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Module Seven

Sprint Retrospective

The SNHU Travel team has finished the latest sprint and has produced a very good product that our customers are loving. We had four main contributors to the project, 1) product owner, 2) scrum master, 3) developer, and 4) tester. The product owner gave the team direction with the product backlog. They also engaged the stakeholders, customers, and internal sales and marketing teams. Conducting the customer focus group is one of the most important aspects of the product owner’s role. This will allow the team to understand what the clientele is looking for and improve the business. It will also show our customers that we at the SNHU travel company care for our customers. The product owner also works on the user stories to create the product backlog. Next, the scrum master worked with the product owner to refine the backlog and ensure each user story is prioritized correctly. After all user stories are prioritized and a timeframe is chosen, the scrum master held the first scrum meeting. This meeting is held before the first sprint. The product owner didn’t necessarily join during this meeting, but they were available for questions from the team. The scrum meeting is the most important part of the scrum master’s role. The pre-sprint meeting was held to determine what user stories would be part of the sprint and how to implement them into the new product. Although the meeting took a long time to complete, it really ensured the team knew how to proceed in the first sprint. Finally, the scrum master held the daily scrum meetings. This meeting takes place daily and only lasts about 15 minutes. The point of the meeting is to determine progress and help the team solve obstacles if needed. Next, the team roles of developer and tester worked on the actual product to carry out the user stories. The team roles are much more independent and require self-organization. Their job was to work cross-functionally with each other to successfully reach the end of the sprint. As the user stories were worked on, the developer and tester had many questions and reached out to the product owner for clarification. Once all user stories are completed within the sprint, the product was deployed. Our users were extremely satisfied with the new product.

The success of the SNHU travel agency is mainly due to the change to agile methodology. It really changed the focus of the team to be more collaborative and encouraged more teamwork. Working with the team during the daily scrum meetings allowed for communication with each other and gave the team the opportunity to ask questions and for help. The daily scrum meeting is great for planning the sprint out day by day. For example, when working on the user story that set a price limit, the developer and tester needed to collaborate to ensure the customer would be able to use this function. Without the collaboration, they would have had many more difficulties succeeding in completing the user story. Working on the user stories was not always an easy feat. The team found some difficulty in implementing the user story that sorts the type of vacation based on user preferences and previous travel. There was confusion on what preferences the user would like to look at. Due to the confusion, there was a pause until the team received more information from the product owner. The product owner then had to reach out to the customer focus group and get more details on what they would like. Had the team maintained the waterfall approach, they would have no communication during the project and would have waited for the product to be finished to get feedback from the product owner and customer. Another reason the SNHU Travel Agency was so successful in their roles was due to their outstanding communication. There are many different types of communication used within an agile team, but this team really worked well with face-to-face communication. A great example of this communication would be the scrum meeting. As I mentioned before the scrum meeting was a very important daily event. It is incredibly important for progress meetings, but also for communication between the team members. Without face-to-face communication, the scrum team and the product owner would not be able to do their jobs. The scrum team communicates with each other, and the product owner communicates with stakeholders, clients, and any other internal team with interest in the product. An example of communication between a developer/tester and product owner is seen below. Had the developer/tester not reached out to the product owner for clarification, they would not have completed the new task at hand.

Dear product owner,

I am excited with the new plan to focus our vacations on the new trend. I wanted to get more information from you regarding the new focus. I have written my questions below.

1. Please create a new user story for the new task at hand.
2. Please refine the product backlog with new priorities.

Please let me know if you need clarification. I look forward to your response.

Developer/Tester

As the team progressed, we found that just doing agile was not going to cut it. We had to be agile. We noticed that different situations would come up that could only be solved with knowledge on dealing with variability and uncertainty and prediction and adaptation. Specifically, the variabilities and uncertainties throughout this project were unavoidable. Finding a way to embrace it and learn from our experiences will help us with the next sprint. Specifically, variabilities are seen within the stakeholders, customers, and even the market’s everyday changes. Learning to read and then adapt to those variables are critical in agile. For example, when the market saw trends move towards healthy or detox related vacations, we adapted to include them in the current sprint by refining the product log and updating the user story. In terms of uncertainty, there will always be some in any project. You have to reduce the uncertainty as soon as possible. For example, when the developer and tester had questions about a user story, they emailed the product owner for clarification. If there were more than one team member that needed clarification, then they would have emailed all at once to ensure they can stick to their deadline. Along with variability and uncertainty, comes prediction and adaptation. In the examples I used before, the team was able to adapt to all circumstances and still succeed with the product. An instance of prediction can be seen with the market research done to show that vacation trends are moving toward healthy and detox. The team was able to adapt to the trend and adapt to the new user story. Now, the customers are able to view vacations that are geared toward healthy and detox trends.

As we come to the end of the sprint, it is normal to assess whether the switch to agile was good for the team or not. I believe the pros really outweighed the cons. This project was a larger project than expected and with its size, we were able to use agile methodology. As this is a travel agency, it is very important to consider our clients. With the agile approach, we were able to collaborate with our clients and really determine what their wishes are. Collaborating with customers is very important because it generally helps with business. However, it can be difficult to work with customers as sometimes they don’t necessarily feel comfortable participating in a focus group. Although agile allows you to work in flexible increments and produce the product by sprints at a time, the cost of the project is not necessarily fixed. It is changing with every new update to the product back log. In the instance of the SNHU travel team, I do believe agile was the appropriate methodology to use. As I mentioned before, it was a larger project that really required customer collaboration. It allowed for faster development of certain aspects and even allowed changes to be made. Had we stayed with the waterfall approach, we would not have been able to adapt so easily and base our travel agency on what our customers want, not necessarily only what the stakeholders want. I am looking forward to the next sprint and how we can adapt as a team and company even more.