

Web Development Reflective Essay

Roles and contributions

We did not have official roles on our team. At the beginning of the project, I started a “getting to know you” thread in Slack, asking about what relevant web development experience team members had. From there we worked on a volunteer basis.

Some roles did naturally emerge throughout the project. I handled most of the project management and QA, Francisco did the design for the wireframes, and Eric did most of the coding.

Your use of HTML and CSS

I am very comfortable with basic html, including images, text formatting, divs, spans, hyperlinks, and tables. I am less comfortable with css and am still figuring out a lot of its more powerful features. I understand classes and ids well by now but I’m still wrapping my head around just how customizable css is. I am not comfortable with animations yet or with positioning elements on the page. I am intimidated by design work.

I am impressed with how far html and css have come in the last few years. Setting up forms and slideshows is something I’ve always relied on third-party tools for but it’s not as difficult as I had imagined doing it from scratch.

I enjoyed having a chance to try out some html and css skills. Even though I didn’t do the bulk of the coding, I still had many chances to contribute to the code and it was nice to be able to flex some of those muscles. I built the html skeleton for the index page, which allowed me an opportunity to build a form out of labels, options, and inputs. This is something I hadn’t done before, and it was neat to be able to learn how.

I also built out a table on the FAQ page, which was an interesting experience. I hadn’t worked with tables much before, so I got to experience table, tr, th, and td tags, and play around, learning how those work. I also got to write about a fake theme park, which was fun.

Positive aspects of your team work experience

There were some positive aspects of the team work experience. Francisco and Eric jumped in right away and contributed a lot to the project. Having someone who was comfortable with wireframes was great because I didn’t have to go out of my way to learn that skill. Having someone who could do some heavy lifting with the code was great because I didn’t have to spend a lot of my time building out the structure. In other words, I was able to play to my strengths and let my team mates fill in the gaps in my experience.

I was able to learn some techniques from observing how my team mates solved certain problems. For example, when I was stuck on the image slideshow Eric was able to implement a more elegant solution.

Without a team, this project would have gone very differently. If I had been building the site myself, I would have started earlier and finished earlier but the quality of the site would likely not have been as good. However, I think I would have learned much more than I did on a team because I would have to do all the design and code and copywriting and QA and everything on my own. It

might not have been practical in the timeframe we were given to complete it on my own but with the extension we were given, I think it would have been doable.

Negative aspects of your team work experience

There were a lot of issues with the team work experience, starting with the delay in assignment of teams. By the time we finally did get teams assigned, many people were confused or just plain missing. One of our team mates never actually showed up. Even though we had seven people on our team, three of us ended up doing almost all the work.

Almost everyone in our team is in a different time zone, making scheduling a meeting with all of us next to impossible. Because of this, I didn't even bother to attempt a meeting, opting to keep all communication in Slack instead. Since we were all working at our own pace, this sometimes caused delays. Because part of the grading criteria was based on team communication, this caused stress especially toward the beginning of the project, when we were waiting for team members to weigh in with their opinions or contribute in a meaningful way about how the site should be developed.

Because there were no assigned roles, it was up to us to decide how we wanted to split up the team, which nobody seemed to be interested in doing. Being able to do what we wanted was both a benefit and a drawback. On the one hand, this allowed us to distribute our talents more efficiently. On the other hand, I know that it prevented me from learning in some areas that would have been beneficial to me. For example, I didn't need to learn how to do animation to get credit for it. Also, when I got stuck on something it was very easy for me to just throw my hands up and let someone else solve it for me.

The technical issues toward the beginning of the project certainly exacerbated some of the issues that normally arise with teamwork. It was strange just waiting around for such a long time, not being sure whether to start on the work or not. Even if everything had gone according to plan, being launched into a Slack channel with a team of people you've never met is an awkward experience. Usually when a new team is formed, there is an effort by management to introduce the team to each other and explain to them what is expected of them. In this case, we knew what was expected of us by the rubric but getting to know my team mates is something that only happened awkwardly because I tried to make it happen. Joining a team is such an awkward experience. Who are we anyway? Trying to introduce yourself to a team of people you've never met is so strange. The human condition is one of being close and distant from those around you at the same time. We know we're only together for a short period of time, so how close of a bond can we really form in that time?

Effects of team work on the quality of the work

Overall, I think the quality of our work is better than what I could have done individually. Having Francisco design the wireframes, me doing project management and QA, and Eric doing the heavy lifting with code made it possible for us to each contribute meaningfully to those areas. If it had been just me doing the project, the content would likely be less complete and the feature-set less rich. If it had been just Francisco doing the project, the code would likely be less complete. If it had been just Eric doing the project, several of the grading criteria might have been missed. Having several sets of eyes on the project increased the likelihood that we would meet all the goals that were set out for us.

Working as a team in the "real world" work environment makes more sense than it does in an academic environment. In the "real world" most people have a specific skillset that they develop to make them more effective on a team. They continue developing that skillset, becoming more and more useful at it, until eventually they master it and start developing other skills. In an academic

environment, we're all trying to learn the same things. To be put into a team environment means being able to rely on other people's skills and not develop them yourself. In a work environment, this is a benefit, but in an academic environment, this allows skills to be ignored that should be developed.

Tools you and your team used

Our team used Slack for communication. We used Figma for wireframing. We used Replit for sharing our code. For the most part, this seemed to be sufficient.

If we were going to be working together for much longer, it would probably be helpful to have project management software such as Trello or even a planning spreadsheet but because the work was of an academic nature, this was less necessary than it would be in a real work environment. Since most of the work was already planned for us, it was less necessary to collaborate on the planning parts in a formulaic way.

If we were going to be working for a long time, I would also have liked to chat with each team member one-on-one using Zoom or some other messaging software. Having a face-to-face conversation with someone is helpful for building rapport. Getting to know people is valuable when you're going to spend a lot of time with them.