

Initial Document: A Multifunctional Fitness Application & Vertical Jump Height Calculator

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This document will outline the plan for development of a functional codebase for a fitness application. This process, herein referred to as “the project” is different to the application(s) produced as a result. The main difference is that the project is not concerned with the deployment, maintenance and future updates of the fitness application and no additional academic benefit is gained from creating the infrastructure or platform-specific functionality. This is to say that the creation of **both** a mobile and a web application is not needed for the project but makes up a core offering of the product for end users following deployment.

A **mobile** application will be produced during the project, which will have 2 main use cases:

1. A user will be able to pay (via monthly installments or upfront) for a fitness plan; where they can monitor, make notes and track their progress and routine via a calendar.
2. A user can create their own fitness plan by producing their own routine using available exercises on the app - the additional functions such as the calendar remain the same.

1.1 Motivations

The motivation for the project began following an initial consultation with a Californian NBA-level basketball athletic trainer who was looking for a bespoke application to reduce his business expenses. Initially, 4 days of planning and a 40-minute discussion took place before the business decided that the costs associated with building this platform are not a priority for the time being.

In the process of considering the development of said fitness platform, I spoke to developers working with smaller high-level sports trainers regarding the technology used and their clients future plans. At this time fitness influencers Krissy Cela and Jack Bullimore had proven the concept a year earlier with the rollout of “Tone and Sculpt” - grossing over GBP 1 million in the 8 months following its January 2019 release [1]. My initial desire to pursue a project in this space grew more after hearing the story and approach taken by “Tone and Sculpt” on the Diary of a CEO podcast [2].

In the world of athletic sports there is currently no viable, consistent and widely used means of measuring vertical leap besides the Vertec. Prices on these devices can be as high as £500 and cheaper alternatives commonly found at a youth/amateur level - that involve markings on walls - don’t allow for an approach jump (without the risk of hitting the wall). This is being mentioned because a large motivation for the jump calculator functionality is to allow an easy and accessible means of measuring a users vertical leap progress. Naturally, the use of a smartphone for measurement is not completely accurate but will provide sufficient consistency (given the user’s setup) and this can be used to monitor improvement.

From a trainers’ perspective, using PDFs to release fitness plans is cumbersome and involves finding a suitable workflow and rollout. Further to the fact that they’re easily copied and distributed. Existing white-label¹ mobile app solutions to these issues don’t offer much customization beyond simple re-branding; many don’t support video. Following discussion with fitness trainers in various countries (including the USA, UAE and UK) I concluded that this is something that needs to be addressed. Many robo-fitness apps exist for end users, but few include real trainers and even less give freedom to the administrator.

¹A white-label product is a product or service produced by one company that other companies rebrand to make it appear as if they had made it.

1. Introduction

In summary, the motivation for the project is to give a customizable fitness planning solution to those interested in monitoring their training. This solution should be usable by administrators (trainers/teams), average “gym go-ers” and highly trained athletes alike. The global fitness app market size was valued at USD 4.4 billion in 2020 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.6% from 2021 to 2028 [3]. We can see that the total addressable market is huge and set to grow quickly, if this is any indicator of the volume of potential users looking for a fitness solution then the proposed project should prove tremendously useful at solving the aforementioned problems.

1.2 Overview & Aims

The projects aims include the following - some of these aims will be broken down into succinct functional and non-functional requirements in ??:

- The ability for a user to plan their workouts on a calendar.
- The ability for a user to track the progress of a workout.
- The ability for a user to measure their vertical leap using their phone.
- Allow users to keep track of their progress in relevant areas such as weight, strength measurements etc. more efficiently than traditional methods.
- Allow trainers to comfortably deliver fitness plans to clients without a steep technical learning curve.

The core overview of the project is that we're looking to develop a mobile application that allows a user to register an account before having the ability to follow/create a fitness plan and provide relevant tools for consistency and the successful reach of a users goals (irrespective of their background). The project aims to focus on the end user² however considerations will be made for the complete implementation of an administrator role (time permitting).

The project is concerned with the ability to solve both parties problems through the development of the application, but the primary focus is on the development of the core functionality and the vertical jump calculator. From a business perspective we can consider the jump calculator the unique selling point of *the product* and a complex component of *the project*.

²The user training using the app

Chapter 2

Project Research

We've previously seen that "Tone & Sculpt" is an existing similar application on the market. Below we'll consider other background research on existing systems and their functionality.

