CPD Episode 2: Revenge of the Miscommunication

COMP130 - CPD Report

1707981

May 1, 2018

1 Introduction

My ambitions remain the same. I'd love to create and run a company someday, standing in a high creative (yet also technical) position. However, coordinating people in such a way that doesn't confuse, frustrate or worse, create co-dependency, will be more challenging than I realised. Who knew being a big leader guy would be hard!

Here lies the continuation of my constant adaptation to the social world in pursuit of the destruction of my social awkwardness and/or dumb decisions.

2 Skills to improve

2.1 Affective - Exercise and Become Big Und Stronk

When a project isn't going as well as I think it could, I get frustrated. During PASS tutoring training, I was teamed up with a peer to plan a session. We were much briefer than I wanted: about 15 minutes. We planned to follow-up on Facebook, but her

messages came in 30-minute intervals, and were sometimes more than one-word answers. I was ultimately stressed by the bareness of the session plan, probably due to fear of the unknown.

I recognise that this stress happens whenever my (or my team's) work is unsatisfactory. This is a core part of my personality, and a bad effect on my health, yet a good influence on my work ethic.

Stress, however, is unfavourable for myself and my peers. To reduce work stress overall, I plan to take more breaks with more exercise. As a reputable fact for most people and a viable theory for programmers, exercise is known to improve mood. And buns and thighs. So from the start of next term, I'll either a) run the Full Body Challenge on my Home Workout App or b) take a lap around campus every Sunday morning.

Specific: Yes Measurable: Measuring my mood with a ruler, yolo. Achievable: Yes Relevant: maybe? Time-constrained: Yes

2.2 Interpersonal - Persuasion

I was scrum master in Team Duo. To arrange stand-up times, I tried to gauge the times that the team would come in. It involved polls: "what times are you free?" and "do you prefer post-session or pre-session standups?". At the time, I felt that pertaining to the interests of others would motivate them the most. But over time, I realised that others' interests didn't always pertain to good productivity. It's nature: given the decision, many would prefer to 'work' from home. Yet I was practically giving the decision to them.

This codependent approach probably damaged the natural dynamics of a scrum master and their team. I should have approached stand-up times like a game testing session: Make the game, then observe how they actually play it, rather than ask what game they want.

Were I more skilled and confident, I would have taken that above approach from

the beginning. However my aptitude in reading and persuading a team is lacking. To improve my skills recognising a team's dynamics, and putting myself in a more correct position when acting as scrum master, I'm reading 100 pages of "Influence" by Robert Cialdini, at 8 pages per evening. This could improve my outreach skills and anxiety as well.

Specific: Yes Measurable: Yes Achievable: Yes Relevant: The word count tho Time-constrained: Yes

2.3 Dispositional - Self-prioritisation

Throughout the semester, my assignments took precedence over challenging real-life domestic tasks. I tend to focus on the goals of others. When I had time to work on my Arduino project or the group game project, I focused heavily on completing the latter. This was driven partly by a fear of submitting an incomplete-seeming game where the mark was shared across my team.

Judging by my actions, my motivation mostly comes from the expectation of meeting specific criteria–and I prefer letting others define it. When a criteria is vague, I lose motivation to meet them as i can't tell when it'll be done. Social anxiety can worsen the impact.

To occupy myself over the summer, I aim to find a programming internship position somewhere in Brighton–another challenging prospect, that could benefit from being given specific criteria. This time using the LifeRPG app to track my progress, and maybe gaining motivation using its exp reward system, I will a) add my projects, music, artwork, and CV to my website, by Sunday 6/5/2018; b) update my LinkedIn profile by Wednesday 9/5/2018; and c) prospectively email 3 companies by Sunday 13/5/18.

Specific: Yes Measurable: Yes Achievable: Yes Relevant: maybe not Time-constrained: Yes

2.4 Cognitive - Playtesting

While acting as scrum master in Team Duo, there were many gaps in the agile process we worked on. A lack of Trello board updates required me to remind everyone, individually and regularly–this helped. A lack of understanding of attendance times led me to make a #scrum channel on Slack for announcements–this increased the awareness. A preference by others led me to run stand-ups at the end of sessions–to negative effect–that I eventually reverted–to uncertain effect.

In Week 10, while playing the game, I realised what we'd been missing: playtests. Granted, getting the team to come in at unscheduled times required social wizardry and persuasiveness that I don't have yet. But I realised that playing the game is half the fun of making it. Many of the team somehow weren't doing this, and I could've made a greater effort to coordinate times for it to happen.

Next time, I'll make sure the team comes in at a specific, regular time once weekly for playtesting. This is highly circumstantial, but for now, let's say Monday afternoons, for half an hour, before the dedicated studio practice time. It might help motivate everyone to come in on time!

Specific: Yes Measurable: Yes Achievable: Yes Relevant: Yes Time-constrained: Yes

2.5 Procedural - Recognising Order of Iteration

The features I created in Handzer came in roughly this order: Images, arduino interfacing, debugging graphs, player, level, level editor, sprites, collision, lasers, bottles, smashing, animations, googly eyes, control polish, and enemies.

The resulting prototype had a few smash-able bottles with an enemy type, and fairly refined controls in a small level. This was disappointing, but I feel that my iterative approach was better than last time. My collision system, for example, started off as a flat rectangle check, even though I would have liked rotate-able level backgrounds. Furthermore, I created everything only once it was needed: string tools, arrays, and

image caching.

Some features were still somewhat oversized for their purpose. The biggest time-eater, naturally, was the level editor, which saw little use in the end. An alternative approach would have been to make a few layers of backgrounds in Photoshop, and hard-code them in.

Identifying the most important features is hard. What's a good system for estimating this? Perhaps I could exploit the Pareto principle. When I next start a project, I will list all required features in a document, and split them into a top 20% and bottom 80%.

Specific: Yes Measurable: No Achievable: Yes Relevant: Yes Time-constrained: No

3 Recording Progress with the Diary

4 Conclusion

5 Appendix - Diary Template

Figure 1: Provisional CPD diary template