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CS250 – Software Development Life Cycle

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This week we learned about all of the roles of the SCRUM team. From the client to the product owner, to the scrum master, developer, tester, etc. After reviewing the best traits of each of these roles, we were instructed to take up the role of the Scrum Master.

The Scrum Master is a peer-to-peer leader role. This person is a person of knowledge and leadership. However, they cannot be afraid to set in and help pick up the legwork if something in the project needs it. The Scrum Master has to be a mentor, a manager, a multitasker, a mediator, a scheduler, and many, many more tasks. This person needs to be well organized and understands all aspects of the project. The are a leader that has no authority. They must know when to congratulate and when to push each team member. They help to ensure obstacles are out of the way for the Team Members to complete their respective task, and ensure the project is completed as planned.

As I sat down to take on this role, I had no clue what I was stepping off into. After all the Agile Scrum Team concept is new to me, as I have not worked directly in software production. I worked to complete the Team Charter, that laid out what the projects objective is, the vision of the team, the goal of the client, what team member would be taking on what role. What the communication conditions should be. Basically, the Scrum Master laid out how this specific team on this specific project was going to work together to complete the mission statement. This doesn’t seem too hard, until you are the one that must do it.

To conduct a sprint planning session, I think I would take the approach of a round-robin style table top. Starting with what we know, where we want to go, how can we get there, are there any know pitfalls along the way, can they be overcome, how long do we need to complete the first sprint. These questions would spark other ideas and questions from all areas of the team. Which would lead the team into the backlog planning and ultimately the backlog grooming (ordering of the stories).

To conduct the backlog grooming the must ask themselves what is needed and what is wanted. By keep these two questions in mind you can narrow down the stories to what is needed to make the program do exactly what the Client needs it to do, versus what the developers creative minds what to make the program do. Ordering the backlog will take time, but in necessary to keep the team running smoothing and help the sprints produce better quality results.

During the sprint retrospective, we would discuss what worked and what did not work during the most recent sprint. Did we not have enough time to complete everything? Did we have too much time? Do we need more team members? Do we need to go back to the client and ask more questions or present additional options? By critiquing the sprint this way, we learn what did and did not work and how to proceed further as a more cohesive team.

As the Scrum Master, I completed a Daily Stand-Up Agenda, which simply asked for each team member to state: What they did yesterday, what they are doing today, and if there were any obstacles in their way. It was then broken down across columns for everyday of the week. This made it easy for the team to go around the table and answer these three questions quickly, write them down, and they would be posted for all team members to see. If there are any obstacles between the team members then the Daily Standup could help alleviate these obstacles and help to produce a more productive team and project. If not, the Scrum Master would set to work fixing the issues so the team members could stay focused on the project. The Daily Standup can remain quick (usually 15 minutes) and still have meaningful insight into the pulse of the team and the project.

The ceremonies of the Agile Scrum Team seem to be set up to ensure a quality product is produced and present in a timely manner, while pulling a team together as one to show case the team and not the individual. The Scrum Master is the hardest position I see in the Scrum Team. With the need to be a master of all things, a mentor/leader, a manager, etc. it places a lot of responsibility on one person. However, the right one person, who is organized, well versed in the project concepts and tools, and able to teach others, would flourish in this position. The Scrum Master’s tasks and skills could easily be transferred into a managerial position in someone’s career path, with the hope that the mentorship, team concepts follow.