COMP47480
Contemporary Software Design

Lab Journal

Student Name: Harry Gleeson

Student Number: 14455822

GitHub Username: HarryGleeson

Practical 1: The Planning Game (Team 5)

Factual Account:

In undergoing this exercise, I was assigned to a group with 5 people. The first task required us to split the group into developers and customers. 2 group members volunteered to play the role of the customers while the other 3, including myself, played the role of developers. The product in question was a fridge. The 2 customers took about 8 minutes to come up with 8 stories between them. Once they had come up with their stories, the stories were passed to the developers and each story was assigned an estimated amount of time, in minutes, required to sketch it. All developers deliberated and came to an agreement on the times. The stories were then passed back to the customers, along with the estimated times for each and the users were asked to pick any number of the stories with the total time of all stories summing to 10 minutes or less. Once the customers had decided on their stories, the stories were passed back to the developers who drew up 2 separate views of the fridge, one of the outside with the door closed and the other of the inside with the door open. After this, the images were presented back to the customers who were satisfied that their requirements were met. Next, the roles were reversed and the 3 group members who were previously developers became customers and vice versa. The 3 new customers came up with an additional 8 stories. Then the process was repeated for these 8 stories with them being assigned a time and a number of them selected. The 2 now developers amended the existing drawings to include the new features. Finally, once all parties were content with the artefact, we all discussed the production as a whole to review the process.

In-depth reflection:

I found the planning game to be a useful exercise for a number of reasons. Firstly, I found the fact that we were randomly assigned groups for the exercise as opposed to selecting our own groups with people we are comfortable with to be productive. I found that it took me out of my comfort zone and gave a more realistic idea of how such an activity may take place in a real world scenario as you will likely be doing such an exercise with people you are not familiar with.

The second thing I learned was the importance to work quickly and conform to the strict time allocation set out for each task. If the customers take too long to produce their stories, then the developers don't have sufficient time to estimate the time required to design each feature and all future steps are delayed. If one person in the cycle takes longer than the allocated time it affects everyone else. I personally learned this while we ourselves were undergoing the exercise. The first set of stories took too long for the customers to complete. Because of this, the time had already expired as the time estimations were completed, with the task of the customers selecting which stories to implement not yet complete.

Another thing learned when completing the process was the importance of thinking through the stories in depth for a customer. In our case there were a number of stories created by the customer that were either impossible or unrealistic to implement. For example, one customer suggested a coffee maker as an additional feature for a fridge. All developers deemed this an unrealistic feature and this was portrayed back to the customers. Another customer story that was deemed not feasible was the remote monitoring of food through a smart

phone application. This story suggested having cameras in the fridge to allow the user to check the contents of the fridge remotely. The designers realised that this idea would not be feasible as the light in the fridge would be off as the door would be closed, meaning the cameras would not be able to see anything.

It is necessary as the developer when handed the stories to carefully consider the time estimations. There were a number of times in our process where the estimated time to draw a particular story was either overestimated or underestimated. This stage of the process is hugely important as the times estimated by the developers determines the number of the stories derived by the customers that can actually be developed. In an ideal scenario all stories would be developed but it may not be possible. It is important not to underestimate the time taken for each development just to try and incorporate all of the stories.

A useful step in the planning game process I found was the role reversal. Having first been a developer there were a number of useful stories I had thought up that had not been presented from the first set of customers. I found it useful to undergo both roles as it further enhanced my understanding of what the other role required.

The planning game requires all parties involved to have an open mind and to be open to accepting decisions that may not necessarily represent their first choice. For example in my group when in the role of the customer, there was a story presented that I personally wanted included in the final artefact but the other 2 customers preferred another story and although not my personal preference, it was necessary to accept the choice of my team mates and move on, particularly given the limited time frame.

Once the process has been completed and the final artefact designed, it is still hugely important to undergo the retrospective process. It is necessary and highly useful for all parties involved to reflect and let their feelings be known on how the process unfolded. This ensures all parties involved are aware of what they did well, as well as what areas they can improve upon, ensuring the next time such a process is undergone it can be more optimised. For example, in our reflection, as mentioned earlier, some of our activities were not completed within the specified timeframe and this is a major area that needs improvement.