The bulk of fitness mobile applications fall into 2 categories:

1. Applications which allow fitness enthusiasts to monitor their training and nutrition - the market leaders in this space (by monthly active users) are "Fitbit" and "My Fitness Pal" (as of March 2018) [4].
2. Applications which allow trainers to facilitate the delivery of programmes either by partnering with the development company or white-labelling software. These are apps focused on trainers more than end users - the most notable player in this emerging market would be "TrueCoach", who raised USD 2.6 million in seed round funding before being acquired by TSG (Transaction Services Group) in April 2020 [5]. Estimated revenue over USD 1.2 million (from 20k users) for 2021 [6].

We can see the main difference in these groups are that the focus of the former is B2C (business-to-consumer) services whereas the latter focus on B2B (business-to-business; often acting as SaaS companies). This is an important distinction as *the project* is looking to combine elements of both and so the following research will reflect this.

We'll also look at vertical jump calculators and the mathematics involved in developing something of that nature.

2.1 Existing fitness application systems

We'll look at 4 systems, 2 from each of the aforementioned application groups. Here it is worth mentioning that some apps are on the borderline such as "Centr by Chris Hemsworth". The app follows a B2C approach but is marketed and part-owned by Chris Hemsworth, with his trainers being the facilitators of programmes and nutrition plans. A similar approach to the aforementioned "female-focused Tone & Sculpt". Because cases like these are not relevant to the application being built for the project, we will not look in any depth at these.

For each of these systems we'll be looking at:

- A typical user story for the given application.
- A high-level breakdown of the system(s) functionality.
- A look at the technology in use (where possible).

We'll then compare the applications (in pairs) to see any unique features and to understand which functions are seemingly core to a positive user experience in the fitness application space.

2.1.1 MyFitnessPal

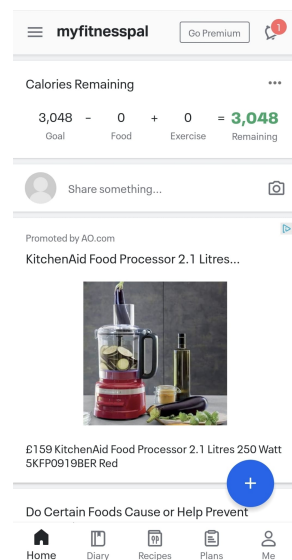


Figure 2.1: Homepage feed

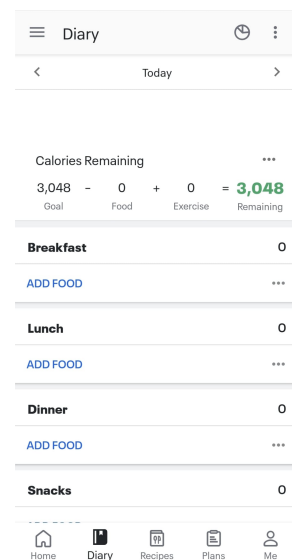


Figure 2.2: Food diary & calorie counter

User Story

“As a fitness enthusiast, I sign up to the app via email. I wake up every day and log my breakfast by scanning barcodes for my food. This is accounted for in my daily food tracking (Fig. 2.2). After breakfast I create a new workout based on advice from my community or homepage, I search for the exercises involved and log my workout later on in the day (Fig. 2.5).”

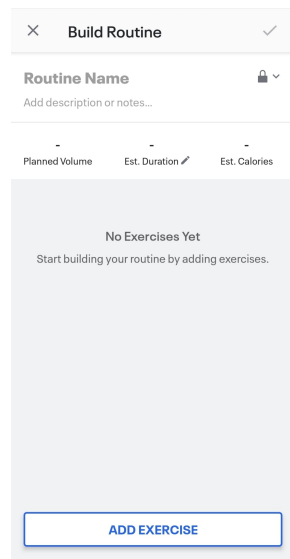


Figure 2.3: Custom workout routine

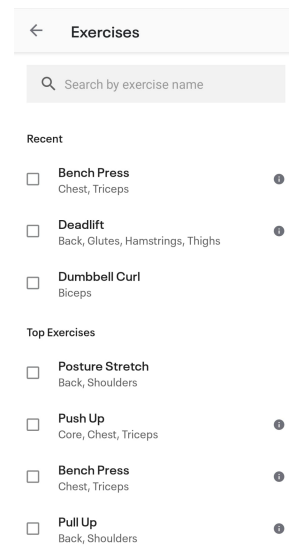


Figure 2.4: Selecting exercises

Figure 2.5: The custom workout routines in MFP

Features/Functionality

MyFitnessPal includes all of the following features:

