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Sprint Retrospective

All of the members of the Scrum Team are vital to a good agile project. All team members are equally important and instrumental in practicing agile and adhering to the principles of agile. While agile is not a strict ruleset, I would argue that to be most effective, all of the basic roles must be filled.

When it came to the SNHU Travel project, each team member held an important spot. The following two roles are the closest thing to traditional “project managers”. The Scrum Master acted as the facilitator for the Scrum process and lead communicator. They kicked things off by writing the Agile Team Charter, setting the stage for the project, and outlining how Scrum would be carried out. From there, they facilitated meaningful communication between the Product Owner, customers, and the development team. The Product Owner also helped set the stage by meeting with a focus group and forming user stories. These user stories are the actionable goals for the rest of the team. Also, as the primary contact with the customer; the Product Owner communicated changes in the project to the rest of the team.

The development and testing teams are arguably the most important parts of a Scrum team. Without well rounded and creative testers and developers, a project could never get off the ground. The tester turned the User stories into distinct and easy to understand goals for the development team in the form of test cases. The Development team worked diligently to meet those goals. However, when things changed, both the testers and the development team went above and beyond in adapting the goals and the resulting product. As an example of the communication required in an Agile environment, the tester worked closely with the Product Owner to adapt the test cases. Here is an excerpt from their communication:

***“As I have started on writing the test cases for the SNHU travel page, I have found that our user stories are tailored very specifically to a webpage list format. Now that we have decided to change direction and work towards a slideshow format, I believe that we may need to re-evaluate our user stories to better illustrate the product we are working towards.”***

Admittedly, the User stories for this sprint were a little overzealous. The overall idea was sound, but we delved too far into uncertain territory without working harder to eliminate our uncertainty. However, most of the stories still work fine as big picture items, the List specific test cases went a little too far into detail. This caused us to waste some time when it came to work that needed to be changed. However, that is the bet we make when we use agile development strategies. The takeaway is to swallow your pride and adapt. This is the advantage that Agile has over the more traditional waterfall. If this type of miscommunication were to have been made in a waterfall project, SNHU travel may have experienced delays and increased cost to get the slideshow implemented. They may have even been stuck with a list in certain circumstances. Once the Product Owner helped the tester straighten out the User Soties, the development team was able to deliver a better product to SNHU Travel. That could not have happened without agile.

However, proponents of Waterfall may state that Scrum and Agile in general have a lot of bloat when it comes to smaller, less complex projects like the one for SNHU Travel. This can certainly be true. In fact, we experienced this to some degree when it came to re-works and overcomplicating. However, because the door of communication was open, we were able to adapt more quickly than a waterfall team may have. An argument could easily be made in favor of Agile or Waterfall when it comes to what would have been best for the SNHU Travel project. While a Waterfall team may have gotten more detailed requirements from the customer and users beforehand, we were able to deliver working prototypes faster and learn from them along with them. Agile may have been overkill for the SNHU Travel project, but they will get a better product in less time as a result, and our team got hands on experience with Agile. For those things, I think that it served its purpose and proved its worth very well.

Despite our troubles with user stories and test cases, these tools were instrumental in our work. The User stories voiced the needs of our future users and our customer. Our test cases showed us the way to make those user stories a reality with specific pieces of functionality. Without these tools and their adaptability, we would not have gotten here as quickly. We also can’t forget where we started, the Agile team Charter written at the formation of the team allowed us to start with a goal in mind and work towards it together. The Agile Team Charter allowed us to create customer focused user stories and test cases and begin working on them as soon as possible.

Going forward, one tool that I would like to explore more is the Scrum Board. I have been inspired to use some agile tools in my personal life. I have some focus issues that I would really like to get under control, and I think that using tools from agile may be able to help me with that. I want to start using a Kanban board to help me with memory, use time-boxing to use my time more effectively, and have a Daily Standup with myself. This will help me wakeup for the day and have some time with myself. Suffice to say, this experience with agile has made me rethink how work is done both in and out of the workplace.