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Team J Closing Report – Lessons Learned

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For the Risk Management Platform group to function well, all the group members had to come together as a group and help each other finish their assignments. We built on each member's strengths to push out functioning work for each iteration. Some members were good with Front-end, others with Back-end, and some with both Front-end and Back-end. We assigned work according to what each member was capable of and made sure that those who needed help got it.

First, when it came to group meetings members were involved and provided feedback. All members understood and knew how to do stand-up meetings, and everyone provided a simple recap of what they had been working on since the last meeting. The group leader also did an exceptionally excellent job of providing the azure board during Stand-up meetings to use as a form of reference to tasks being worked on. We performed these meetings efficiently, as every member knew when their turn was on and respected the time limit.

Second, the Sprint Planning Meetings were also performed. As a team, we did a fantastic job of managing time and communicating. During the planning meeting as a group, we found out that going through and making work items together was the simplest way because we could give them weight together depending on how important they are to the client. The Planning meetings helped us as a group to learn how to set up and get ready for an iteration so that every team member knows what they are supposed to do and how important it is to push it out so other team members that depend on it getting finished can start their work too.

Third, we also did "Review Meetings". These meetings were for reviewing work done in the previous iteration and knowing what was not done in that iteration so that work can be done in the following iteration. Review meetings were done with the client and we would present what we accomplished in the iteration to get feedback from the client, then he would assign us new tasks to do. "Review Meetings" taught us how to deal with the client. From the first review Meeting, we were struggling with Azure, which improved for the next "Review Meetings". We learned how to work on azure and document work being done and we improved on reporting hours on Azure to show work being done by each team member.

Finally, we performed "Retrospect Meetings". These meetings were for communicating with other team members. As most of the group members had been in the class previous to this one where we had a larger group. These meetings were more useful during the fall. As we only had five group members communication was not an issue, but Retrospect meetings are necessary for larger groups. Some members do not get an opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions in large groups, so Retrospect meeting helps with giving everyone an opportunity to express the struggle they face in the iteration and what went well for them. We learned that Retrospect meetings are useful to aid and improve team cohesion and promote better communication between team members. These meetings were successful for our group because all members expressed their thoughts on how the iteration went; terrible things so we can avoid them in the next iteration and good things so we can build on them for the next iteration. One example for the Retrospect meetings is; we learned that we were not performing well on the azure board because a few team members were putting a lot of hours on the project trying to fix a task assigned to them, but they would not mark down those hours on the Azure board. As we moved through the term all team members started to mark down their hours and we improved the Azure board records.

Our team additionally become more comfortable with working with Git in general. Many of our members were not entirely familiar with using Git and/or did not fully understand the value of a proper Git branching model. Over the course of this semester all of our members had to quickly understand how to use Git in a hands-on manner, owing to the small size of our team – everyone had to contribute directly to our codebase, and to do so they had to understand Git. I (Fred) had some experience both with using Git technically, and I also had an understanding of how to implement a proper Git branching strategy for our project, so I took the opportunity to help teach the team in this area. This was also a learning experience for myself in how to teach others – it helped me to develop an idea of how to explain (especially technical) concepts to others in a more efficient way (ex: providing a demonstration/graphic for what I am explaining at the time), so this was also a nice opportunity.

Another important lesson for myself (Fred) was in how to lead a project team. I had some prior experience from the past semester as an “emergent leader”, but I was effectively in the role of a technical advisor, and I did not as much get the opportunity to “lead” a team. This semester however, I had to quickly develop an understanding of how to organize a team and lead them in an efficient manner (while also juggling developer tasks at the same time). This gave me more of an understanding for how to properly communicate with members of the team regarding such things as deadlines for work – it definitely helps to be understanding of some reasons for potential short-term delays (ex: someone was sick), but overall, you have to be firm (you can’t allow members to get into the habit of postponing/delaying work). This further ties into having to be at least somewhat proactive – as the semester went on, I became more effective in helping to organize iterations (for example) when I started to take more of an active stance to managing work that was being done – this would involve checking in on the status of work, asking if they had any questions or if they believe that they might not be able to get the work done in time, rather than assuming that it would always be done according to plan. This was important to balance with respecting the autonomy of the team members – going to far, into “micromanagement” would only damage the efficiency of the team.

Over the course of this semester, I, Ryan, learned the importance of communication among team members. I have had some experience working in groups prior to this course and have always found team performance to be low, usually completing most of our work moments before the deadline; however, this semester in 3691 I was lucky to work with an extremely capable team with great communication skills, answering every message quickly, and enabling me to get work done faster. Additionally, I have been able to further develop my abilities using Git, now merging our development branch into my branch before merging my changes to development, stashing changes, and rolling back branches when issues arise that cannot be fixed easily. Furthermore, I was able to improve my organization skills, both online and at home by checking Azure often, and writing down the tasks I had to complete for the week starting with the highest priority and working my way down. By writing my tasks down and breaking them into even simpler tasks, it allowed me to better manage my time and get more work done, something I was struggling with courses being online. Lastly, I have contributed more to group discussions this term than I had in the previous term, though this may be because we have a smaller group this semester; however, it is something I would like to maintain either way.

This was my first time in a group like this (Amal) and I was not sure what to expect at first. I learned that when it comes to group work it is important to be able to communicate with

your team members and ask for help when you need it. Personally, I am less experienced with the tools we used so asking the others for help was needed at times. By asking and learning I was able to become more comfortable with the tools like Git and Angular which will help me in the future. Also, this was the first time I used an app like Azure which was hard to get used to at first, but which practice I was able to understand and get comfortable with it by the end of the term. Overall, I learned new skills and had a very good group to help me along the way. All the members communicated well and helped each other as the project went on. It was a great learning experience and will help all of us as the years go on.

When it comes to group work like this, I really feel like I'm (Bryson) in my element. I was mostly surprised by the size of the team but this quickly turned into a positive over a negative. The biggest learning experiences this semester came from the coding perspective. Skills like communication, agile, scrum, and such are constantly being improved. As is coding, but this semester I felt as though I did quite a bit of work on the code, and this enabled me to expand my depth and become a highly confident angular, node developer. This team was phenomenal and I hope my future teams are as reliable, honest, and excellent to be around/work with as this group was.