- Estimate calories burned given a set of exercises/a routine.
- Track food intake via barcode scan or recipe input.
- Track water.
- Workout plans provided by MFP.
- Track weight.
- Create custom workout plans from existing exercises.
 - Exercises don't include video/images and no ability to add custom exercises.
 - These can be shared publically to dashboard.

- Count steps (using compatible devices).
- Add friends and send/receive messages.
- Community tab (requires separate signup).
- Export progress as CSV.
- Meal and weight tracking reminders (via push notifications).
- Set workout/week, minutes/workout and “calories burned” goals.
- Discover recipes/meal plans via community and MFP suggestions.

Technology Stack

MyFitnessPal uses the following technologies according to Stackshare [7]:

- React (a JavaScript framework for creating cross-platform applications)
- Cloudflare (for web infrastructure)
- NginX (for server side use)
- Vanilla JavaScript and CSS + libraries (jQuery, Bootstrap)

Various other technologies are being used on the server-side but for *the project* we are primarily concerned with the technology used for the application as opposed to the backend infrastructure.

2.1.2 Fitbit

Fitbit is the app that accompanies many of the Fitbit brands’ hardware products, their first movers advantage was likely a large contributor towards their large market share (in 2018)¹ in the application space. The functionality of their hardware products (which had been the standard for fitness tracking wearables) is enhanced through use of the app. The research will consider the application alone and disregard any wearable-specific functionality.

¹Q3 2020 wearables market share = 2.6%[8]

2. Project Research

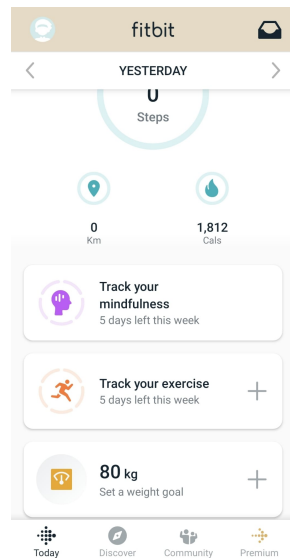


Figure 2.6: Dashboard

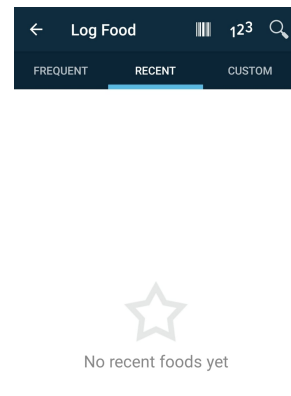


Figure 2.7: Food log screen & features

User Story

“As a professional athlete I wake up, go through guided meditation on my Fitbit calendar before weighing myself (Fig. 2.6). I then log my breakfast and eat (Fig. 2.7), followed by my commute to practice and logging my sport and duration (Fig. 2.8).”

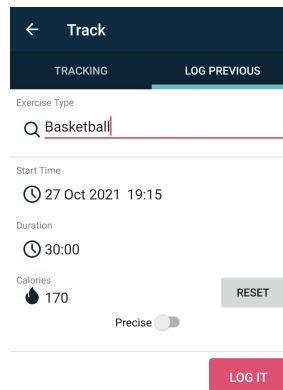


Figure 2.8: Using exercise search & log

Features/Functionality

Fitbit includes all of the following features:

- Guided meditation (w/ simple week-calendar scheduling).
- Guided video workout plans (w/ simple week-calendar scheduling).
- Guided programmes (for meeting targets in health, not just fitness).
- Challenges (1-10 people, gamifying targets).
- Water tracking.
- Food tracking.
- Track exercise (only by sport/activity, no custom option and no individual exercises/routines).
- Step counter.
- Community feed and groups.
- Add friends and send/receive messages.

