Reviewer: Bisakha Das, Seat 7, SS2

Designer: [redacted]

Strive for Consistency

The lo-fi prototype attempts to have consistent visual layout, where the project title is displayed at the top of every page (for example, Gardens by The Bay). Similarly, the Grouped Task View and Gantt Chart View (Screen 2 and 2B) share the same top half layout, which is informative also, since it displays the number of tasks completed and the days left to complete the remaining, therefore serving as a constant reminder to the users. Moreover, once a group has been selected (for example, Activities), a similar top display is used for Individual Task Manager view (Screen 3), Creating New Task (Screen4) and Modifying Existing Tasks (Screen5), which displays the name of the task group, as well as the number of subtasks under that task group. Additionally, the action to create a new task is consistent in design, which is a dotted box with a plus icon.

The task title is clearly displayed wherever appropriate, including while viewing the details of any task. Short descriptions of every task accompany the task title in the Individual Task Manager view, which are displayed in the same format, with the due date of the task followed by its dependency. However, a separate format has been used to display the due date and dependency in the Gantt chart view, which might have been designed in such manner in an attempt to appeal to the users who would like multiple ways of viewing tasks.

Furthermore, a consistent sequence of actions has been almost achieved for similar situations, with the “Back to Project Overview” button in Screens 3, 4 and 5. However, no such button has been designed for Project Overview page in Screen 2. For this reason, it is unclear how a user might go back to Screen 1 if he/she would like to select a different project to view. Hence, one suggestion would be to simply add another similar button to Screen 2 to allow the user to achieve a consistent sequence of actions and easy navigation.

Cater to Universal Usability

Icons used are instinctive in nature. For example, the universally recognized plus icon has been used to indicate adding of tasks, and places where icons might not be as instinctive, clear titles are used to imply the basketball icon depicts activities and bus depicts transport. Due to this, it is easier for a novice user to navigate through the application.

Another specific case would be the use of three horizontal dots in individual task manager view at the top left corner of any task to signify secondary options menu. Although this icon is common, it might be of significance that, as seen in the modifying existing tasks page in Screen 5, the only function this button has is to have a pop-up which reads “Delete?”. As such, it can be simply replaced with a more recognized icon such as that of a recycling bin to denote that it’s the delete option, thereby also eliminating one unnecessary click and popup. In the place of that, the interface may have another pop-up, asking the user is he/she is sure about deleting with clear “yes” and “no” options, instead of the “Delete?” question which is slightly ambiguous in the form that in case it was clicked by mistake, there is no button to signify “no”.

The design also includes a separate setting with a color-blind mode for easier access for the visually disabled. However, it has to be noted that the only way to change the setting to color-blind mode is by first selecting a project, followed by one of the groups in the Grouped Task View, and then clicking on the settings icon. The settings options are also not displayed when the user is in the Gantt View. As such, the number of clicks required for a visually disabled person seems to be unnecessarily high. An easier alternative would be to have the settings button in Screen 1, so that a user can immediately change to a more comfortable view if preferred.

Offer Informative Feedback

The project or group selected in Screen 1 and 2 respectively, are duly highlighted when to signify their selection. Furthermore, in the Planning Phase Viewing for Gantt Chart, specific symbols are used to define different types of dependency, and each can be clicked to receive a pop-up explanation of the meaning of the symbol. As such, both of these systems ensure immediate feedback, while at the same time, the pop-up explanations of the symbols are also informative.

In addition to the aforementioned systems of feedback already designed, it may be worthwhile to note that while delays in completing a task are highlighted in the Gantt Chart view, there is no direct form of feedback which reminds the user to complete the task, unless he/she decides to open the gnat chart view. As such, one suggestion would be to implement a notification alert to notify the user of the past deadline. Else, events whose deadlines have expired might also be highlighted in the Individual Task Manager View, so that the user does not necessarily need to go back to the project Overview page and change the view. This can be implemented by simply displaying that task title in red in the Individual Task Manager Page.

Design Dialogs to Yield Closure

Following the log-in page displaying a task's details, a clear sequence is followed (begin by selecting the project, then select the preferred view and task group, and end by selecting the specific task title). Similarly, to delete a task, one would have to begin at individual task manager view, followed by clicking the three dots on the upper left corner which would prompt the "Delete?" dialogue and end by the user selecting it. Therefore, such processes provide a sense of accomplishment in the user.

Permit Easy Reversal of Actions

An undo button exists in the Individual task Manager View which allows the user to undo the last action. For example, if any task has been mistakenly moved to the "In Progress" column or been deleted, the user can easily retract that action using the undo button. Therefore, this allows the user to return any action to its original condition.

Support Internal Locus of Control

The application supports internal locus of control of the user, such that users are initiators, instead of responders. For example, a new task will only be added if a user explicitly clicks on one of the bland spaces with the plus symbol on it, signifying add task. Similarly, the edit task page will only be opened if the user selects one of the task titles from the individual task manager page. There are no actions happening which are not directly initiated by the user; therefore, one can feel in control and in charge of the interface.

Reduce Short-term Memory Load

The design has been kept simple overall, with much of the information being consolidated within the two views available. In the design, it is relatively easy to notice the number of tasks completed and days left to complete the project in the project overview page. In a similar manner, it is easy to spot the number of tasks in the "not started", "in progress" and "completed" headings in the Individual Task Manager view due to them being explicitly mentioned under the respective headings.

However, different types of dependencies are portrayed by symbols resembling triangles and diamonds. Without clicking on them to check the meaning behind the symbols, it might be difficult for novice users to remember what the symbols mean. As such it might be easier if the symbol included abbreviations of the dependency type, for example Start-End will be denoted by SE written within a circular icon, such that It is more intuitive without clicking on the icon for more information every time the symbols are used.

Moreover, since one must first select a task group before seeing the tasks listed under it in the Individual task manager page, the user needs to remember the group under which he/she has saved the tasks. This might cause troubles if a task applies to two separate categories at once. For example, arranging for transport to carry food from the catering service to the venue. In this case, the exemplar task may be saved under the transport group or the food group which adding. For such situations, it might be a good idea to allow a task to be under two task groups under the same time, by editing it in the Edit Task Page. Thereby, the user will not have to go through the trouble of going back to the Project Overview page and selecting another category to find the desired task in case of a task group overlap.

Additionally, the search function in the dependency section helps to reduce short term memory load as well, since it provides easy access to tasks the new task or the task being edited might be dependent upon. To extend the same functionality of the search button, if it can also be implemented in the Project Selection page or the Project Overview page, then the user may directly jump to the details of the specific task. This solution also eliminates the previously mentioned problem of task group overlapping.

Prevent Errors

In the calendar, while adding start or end dates, dates which are before the start date are greyed out to prevent errors by clicking on dates which don't apply. Moreover, the "Task Description" section is the only one whose input has been set as textual. Else, all forms of entry are either selection from calendar, or drop-downs. This eliminates the chances of erroneous inputs.

In addition, which the user may select, he/she may not edit information on the Project Selection or Project Overview pages, other than for the purpose of adding in a new project or task group. This limits erroneous edits to tasks.

To add on to the already mentioned measures, the application can also include alert messages while deleting or saving a task, to ensure that the user evaluates their decision once before engaging in any undesirable deletions or additions. As such the current design does not include constructive error messages, but they may be a good addition to the current design.

Additional Comments

It is a well-designed interface which tries to keep usability into account and follow all eight of the Golden Rules to a large extent.