

Reflection

Concept Phase

S8 Graduation
Personal Development
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Introduction

I decided to apply a different reflection and retrospective strategy this semester. Other semesters, I reflected per week or per two weeks. I often preferred to utilise the four-L method for my reflections. However, I often struggled to come up with genuine points to reflect on for my reflections and retrospectives and therefore made a lot of things up, resulting in a lot of documentation that didn't really mean anything. That's why I want to try a different approach for this semester in the hope to have a more concrete and valuable retrospective in the end.

My project is divided into project phases. Each project phase covers a distinct set of activities and events. This will make my retrospectives more organised as each document will cover one entire project phase. Besides this, it's also less time consuming, as I only have to document my retrospective once every project phase instead of every week.

This retrospective covers a project phase that was quite time consuming. My project has a pretty open brief, so a lot of research was required to come up with a validated concept. Therefore, this document covers the work of the first eight weeks.

Key activities and milestones

Activities

In this project phase, I primarily worked on research to come up with a validated concept to develop. To have some variety in my work, I worked on technical proof of concepts to find out what I want to make is technically possible.

In the first week, I set up my laptop and had my introduction to the company. I filled my time with finishing my project plan. The weeks after were filled with doing research to finish my concept and setting up my portfolio for my deliverables.

Besides doing a lot of research, I have a daily standup. On Monday we have the start of the week meeting and an update with my company coach John. Every two weeks I have an update with Erik.

Milestones

This project phase had a couple of interesting milestones that were key to the course of my internship.

- **Introduction to the team.** I had a very warm welcome to the team as it felt a bit like a homecoming to the Handpicked family. I'm very positively surprised by the social atmosphere in the team, colleagues are helpful and for me it doesn't feel burdensome at all to ask a colleague a question.
- **Meeting with RN365.** In the second week, I had my first meeting with Ruud from RN365. I still wasn't able to answer a few topics in the project plan as some things about the project were still unclear. This meeting gave clarity to these things and right after I was able to finish my project plan and start researching.
- **ThreeJS Journey course.** The meeting with RN365 was in the second week, and I didn't really have anything left to do for my project plan. That's why John suggested I start the ThreeJS Journey course to get to know ThreeJS as this will be an important part of my project.
- **Company visit from Erik.** My semestercoach Erik visited TDE to get to know the company. We discussed the project with John and Joep. After this meeting the project plan was officially approved. I also shared my work from the first couple of weeks.
- **Focus group meeting.** This meeting really gave some shape to the project. The first couple of weeks were still only for orientation and discovering insights. During this meeting, we came up with an idea to further develop into a concept based on the insights I discovered.

- **Discovery of actual location data of Formula 1 cars.** I conducted thorough research on the data that's available from Formula 1. I concluded from this research that there's no exact location data available from Formula 1 cars. However, during an update with John, a colleague pointed out that there was in fact exact location data available. It just wasn't present in the sample data I received for my research. This changed the course of the project by a country mile. As I don't have to use YukaJS anymore and the development phase will also become much easier because of this.

Achievements

I am proud to have made a few achievements already in the first project phase. A summary is written out below.

- I had a great time onboarding at TDE. As already described, I experienced a really warm welcome at TDE. It just felt socially pleasant and I call this a personal achievement. I can compare this with my first internship at E-Sites, the onboarding and first few days felt a bit overwhelming. I didn't really sleep well the night before and meeting new people just felt a bit awkward. One of my goals for my international study was that I wanted to improve my social skills and the onboarding at TDE felt a bit like proof that I achieved this goal. I noticed I was much more confident about this onboarding than my onboarding at E-Sites and I was excited to meet my new colleagues. I also noticed that I am much better at conversing with strangers and people around me.
- Of course the objective of the concepting phase of this project is to have a validated concept and I made this happen. Concepting and strategy wasn't my strongest part first, but as I learned methodologies like the Double Diamond method, it became much easier to give shape to the concepting activities. I can say that this project phase resulted in a strong concept to develop further into the project. I also genuinely feel like this project has some real potential, and isn't some useless project that gets discarded after my internship.

Challenges and learning

I can't say that I encountered any major challenges so far. The most considerable challenge for my project was an incidental shift in planning, as I sometimes had to wait to continue on something because a meeting was scheduled a bit later. However, I was able to easily work around this as I had plenty of other work to do to fill the time.

My personal challenge was the hybrid work policy at TDE. I know by myself that I find it very difficult to find motivation when working from home. At TDE, we have office days on Mondays and Wednesdays only. In the first week I tried to work at the office every day of the week, but found out that the office was quite deserted on non-office days. In the weeks after I experimented with working at school for these days, or working only at the office in the morning and working from home in the afternoon to avoid rush hour. However, working from home still is a challenge. That's why I have decided to try to work at the office as much as possible anyway. So far it's quite a struggle to be at the office 5 days a week. Whether it's because of maintenance on the railways that hinders my commute to the city, or my difficulties having sufficient good sleep that makes it way too easy to ignore my alarm in the morning and stay in bed. (More on this in the emotional and personal reflection down below). Anyway, I expect to improve my productivity over the next couple of weeks by working at the office 5 days a week.

