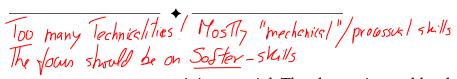# IT Team of Departamento de Engenharia Informática (DEI)

José Pedro de Almeida Arvela

Learning Report

Abstract—During my activity, our group was responsible for several critical things with a limited time span. In this report, I show how I prepared myself and dealt with the situations. I describe the methods used to organize our team, how to keep each other aware of what is being done, what needed to be done, and the progress of things as they happened. I also describe how I prepared and executed tasks and what I did to get a better and more broad knowledge of our section of the department.

Index Terms—multitasking, organization, task management, team work.

✦

Too many Technicalities! Mostly "mechanical"/procedural skills. The focus should be on Softer-skills

1 INTRODUCTION

WORKING at our section of DEI is a very intensive and time demanding task. Having such a small team handle so many critical parts of the department means we need to strive for organization and time management so as to optimize and ensure maximum efficiency in our efforts.

2 ORGANIZATION

All of what is done in our team is accomplished due in no small part to great lengths to organize tasks, bugs, meetings, and every possible situation needed.

2.1 Task Management

When working in small tasks, sometimes the benefits of proper task management might not be seen. Even a medium size project, if simple enough, and in a small enough group, might go along fine without the need for special efforts in task management.

When moving to larger tasks and bigger projects, task management is not only a benefit,

it is essential. The change in workload was such that I had to quickly adapt and quickly develop stronger task management skills.

Gladly, the rest of the team helped a lot when I first arrived, and gave me pointers on how to keep track of what I had to do and what the others were doing.

With this, I was quickly able to develop habits, keep the team aware of what I was doing and be aware of what they were doing, as well as structuring my tasks so I could be able to keep track of what was done and needed to be done with time.

2.2 Communication

Communication is crucial for our team. Such a big and interleaved system means that it is impossible for each individual person to know all details. So, we resort to each others for help and support when working.

When I started working here, one of the first things I was told to was to keep the team aware of what I was doing, my progress on it, my problems and my worries. Doing so proved to be useful. When I was having problems with something, the broad knowledge of the entire team meant that someone could know the answer to my doubts, and I could accomplish work faster and with better results than if I had done it alone.

• *José Pedro de Almeida Arvela, nr. 73557,*
E-mail: jose.pedro.arvela@tecnico.ulisboa.pt,
Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa.

	LEARNING					DOCUMENT						
(1.0) Excelent	CONTEXT x2	SKILLS x1	REFLECT x4	S+C x1	**SCORE**	Structure x0.25	Ortogr. x0.25	Gramm. x0,.25	Format x0.25	Title x0.5	Filename x0.5	**SCORE**
(0.8) Very Good												
(0.6) Good												
(0.4) Fair	1.8	0.8	3.6	0.8	7.0	0.25	0.2	0.2	0.25	0.5	0.5	1.9
(0.2) Weak												

The opposite also was true, if someone was having a problem I knew, my contribution meant they could solve it quicker and as a result all of us were benefited.

Communication proved to be one something that made us work better, and that also bonded us together, improving the environment among us.

2.3 Documentation

When I first joined this team, this was actually one of the parts that lacked the most progress. Having to deal with systems that were barely documented and poorly structured meant that I quickly learned the importance of it.

Working without information meant that I was always questioning if any changes I did were correct or not, and that apparently innocent changes had drastic repercussions.

As the documentation was improved and developed, the code became less scary, and implementations easier to reproduce.

For small projects, documentation might seem secondary, but as scale grows, I quickly learned that documentation is essential, otherwise even simple things will be lost in the abyss of code and around it.

This also helped in task management and communication, as documentation meant that we lost less time explaining implementation details to each other, and more time actually talking about the tasks at hand and ways to improve our systems.

Documentation is what allowed us to keep track of what each thing does, and better preform our functions.

3 TOOLS

While all of the above could be possible by itself, these following tools were critical at making our job a little easier.

We have a mailing list which we use to communicate when we're not all together. We also have a forum where we put bigger discussions. We use Trello [1], which is a dedicated platform for task management in a group. We also use Flyspray [2] for bug management. And we have a wiki, using Dokuwiki [3], where we document our projects and instructions on how to preform certain tasks.

Trello [1] is an efficient tool for managing long therm tasks, allowing each of us to keep "to do" lists of each task, provide information on our own or our colleague's tasks and to keep track of time limits.

Flyspray [2] allows us to keep track of smaller problems which arise and the resolution of said problems.

Without these tools, any of our efforts of communication, task management, or documentation would prove to be much more inefficient, slower or harder to accomplish.

4 HISTORY

One nice little thing that was done a couple of times already was to set up dinners with former members of the team, who have worked there in the past. We would set up a small dinner somewhere, with all of the current team, and invite former members to join us, in a happy dinner talking about the past, the present and the future.

In these, I was lucky enough to meet people who worked in the same place as us as far in the past as the late 90s. In these dinners they told us what they did back then, what they learned, and how it helped in their current lives. The showed us how they grew and how they evolved from then on. We also told them how the team changed, how the responsibilities changed, and how we have been doing things.

This exchange of histories and ideas helped putting things in context. Knowing that their contributions, so far ago, continue in some way or another being helpful showed me how long things might last, and how even a small contribution somewhere might make such a great lasting difference.

It's inspiring to get to know personally a bit of history and to know that, perhaps, what I do here might not be forgotten so soon.

5 CONCLUSION

Working in this team was not an easy task, but it was also not a dull one. Every task and every piece of work I had to do proved to be part of a big and valuable lesson.

As I write this conclusion I am not the same person I was when I first joined this team. I have learned a lot about the areas I was responsible for, as well as cooperation and organization. But most importantly, I learned that I still have a lot to learn over the course of my life, and that each new challenge is a new lesson to learn.

In this type of document (Technical), the Conclusion should start with a summary of the subject addressed and then should highlight the results.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

[1] "Trello." [Online]. Available: https://trello.com/
[2] "Flyspray." [Online]. Available: http://flyspray.org/
[3] "Dokuwiki." [Online]. Available: https://www.dokuwiki.org/

José Pedro de Almeida Arvela Masters Student at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), Open-Source Software (OSS) advocate and Systems Administrator at DEI.