Sprint Retrospective

Applying Roles:

Each and every role on the scrum team is critical to its overall success. I, as scrum master, helped the team to focus on planning the sprint, refine the backlog, and keep the team together as we worked through the sprint. This was especially important as we pivoted to a slideshow because many of the tasks needed to be changed and therefore the backlog priorities changed as well. Redeveloping the framework became a top priority and newer lists moved down the priority chain. This ensured that the team was always working on the most efficient or important tasks at any given time and making the most out of our resources. Our product owner was also very helpful in clarifying questions about the new slideshow format. He was able to speak with shareholders and develop a clear vision for the slideshow. This was then communicated with us via our meetings and email in order to ensure the product matched the vision. Our developers and testers also played a critical role in the transition. The developers were able to push out updates to the product and convert the list to a slideshow. They were also able to create an early wireframe of the slideshow so that we could verify its function before devoting too many resources into it. This gave us a basic template that we could then load items from the content team into. Our testers were equally quick. They converted user stories from list formatting and terms such as “scroll” to slideshow terms such as “click next”, allowing us to refine testing procedures. Without these many roles in a scrum-agile environment, it would have been difficult to pivot development as quickly as we did.

Completing User Stories:

Since development and testing occur side by side in an agile development environment, as we worked to develop the product, we worked with our testers to define user stories. This meant that we defined what a user should want or expect our product to do constantly as we made changes. We were then able to use these stories to direct development. This also meant that when we changed from a list to a slideshow format, our user stories had to change as well. Our testing team took our existing list user stories and converted them into a slideshow equivalent. Therefore, what was once “Scroll up and down to view top 5 locations” became “Click next 5 times to view top 5 locations”. These small adjustments in formatting allowed our testers to accurately test and inspect the software to make sure it was ready for release. Several of the stories were not able to be completed this sprint, however, it leaves directions for possible future sprints. These ideas include user personalization, price sorting, and more list varieties that may become the topic of future updates.

Handling Interruptions:

Change is a critical part of adapting any successful product. Whether it be a small task or a large corporate project, adapting to problems as they occur makes the end result much more successful. Changes in consumer needs, stakeholders wants, or unexpected errors in the code are often causes for these types of changes. In one instance, SNHU Travel had originally intended to create a top travel website for its users to view vacation ideas. This was worked on over several iterations, but then midway through development we received a request to change the product to a slideshow format instead. This was communicated by the Product Owner to myself and the rest of the development team as soon as it was decided by the stakeholders. The team then began restructuring the framework of the product to a slideshow format instead. We added forward and backward buttons and limited the page to one destination at a time. We then reused the existing location assets and descriptions, porting them over to the new layout. This was possible since agile development works in small iterations and therefore, we could change the framework independent of the content. We were able to complete this change in under a week and stay on pace. This resulted in a better deliverable for the consumer while maintaining minimal stress on the development side.

Communication:

Communication is a critical part of any well-functioning team. The same is especially true in an agile setting. With the many fast-paced pivots and developments found in an agile workplace, it is more important than ever to stay communicative and in the loop. The usage of third-party management tools such as JIRA or Trello can help to keep team members communicating consistently and effectively. Agile is built around a faster moving, adaptable plan compared to the traditional waterfall method. “Individuals and interactions” and “Responding to change” are two major principles within the Agile Manifesto (Agile Alliance, 2001). Since agile wants high amounts of collaboration, interaction, and change as needed, we must be able to communicate with our team effectively. One option is Daily Scrum meets which create a mandatory 15-minute event each day focused around communicating one’s goals and impediments (*The Daily Scrum | Scrum.org*, n.d.). This encourages team members to participate and share their feelings, allowing the team to adapt accordingly and further each other. For example, if Jared was tasked with developing a web page for SNHU Travel but did not feel knowledgeable enough to complete it on his own, he could have asked Eric to pair program with him and develop skills together. Being encouraged to meet daily and discuss pain points facilitates these interactions and helps interweave the team members.

Organizational Tools:

Oftentimes, raw communication is not enough to manage the workflow of an agile environment. Thankfully, there are several tools to aid us in this process. In order to develop a sprint plan with my team, I wanted to be able to further discuss ideas outside of the daily scrum. We were able to do this utilizing an online discussion board and agreed upon pair programming being critical to a successful project. Therefore I, Gavin, Vianelis, Jennifer, Andrew, and Caleb implemented this process into our sprint. In addition, tools such as Trello allow users to post and respond to tickets that allow us to easily manage tasks we would like to complete and what work we have completed so far. This makes it a wonderful tool to assist in managing product backlog.

Evaluating the Agile Process:

The agile approach was very effective in handling the SNHU Travel project. Since consumer needs for travel change often and follow trends, the project was bound to change during development. When this occurred and it converted to a detox and wellness focused slideshow, the agile framework is what simplified the change and made it possible. The agile approach had many benefits during our development. It was easily adaptable, quick to start with little upfront planning, and the recursive nature ensured we always checked our work. While this did mean more work as a baseline, it led to less overall work as we didn’t have to redo entire sections like the waterfall method would have. In the waterfall method, many things would need to be redone and reworked during the transition, leading to longer development and higher costs. With agile, we were able to complete the changes in under a week. The scrum-agile approach quickly proved to be the right approach as it very quickly adapted to the changing needs of the users.

References

Agile Alliance. (2001). *Manifesto for Agile Software Development*. Agile Manifesto. https://agilemanifesto.org/

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