CS-250

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SNHU Travel Sprint Review and Retrospective

Adapting to the challenge of completing a project in real-time for a client while following a new workflow model was difficult for the team, but through collaboration and openness we were able to deliver a quality project and have a gained appreciation for the Scrum-agile approach. Each member of the team contributed to the project’s success, and the Scrum-agile approach allowed us to work together not only to achieve our individual goals, but to support each other in filling gaps to meet our team’s goal of delivering the project on time.

Our Product Owner played a key role in facilitating the communication between SNHU Travel and our Scrum Team. Without the Product Owner to distill what the customer was looking for, and take the time to answer their questions and address feedback, we would have needed to allocate valuable time from our development of the project to doing this ourselves. In addition to facilitating the communication, the Product Owner was able to create user stories which were an excellent resource for our development team members as well as our testing of the product. Taking on this project using the Agile methodology allowed our Developers to operate as quickly as possible by focusing on the most important use cases first and adapting the project timeline as we progressed through the project. The Developers did a great job of taking mid-project feedback from SNHU Travel into consideration even though it meant changing the course of the project. Without the developers, we would not have been able to deliver the project requested by the customer; their contribution was an integral part of the team’s efforts. Likewise, the Testers on the Scrum team testing the project for alignment with the user stories allowed our developers to make real time adjustments without having to pause development to do this testing themselves. Because the testers had specific user stories to work from, they were able to develop specific tests to ensure the project we delivered met all of SNHU Travel’s expectations.

While it was the first time our team worked with a Scrum-agile approach to our SDLC, it is clear that this change benefited the team in many tangible ways. One of the most visible positive outcomes of this approach was in how our Testers were able to increase their efficiency with the use of user stories. Because of the Product Owner’s initial effort in creating user stories, the Testers achieved optimal results in the effectiveness of their tests. They honed in on the specific needs of the client, and were able to provide valuable feedback to the Developers before the project progressed too far beyond the window they had to easily adjust their work.

The change in requirements from SNHU Travel posed an obstacle for our team, and specifically our Developers, that may not have been overcome in our previous Waterfall development model. Our team is used to working from our initial plan, which doesn’t leave room for changes mid project. It was positive for us to see how we were able to shift direction and incorporate the customer’s feedback while still maintaining the team’s confidence in their ability to produce a finished product and on time. With the Scrum-agile approach to the project, our team was prepared to incorporate feedback into our process, and were ready to utilize this approach when the customer presented their new idea. Having the Product Owner act as the intermediary between SNHU travel and our Scrum Team while managing these changes was helpful to us as it freed up our team’s time to focus on readjusting our action plan. Our team learned the valuable lesson that we are capable of improving our processes both for the benefit of our customer and our team.

The Scrum Meetings were one of the most beneficial agile communication tools that we took advantage of during this project. By taking a short amount of time each day to hold a meeting, we ensured that everyone was on the same page, and the project as a whole was moving towards an organized conclusion. In the past with the Waterfall methodology we have found that our developers and testers are not always aligned with each other, leading to team members waiting for others to complete their portion of a project before they can move on. With the Scrum-agile framework, everyone on our team communicated their challenges and wins, so that we were able to maintain a unified team. Communicating with the Product Owner was another essential piece of our team’s success. For example, the email below demonstrates how communication between our Tester Sequoia and the Product Owner Clarke facilitated our team getting the most pertinent information about the client’s needs:

*Hi Clarke,*

*Thank you for providing the detailed user stories based on your meeting with SNHU Travel. I developed a test case for each of the user stories and I am happy to report that the project is progressing successfully thus far. There are some questions the team has after this first phase, and I would appreciate if you could pass these along to SNHU Travel for their feedback so that we can move forward.*

1. *What user profile preferences would they like to include? For example – favored type of accommodation (hotel, b&b, hostel, etc.), method of travel (airplane, train, cruise, ect.), climate (tropical, snow, temperate, etc.), or atmosphere (city, rural, etc.).*
2. *How many recommended destinations should be shown to the user?*
3. *Are there any other search filters that should be included other than price?*

*Once you receive feedback on these items we will make adjustments and create a demo of progress made thus far which can go to the customer for their review.*

*Thank you,*

*Sequoia*

In this email, Sequoia asks Clarke to confirm several questions that she came across when building test cases based on the user stories Clarke wrote. This type of communication to clarify uncertainties was vital for our team to stay on track amid changes to the project, and deliver exactly what the customer was looking for.

One of the most significant changes of process that our team noticed while working on this project under the Scrum-agile approach was the way that each team member was encouraged and supported by the rest of the team through organizational strategy. Having myself as the Scrum Master to enforce this collaboration and provide guidance and individual support helped the team members to each achieve their goals and provide support to their teammates who needed help. Each role on the team interacted in this model to allow us the combined resources needed to navigate the project’s changes and challenges. The Daily Scrum was an important part of this framework, especially for those of us who were new to agile. Making sure that we started the day by sharing our progress and communicating any updates helped facilitate trust from all team members in our ability to get the job done.

Looking back on this project it is clear that the team’s success through the challenges we faced is due in part to the use of the Scrum-agile method. While there were some new obstacles that we encountered using this methodology, overall the positives outweighed the negatives. One challenge that was felt by all team members was the discomfort of adjusting our plans to accommodate changes from the customer. Because we have been working under the more rigid Waterfall method, this felt uncomfortable for the team. Despite this, we were able to work more collaboratively under this framework, and each member of the team felt supported in accomplishing what was asked of them. Additionally, we were also able to incorporate feedback from SNHU Travel which led to us providing a better customer experience.