

What I learned – Reset phase Week 3

I come from a background of mechatronics, where I worked mostly with electronics, and the closest I was to programming was working with Arduino or MATLAB, so I never had to program something truly hard, it was mostly equations and easy on and off programs. I mention this because this week was tough for me, I was given a coding problem in a language I've never used, and it wasn't the kind of code jam problems where is mostly logic, and this one was more elaborated. On top of it, we had our weekly assignments and I had school homework, so this week put my time-managing skills to the test.

First, I want to talk about everything else I learned through the week other than the programming challenge, as I would leave that for the end. I want to start by talking about when I was in university, and that is because some videos I watched this week were about people resisting change, having fix mindset against new technologies and just trying things. Back then there were times I refused to change or try new ways, as I would fix myself on thinking that no other way could work, I know now that is a poor way of thinking, but then I didn't and if it wouldn't be because of some teachers that they would encourage me to try I wouldn't have come out of that state, so I appreciate being taught about trying new things and being open to change, because having a fixed mindset stops creativity and progress.

While I was at school I learned a lot of different topics, which is something mechatronic engineering stands out for because you touch various fields, but it just gives you a taste of some of them, which it is what happened when this week I learned about quantum computers, which is just another world, I can't say I know about them, but I would say I can see now where things are going and how the fact of just wanting to improve (go faster, bigger, etc.) can let people create amazing things. That necessity of improving comes from passion and courage of sticking to a belief and pursuing it, I won't say it has to do with me, but when I finished school I wasn't sure of what to do or what fuel my passion, of course, I liked what I studied and I know it can help right now in things I want to do, but something I discover is that I liked programming and I wanted to pursue that field and learn what I could do with it, which is what I am doing right now and I am enjoying it, which is what a lot of people tell you, to do what you feel passion for.

This week's problem was about coding a movie recommender with the help of Mahout's library, using a 9 GB database, which at first was intimidating, and to top it off coding it with Java. When I first read the problem, I didn't know what to do, how to start, I was lost. Something that helped was to just try and break the process down. As I didn't know anything about Java, my first task was to learn it, which is what I did with a basic Hello World! Then was reading on the internet about its syntax, after having a rough idea of Java I started searching about the problem and how to use the library (a weekly task was to use it in a simple recommender exercise). After this, I started to think about the logic and how the code should work, and the rest was looking for examples of how I wanted to code my ideas, of course, all of this with the help of my colleagues as well. I don't think I could have done that in the past, this was a challenge for me because I struggle on how to start to learn new topics, but I can say I enjoyed the process of progressing on something I was able to finish at the end, and that for me was an accomplishment. Something else I realized when I finished reading and watching my weekly lectures and videos, was that there were few techniques I could have used to code, like TDD or using Mocks, as sometimes the tests would take quite a long time and I erased a lot of functions and variables I did at the beginning, but now I know these techniques exist, which I don't understand completely, but I know I will if I just start using them and try them.

This was my week, it doesn't sound that crazy, but to me, it was, as I was working the whole time to be able to finish everything which I am glad I did taking my time and doing things right because everything came out working correctly. I realize I can do things if I organize myself and put time into them because I struggle sometimes with procrastinating, but I can say I managed myself correctly this week.