoted to Detox Travel.

**Email to Tester**:

Hey, Brian!

I hope you’re doing well! I just wanted to reach out regarding the changes Christy mentioned. I was hoping we could update the acceptance criteria and test cases you previously provided. We will need to perform a thorough review of the acceptance criteria to ensure it aligns with the new focus on Detox and Wellness travel. Additionally, could you also provide detailed test cases to validate the functionality of these features? Any edge cases or scenarios will need to be tested and documented as well, please.

I’ve reached out to Christy to clarify a few things and develop an updated Mission and Vision statement, as well as to confirm the Product Backlog. I’ll be sure to share any updates as soon as possible with you. Lastly, as the client is requesting to maintain the same deadline, if you could please respond to this email by the end of the week, it would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you!

Nicole

As seen in this example, collaboration was present. The Developer, Product Owner, Scrum Master, and Tester all employed effective communication to discuss the required changes when the client suddenly changed their mind. Transparency was considered by explaining to other team members what they were working on, what they needed, and what the intended incoming steps were.

**Organizational Tools and Scrum-Agile Principles**

While organizational tools can be incredibly impactful on a project and workflow, there weren’t many great examples of such tools throughout the development lifecycle of SNHU Travel’s platform. There were never any mentions of tools that were used such as JIRA, Kanban Boards, or any other project management systems. Additionally, communication practices could be drastically improved through the use of these tools instead of just relying on a whiteboard, as indicated by the project’s resources. With that said, there were several Scrum-Agile principles that did help compensate for the lack of any other legitimate organizational tools. Daily Scrums helped align the team when working on tasks and the backlog creation and refinement process, while happening behind the scenes and without any sort of information provided about the process, helped ensure the team was working on prioritized work.

**Effectiveness of the Scrum-Agile Method**

The Scrum-Agile Method carries several benefits to it, but also includes drawbacks. Some of the benefits included the ability to pivot and change quickly when major criteria suddenly change, open and effective communication is encouraged, and transparency helps foster collaboration. This could be seen in all steps of the development lifecycle, from collecting user stories to requesting clarification across different roles of the team when changes were presented. Regular scrum events encouraged transparency, understanding, and helped foster a sense of collaboration amongst the team. However, there are drawbacks to the Scrum-Agile approach as well. These drawbacks are particular present in the SNHU Travel project, as the team was previously operating on a Waterfall based approach. The Waterfall approach differs from a Scrum-Agile approach in many ways, so one drawback to using it was the difficulty of transitioning into that different of a framework and the learning curve associated with it. Communicating and transparency can be difficult to promote in a team that is not used to those principles. Additionally, the Scrum-Agile approach requires consistent monitoring, which is seen in the very frequent interactions amongst the development team and key stakeholders. The need to be available at any moment and provide consistent updates to allow for feedback can be a difficult method to transition into.

The Scrum-Agile approach proved to be a particularly beneficial method for the SNHU Travel project. Considering the core principles of the scrum-agile methodology, it can be easy to see how this approach was an effective one for the team to implement into the project. An iterative approach allowed the team to break tasks into smaller and more manageable components that enabled the team to quickly and efficiently test, develop, discuss, and present updates. This iterative approach also benefited the team when circumstances suddenly changed, allowing them to quickly pivot into the new direction without having to completely recreate everything from scratch. The Scrum-Agile Approach’s adaptability, emphasis on transparency and communication, and the overall iterative approach assisted the team with delivering a finished product, even after sudden changes, without missing the deadline provided.