Post Mortem AREA

Introduction

AREA is an ambitious project. Its objective is to create **links of Action-Reaction** between **services** (e.g. : Youtube or Spotify). Our service will detect an Action chosen by the user (e.g.: liking a YouTube video), it will then take **data** from this action (e.g.: the title, the genre or the author of the video) and use it while triggering a **Reaction** (e.g.: adding the song linked to the video title to a Spotify Playlist).

In order to give a product answering to all the expectations given by the subject we had to organize our group really well. That's why two months after the start of the project, it's time to see what went right and what went wrong during our AREA..

Our original organization

The first week of the AREA was the time where most of our group and organization rules were decided.

First, in terms of methodology, we decided to go with the Agile model as it's the most flexible model, and as beginners in long term projects, it was the best way to find quick and easy solutions in case of arising problems.

Then, in terms of rules for this agile, we decided that the project would be divided into multiple sprints. Each one will start with a meeting where we would decide on a theme for the sprint, each person is then going to choose tasks that he will complete during the sprint that makes sense according to the theme. Then, we would each day reunite for a daily meeting, where we would attribute the tasks each person would do during this day and what has been done the day before, the time for the meeting would be picked by the team leader and transmitted the night before to the rest of the team. At the end of each sprint we would have a meeting to discuss how the sprint went, what had to change and how to upgrade our overall quality of work.

Now that we're done talking about our starting organization, let's deep dive in the actual events that took place during the AREA that are notable for future projects.

Daily meetings

During this long project, daily meetings changed a lot.

At first, they were set as early as possible in the morning in order to have a side effect, kickstarting the day for every developer working on the project. The idea behind this was that if the first thing we work on in the morning is the AREA meeting, we will be in a good state of mind to produce some work on the project.
However, a problem arose. We didn't take into consideration that the C Pool for the new students would have such an impact in the structuration of our daily meetings. To give more details about this situation, two members of our group are AER at Epitech Strasbourg. And as we had to supervise some activities during the Pool. In consequence, the daily meeting sometimes had to start at 8 a.m. We managed to keep those meetings up during the period of the C Pool but those clearly showed us a lot of their flaws. On the one hand, the start time of the reunions was too early for some members of the group, causing some people to be late and missing a part of the meeting. On the other hand, people that were actually on time were starting to get mad as they put in the effort to come by

at the time asked while others don't seem to do the same. Meetings that had the objective of assembling and making the group information flow better than normally started to make the group drift away little by little.

To answer those problems, we decided to take a break in terms of daily meetings. This made us understand two things, the first one how important those reunions were because the lack of it was showing in terms of work and communication, the second one was how better it could be to set those reunions at a better time than the first hour available in the morning.

So, we changed the system. Each monday, during the daily meeting, we would set up the time for the reunions for the whole week, and the next monday. This had multiple benefits, a lot less lateness was seen, it was easier for us to plan our weeks since the meetings are set up in advance, and a better group cohesion and organization overall.This modification is probably something that will be kept for all the projects where we can install this format of a daily meeting.

A great adaptability to unforeseen situations

The greatest thing that came from our organization is the great adaptability to unforeseen situations. Multiple times during the project, people couldn't be available when we needed them to, it could have been because of our part-time, social gatherings planned a long time ago, or even other activities from other projects that made people not available to answer our questions.

Fortunately, thanks to how we organized the different branches of our project, there was always at least one person from each pole available to answer questions that blocked us during the day. More than that, thanks to our daily meeting system, everyone could be aware in real time of the situations of every part of the project, making discussions about problems easier for everyone and finding a solution for them is child's play.

It's the same thing for Pull Requests on GitHub, most of the times, we would get answer to our PR less than 24 hours after sending them online, with a great feedback on what to change if change are requested or the ability to merge if what we did was considered as well done and was working properly.

All of these aspects transformed all of our hardships into successes

Task priority

Something that was lacking in our project organization was probably our Task Priority. When we divided our tasks, we didn't really think about what was the priority in the project and we just made a list of tasks with their duration next to it. Making us do the tasks in order instead of thinking of what we should secure first and what is the least important.

Of course, it is something that is done subconsciously, doing the most important tasks first, but in retrospect, a part of the time given at the start of the project should have been dedicated to highlighting a priority order among our tasks. Even if those tasks were not the most entertaining or attractive, doing those were mandatory and a better management of those specific tasks should have been put in place.

Even if this time, everything went well, you never know when a problem can arise at the worst time, and it could have been a disastrous result that would have invalidated every

piece of work we put in the project. For a silly mistake of organization at the start.

The lesson we learnt was that the key for a good project is the foundation you created in the first weeks. Any little shortcut you take or mistake you make during this foundation phase could lead to a monstrous amount of wasted time.

Difference in schedule

A problem that came and repeated itself, was the difference in schedule between different members of the group. Some people prefer to work during night time while others stick with working during the day. And this difference cost us a little time during different occasions in the project. But a little time loss repeated a lot of times, starts to be a big time loss.

The cycle that was created by the differences of schedule was the following: A, is working during the day while B prefers to work during the night. A and B share only two hours of work, meaning they can basically talk about work for only two hours despite working eight or more hours. This is fine, until B finds a problem that he knows could be resolved in less than 30 minutes with the help of A. Unfortunately, the two hours of shared time is over, and A is not working on the project at the time of the discovery, having no other choice than tackling the problem by himself, he spends two hours to solve it. Result of the operation: 1 hour and a half lost because of a desynchronization in schedule.

Of course, nothing forces him to solve the problem instantly, he could wait for the next two hours of shared work span. But in the long run, it's not an effective solution. Sometimes you need to find a solution as soon as possible, and because of this desynchronization, time loss is inevitable.

To find a solution to this problem, we all tried to make an effort in getting more hours where we could work together with other members we frequently work with. So instead of losing time, we could save some with cooperation and communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the organization we planned at the start of the project was overall a big success. But like every project, some things went wrong, and we learnt most of those little obstacles scattered in the road of our project success.

Daily meetings are in the best shape they ever have been, thanks to its evolution due to multiple misconceptions about them.Our adaptability and communication are flowing like a river, and more and more time is shared for us to use it at its max potential. And finally our future foundation for our next big project will be even better with the new thing we learned from this experience thanks to a better division of tasks but also a better capacity of seeing what are the obstacles toward our final goal thanks to this experience.