In a proper Scrum-Agile setting, each role on the team has a set of tasks to perform which are crucial to the success of the project. Unlike other organizational structures, there is no hierarchy; everyone is considered a peer, and all work towards the unified goal of providing increased value to the client.

For the SNHU Travels project, first the Product Owner, as liaison between the customers and the team, met with a number of the clients in order to gather information about their needs and expectations. These inputs were used to create the individual user stories which would be necessary to drive the direction of the work to be done. The Product Owner would then organize a Product Backlog of these requirements based upon several factors including priority and size.

Next, collaborating with the rest of the team, the Product Owner shares these requirements with the Scrum Master, Developers, and Testers. The Scrum Master serves as not only a great source of knowledge about Scrum and Agile practices, but also may facilitate the efforts of the Developers and Testers by assisting with the more non-technical needs that arise. One example in the readings was where the Scrum Master acquired window blinds to reduce the glare on monitors so the programmers could code more easily.

After a Sprint is laid out, the Developers will work alongside the Testers to create a minimal, yet stable, version of the product which the clients can assess and provide further input. The deliverable is kept as small as possible with the expectation that changes are likely to be desired. This recurring delivery of incremental product for client assessment is part of what makes agile a highly efficient method for handling projects, by eliminating large amounts of ‘redo’ work.

The user stories gathered from the clients by the Product Owner offer a wealth of insight into understanding the needs of the customers. The *value statement* of each story is a brief description of who is asking for what and why. The *size* is an approximation of the amount of work it would take in order to implement it. These two items can be used to prioritize the stories into an ordered backlog of work. Perhaps the most valuable section of insight for each user story is its *acceptance criteria*, which lists a step-by-step process of what the user expects to see when using the product. This will help the Testers in particular, as it provides a checklist of items to look for while assessing completion of the deliverable.

Depending upon the complexity of the user stories, any number of them could be incorporated into a sprint. The goal of said sprint would be to present a workable manifestation of the user story for client assessment. By incremental implementation, the user stories get added, piece by piece, into the finalized version of the product by project’s end.

As can often happen during a project’s life, the customer may decide to make changes to their requirements, whether minor or drastic. One of the key characteristics of agile methodology is its innate acceptance that alterations in user needs are inevitable, and as mentioned above, is why small incremental deliverables are the goal of each sprint. When SNHU Travel’s clients informed the team of their desire to include or transition to health and wellness destinations, it did not present a major negative impact on the project, as the work implemented thus far had only been done so in minute amounts. As such, making these changes did not result in a lot of time and effort lost by the developers and testers.

For one of our earlier assignments, as the Product Owner, I drafted an email asking some end users for clarification for their recently-submitted user stories. I stated a desire to meet with them, and gave a quick overview of the points the development team were needing more specificity on in order to proceed in the right direction. In this most recent group discussion assignment we were given, I initiated a dialogue with the other members, first asking if anyone had any particular role[s] they cared to play. After getting their input, it was decided I would take on the role of one of the developers, so I created a separate thread where I laid out my plans about ways to collaborate with the others in this pilot project to assess the viability of ChadaTech becoming an agile-centric organization. It seems the other members followed this format and each created a separate thread for their own roles.

These highlight that friendly and open communication with team members and other parties of interest can be an effective way to start a dialogue, “get the ball rolling”, kick off the brainstorming process. I typically take an inform route when interacting with others at work, as I often find people are more relaxed and more open to sharing and working towards a common goal. Also, before requesting a meeting with others, I try to give them an idea of what the confab will be about. This gives them an opportunity to think about the topics beforehand, and can come more prepared, offering more insight to the discussion. I used this approach when drafting other emails and posts for these assignments.

Of all the aspects attributed to the success of a project, communication is inarguably, the most important, with the means of communication being no less so. The Daily Scrum meetings present the core of information exchange among the various team members, and proved vital to the efforts of the SNHU Travels undertaking. Here typically is shared the main accomplishments of the day prior, the goal for the day, and perhaps most useful, any expected roadblocks that may deter progress on that goal. For those not present in the Daily Scrum, progress can be visually tracked by means of an information radiator. While this can come in many different forms, a Kanban Board, either a large board in a highly visible area, or an online version where teams and other stakeholders are geographically separated, is an effective way to present the overall progress of the various tasks and moving parts that will coalesce into the final product. Another useful tool are Burndown and Burnup charts, which show an approximation of project progress or estimated time to completion.

In this paper, we have discussed a myriad of merits for opting to use a Scrum-Agile approach when handling projects, however, there may be circumstances where the Waterfall methodology might be a more beneficial framework. This is the preferred strategy when there are fewer unknowns to tackle at the start. The client’s requirements are well thought out and there is a high probability that they will not change over the duration. Waterfall could also be better used when time and or financial situations are both constrained, or when there are imposed limitations on how the final product is made. Where Agile really shines is in situations where the developers have more freedom for creativity, and the clients have more time to interact more with the team.

I believe, given the circumstances of the SNHU Travels project however, a Scrum-Agile approach was the best fit to guarantee its success. It seems the clients only had a general idea of what they were wanting to accomplish; to retain the agency’s status as a top travel broker. While it offered the developers a number of user stories as input on how they wanted to do this, there was some room for interpretation on how to implement the additions. As we also saw, while the work was still being done, the clients came back with a number of refinements to their requirements. If this had been done in Waterfall fashion, the project could have met with numerous delays. Further, this shows the clients’ willingness to work alongside the Scrum team to help them increase the value provided. In summary, using the Agile approach for this project was the right call to make.