Technology Stack

Fitbit uses the following technologies according to Stackshare [9]:

- JavaScript(and Ember.js) for the front end.
- Fastly (for cloud content delivery)
- Redis (for middle layer and database caching)
- Node.js (for producing backend APIs)
- Java (and Spring) for the non-mobile applications
- MySQL (for the backend database(s))

Fitbit is cross-platform and multifunctional, thus there will be some technologies not in use by the mobile app we are researching. It's unlikely Spring is in use, but the use of JavaScript (w/ Node.js) for the front and backend is common in current world of software. It's highly likely the whole system is using a microservice architecture where components maybe used in several places.

2.1.3 Comparing MyFitnessPal and Fitbit

Firstly, we'll note that both applications make use of JavaScript for their front-end technologies. It's difficult to pinpoint what is being used without decompiling both applications (both of which have a huge codebase). It is apparent that MFP is using React². Both apps are also using some form of CDN to speed up content delivery, which is needed given the abundance of data involved in the tracking of food and exercise. MFP offers developers access to their data set via their own API [?].

Whilst both apps calculate calories burned (an arguably useless metric for *our project*) during exercise. The scope and functionality of exercise is vastly different. Fitbit includes general sports and activities but no specific exercises (for example - "weights" is considered 1 exercise type and the calories burned are dependent on duration) and there is no ability to produce your own routine. On the other hand, MFP allows for the creation (and sharing) of your own routines using their database of exercises. There are no videos to follow for this component of the app. Both apps do however offer workout routines (and short-term programmes) via short videos published by the respective companies.

Both apps allow for the tracking of food and water intake, as well as the ability to scan product barcodes to log nutritional information. In regard to overall wellness, Fitbit seems to be covering more "bases" by providing guided meditation videos and challenges which can be taken alone or as a group. These challenges are a way to gamify the achievement of personal goals (such as using your phone less).

Finally, both apps include community features - very similar to traditional social media platforms. These and other nutrition focused features are beyond the desired scope of *our project* thus we won't be comparing and considering these.

Internal link to requirements

Overall, the fitness aspect of MFP seems more useful, but there are elements of the app which are not yet on par with Fitbit - such as the goal setting and mindfulness measurements. That said, the UX/UI of MFP is more usable and the app has fewer features locked behind hardware devices (yet you can still pair compatible devices to MFP). Neither app has any major feature involving the camera besides the barcode scanning components. A combination of elements from both apps will be paramount to a successful project.

²an open-source UI software framework created by Meta, Inc (formerly Facebook)

2. *Project Research*

reference prelim
work

The project is planned to have a side panel menu and similar minimal aesthetic to that of MFP. It's not planned that it will include the calories burned estimates; however other metrics will be included in similar vain, such as total time trained and cumulative weight lifted/cumulative distance travelled. Calorie estimates will be an enhancement (additional feature) where time permits. The abilities to create custom routines and follow preset routines that are featured in MFP and Fitbit respectively, are expected to be important features in *the project*. Albeit, the long term plan for things includes the ability for trainers to set these programmes as opposed to presets alone.

In summary, the design and layout of these apps is what's useful for us - inspiration and additional features can also be drawn from these existing systems. With that said, *our product* is not a nutrition tracker and focusing on elements in this space would shift the scope of the *project* substantially. An extensive breakdown of the feature set can be found in Chapter 3.

reference feature
set

2. Project Research

2.1.4 TrueCoach

TrueCoach provide a cross-platform system that includes a web application. We'll be considering the mobile app provided for end users and making reference to the functions available to administrators in the process. They provide a mobile app for each of these use cases - "TrueCoach for Clients" and "TrueCoach Connect" for trainers.

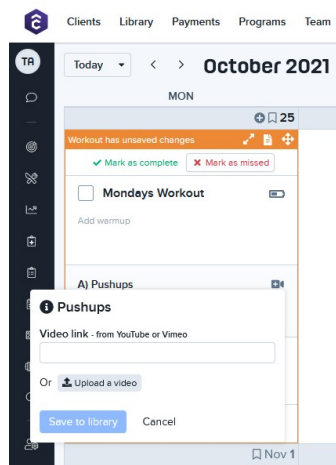


Figure 2.9: Trainer using web app to set clients workout(s).

