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SNHU Travel Project: Sprint Review and Retrospective

CS 250 – T6591: Software Development Lifecycle

August 11, 2022

During this course I took an Agile approach to follow a project through the Software Development Lifecycle. I was able to look at the project from the various points of view of the Scrum team. This team was made up of a Product Owner, Scum Master, Developers, and Testers. Each of these roles helped contribute to the SNHU Travel project, which lead to a successful conclusion. In the following I will go through how each of the roles specifically helped on this project, how the Scrum-Agile approach was used during the project, and how the project benefitted from the use of the Scrum-Agile approach.

**PRODUCT OWNER**

Each project starts with and is driven by a Product Owner. While I assumed the role of the Project Owner, one of the major tasks that I had to complete was getting the starting requirements from the client. I was also able to get input on some valued functionality from a focus group made up of end users. After getting all of this data, I then needed to turn these requirements and suggested functionality into User Stories. User Stories take the requirements and breaks them down into tasks, where I then prioritized them and put them into the Product Backlog for the rest of the Scrum team to see and use for development and testing purposes. As the Product Owner I was also the go between for the client and the rest of the team. It was my responsibility to clarify any questions regarding the requirements.

**SCRUM MASTER**

Just like the Product Owner, the Scum Master is a link on the team. As I took on this role for the project, I helped the Product Owner with the Backlog creation and maintenance. I was also tasked to make sure the communication between everyone involved in the project stayed open. Among the team, that was done by holding daily stand-ups. This is just a quick fifteen-minute gathering where everyone contributes by answering 3 questions:

*(1) What did I do yesterday?*

*(2) What will I do today?*

*(3) What impedes me?*

With the expectations of this stand-up known, my role was less of a leader and more of a facilitator/resource. The rest of the team had the expectation to be self-organizing and being able to hold each other accountable without having someone micro-managing them.

**DEVELOPER and TESTER**

These last two roles on the Scrum team go hand-in-hand and often work closely together throughout each Sprint as testing is encouraged all throughout the developing of code and not just saved for the end. Both roles used the User Stories created by the Product Owner to guide their work. As a Tester, I used the User Stories to create the Test Cases for the developers to use to know if their code meets the requirements. The Test Cases also helped further define the requirements or functionality for the developers. As a Developer, I was able to use the User Stories to help with bringing purpose to my code. I was given some degree of freedom on how I structured my code, while following best practices, due to the requirements not being strictly defined upfront as part of the Agile methodology.

**SCRUM-AGILE APPROACH: USER STORIES**

For the Scrum-Agile approach to the Software Development Lifecycle, it is important to identify critical requirements and functionality, but at the same time, not to lock down the project with strict definitions. This is done through the use of User Stories. User Stories break down the requirements and functionality into smaller increments that can then be used to guide code development and testing. The User Stories need to answer three essential questions: Who, What, and Why. When talking about who, we are stating who the intended user is. When looking at what, we are needing to know what the user wants to accomplish. Lastly, when asking why, we are needing to know the reason behind wanting to accomplish the task. By answering these three questions, it provides value to the need for each User Story and helps the developer see the importance of the code being developed.

**SCRUM-AGILE APPROACH: INTERUPTIONS AND CHANGES**

A definition of agile is “being able to understand, adapt, and change quickly in an ever-evolving environment.” With a Scrum Agile approach to projects, interruptions and changes are able to be handled with ease because they are expected ahead of time. With a higher level of uncertainty that comes with this approach compared to a more traditional approach, requirements and functionality can change and evolve over time as they become more clearly defined. One example from the SNHU Travel project is how the client knew they wanted to provide highly rated vacation packages based on each users likes, but then they wanted to put that focus on detox/wellness packages as they found that these types of vacations were becoming a popular trend.

**SCRUM-AGILE APPROACH: COMMUNICATION**

With any project, but especially one taking a Scrum-Agile approach, communication is the key to success. Whether it is communicating to obtain requirements, communicating those requirements to the rest of the team, communicating the progress to stakeholders and clients, or communicating within the team to complete tasks, communication is needed in all areas of the Software Development Lifecycle. Without good communication in any of these areas, the success of the project is put in jeopardy. During the SNHU Travel project, changes were made to the focus of the product, and these changes had to be communicated to everyone on the team in a timely manner to be able to stay on time with deliverables. These changes were communicated to me while I was taking on the role of a developer, where I then needed to get further clarification from the Product Owner. To get this clarification I sent an email to the Product Owner with my questions that I needed answered to be able to move forward with implementing the requested changes. Here is that email:

*To: Christy*

*Subject: Changes to SNHU Travel Project*

*Dear Christy,*

*Thank you for informing us about the changes to the focus of SNHU Travel’s website. With these changes, we are going to need some clarifications to make sure we are providing the required/requested modifications according to what SNHU Travel had in mind. With the new focus being on vacation packages for detox and wellness getaways:*

* *Will this now be the sole focus, or are customer’s still able to access and book traditional vacations as well?*
* *If this is not the sole focus, is this going to be a separate area of the website, or are these listings going to be mixed in with the traditional vacation packages?*
* *If they are mixed in with other vacation types, how are the results supposed to be prioritized?*
* *Do we need to add a filter for the search algorithm to show just these types of vacation packages?*
* *Will this type of vacation have it’s own link from the member profile page?*

*Thank you for taking the time to clarify these questions so that we can make the necessary adjustments.*

*Sincerely,*

*Thomas*

**SCRUM-AGILE APPROACH: ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS AND PRINCIPLES**

There are a number of tools that can be used to help a team succeed in a Scrum-Agile approach. One such tool that helped the team succeed in the SNHU Travel project was Azure Boards. Azure Boards were used throughout from creating and maintaining the Backlog, to tracking the progress of individual tasks, to being used to disseminate information to the client about the overall progress of the project. This tool helped the team easily follow the principle of being an information radiator. Having this tool allows everyone to stay in the loop about the progress while not all having to be in the same physical location to get this information.

**SCRUM-AGILE APPROACH: SNHU TRAVEL PROJECT REFLECTION**

When starting the project and discussing with SNHU Travel what it was that they wanted, there were not a whole lot of strictly defined requirements, which meant there was a higher level of uncertainty entering this project. This made the Scrum-Agile approach the best choice for this project. With following a Scrum-Agile approach, it allowed the team to be flexible and open to change. Had a more traditional project management approach such as Waterfall been used, the focus of the product would have been set from the beginning, and the change in focus that occurred would have been costly in both time and money. This would have left the client to make a tough decision of accepting that cost to change the focus, or being given a product they will most likely not be happy with.

In conclusion, the Scrum-Agile approach worked will for this project. It worked because there was a team that was open to following the approach, communications were constant throughout the project, and tools and resources were wisely used by everyone involved. This all lead to a successful project and a satisfied client in SNHU Travel.

Citations:

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