Feedback and interactions

I receive feedback on my work and progress primarily in the updates with my company coach and my semester coach. These interactions mainly give steering to my work instead of correcting my work. To give an example, I discussed my plans for the focus group discussion with Erik. Erik pointed out that it's important that I utilise this time as best as possible as this is a valuable moment and opportunity for my project. This caused me to pay extra attention to the preparation of this meeting and therefore contributed to the success of the focus group discussion.

Skills and tools used

- I noticed that my development skills improved really well. It feels like nothing is difficult anymore. In just a few weeks, I learned the basics of ThreeJS, front-end frameworks Svelte, SvelteKit and Threlte as well as YukaJS. And to top it off, I learned about NodeJS backend development as I built an entire development API with loads of new techniques I never heard of before. I have to admit that I acquired ChatGPT+, and it assisted me a lot with some matters.
- After a few weeks, I noticed that I lost track of the project and didn't really have an overview on my internship. I solved this by managing all my tasks in Notion. I have never used Notion before, but now, I can't live without it. Notion houses everything about my internship. Every document and deliverable is sorted in scrum boards for each project phase and I even write summaries of feedback and meetings in this tool. Thanks to Notion, I have a great overview of my project.

Emotional and personal reflection

- I discovered that I'm dealing with a so-called post-travel depression from my international study in New Zealand. I have always been warned of a reverse culture shock when coming back to the Netherlands and I was aware that this semester could become a boring and busy time, but I never expected to feel depressed.

Apparently, the contrast between doing a lot of travelling and coming home, getting to work and school can cause depression. I think I got used to a constant supply of social activities and adventure that I can't achieve in the Netherlands and it seems like this makes me somewhat blind to success these days. It feels like I have difficulties realising how well I'm doing, considering I'm graduating in a few weeks, my internship is going well and I have plenty of social connections, but it simply doesn't feel like it's enough for it to be called success. Combine this with a couple of personal setbacks in the weeks after I returned from New Zealand, and it resulted in a little depression that affects my focus and motivation for my graduation internship.

I have already made a lot of progress in dealing with this little depression, and it feels like I'm about 90% there. Just by discovering that post-travel depression is a thing, already made it so much less severe. I found online that it will fade all by itself after a few weeks or months so I don't have any concerns that it will affect my internship that much anymore. Also, apparently it helps to just plan a next trip or vacation so you can look forward to a next adventure. Therefore, I visited some friends in Denmark a few weeks ago that I met in New Zealand and I planned a trip to Madeira at the end of the month, and I can say that it made me feel a lot better!

- As presaged in the challenges and learning part above, I noticed that I had developed some difficulties with my sleep in the last couple of weeks. I believe this is somewhat connected with the post-travel depression I've been dealing with recently. My problem was that I lacked enough good quality sleep. I found it difficult to fall asleep in the evening and woke up regularly during the night. Also, my sleep wasn't deep enough. This resulted in me working from home more often than I wanted to and during the day, I felt like I wasn't able to present the best version of myself.

Online I found that limiting the amount of bedtime improves sleep quality and results in more energy during the day. I found out that this works in my case. I got myself a key to the office building. This way I can start my day an hour earlier, also avoiding rush hour during my morning commute. Since I woke up earlier, I tend to sleep better, and have more energy during the day.

- Another thing that didn't really go well in the last couple of weeks was a little promise I made to the study abroad team of my study. As a return for a scholarship for my study in New Zealand, I agreed to make a video about my experiences studying abroad. However, I severely underestimated the amount of work that's required for this little side project and it has claimed a lot of my spare time next to my internship. Fortunately, this project is now finished, allowing me to focus more on my internship project. I also plan to use some of my spare time, gained by finishing this project, to work on the personal development part of my internship and other tasks required for my internship, but not directly related to the project like updating my portfolio and documentation. This will increase overall productivity during my internship.

Improvement for the rest of my internship

I think everything I wrote above should conclude that there's plenty to be improved in focus and productivity during my internship. I expect to improve on this by working at the office every day of the week, whether the office is deserted or not. Also starting my day an hour earlier will improve focus during the day, and my progress in dealing with my post-travel depression will only result in more motivation for my internship.

Additionally, I want to reflect on what I could have done to prevent an incorrect conclusion in the available data analysis. I conducted research to find out what data is available from Formula 1. The fact that a colleague knew that actual location data is available from the FIA API could have saved me about a week of work, as I probably won't use YukaJS anymore to simulate car driving behaviour in the simulation part of my tool, although it was very informative. I was sent a data sample of the FIA API and this data sample didn't include location data, I was told that this sample contained all data that the FIA API could provide. This turned out to be false. I would probably have found out that this data is actually available by doing an expert interview with this colleague.

Summary

This semester, I decided to try a different approach to reflecting. I used to use the Four-L reflection method about every two weeks during previous semesters. I found that this is way too frequent, and that I often struggled to come up with genuine points to write down. Therefore, I reflected once per project phase on specific topics that I consider important for a reflection. These are activities and milestones, achievements, challenges and learning, feedback and interactions, skills and tools used, emotional and personal reflection and improvements for the rest of my internship.

The conclusion I get from this reflection is that there's plenty to improve on focus and productivity. There are factors that made me struggle a bit with this topic, but I have a plan to improve on this.

Learning Outcome Clarification

- Learning Outcome 5: Personal Leadership

Learning outcome 5 applies for this deliverable as I showed that I can reflect on my own actions.