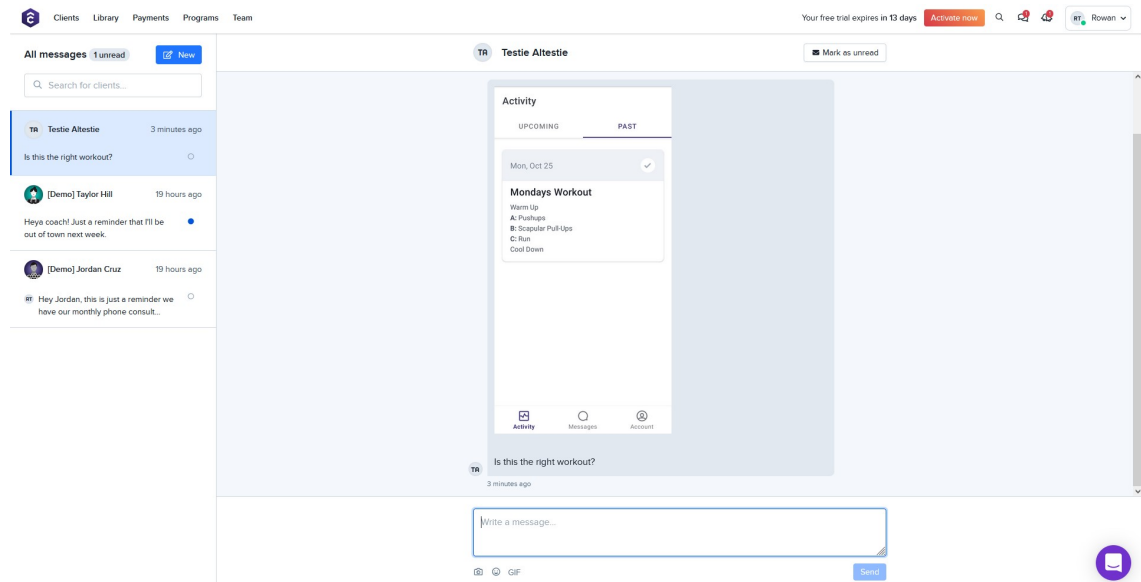


Figure 2.10: Trainer using web chat to manage clients.

User Story

“As a new gym go-er, I work remotely with my trainer (Figs. 2.10 and 2.12) to refine my training technique(s). I view my upcoming workouts (Fig. 2.11) and follow instructional videos before marking my workouts as complete and monitoring my progress via goals & challenges (Fig. 2.13). For advice I can view documents and progress photos in my settings page (Fig. 2.14).”

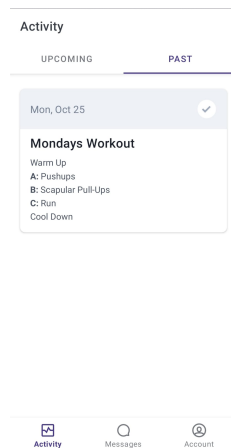


Figure 2.11: Viewing workouts (upcoming/past).

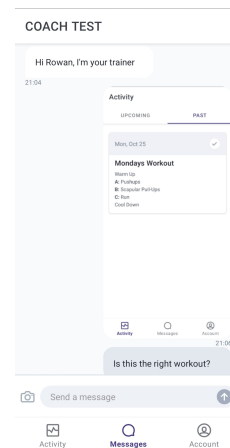


Figure 2.12: Instant messaging with a trainer.

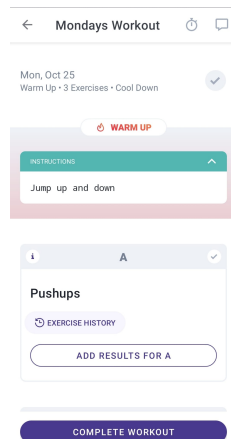


Figure 2.13: Logging a workout.

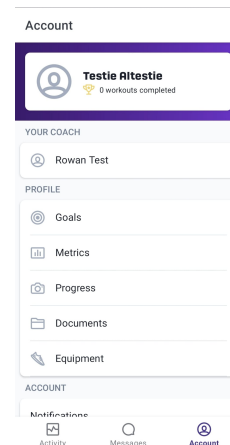


Figure 2.14: Viewing settings.

Above, “Testie Altestie” represents an end user and “Rowan Test” is the trainer. We can see the functions available to the user are dependent on the workouts uploaded/scheduled by the trainer using their interface (web application in this case).

Features/Functionality

“TrueCoach for Clients” includes all of the following features:

- Track coach’s release of phased training (upcoming/past workouts).
- Log workouts (w/ notes).
- Timer & stopwatch function for tracking timed exercises.
- Video breakdowns of exercises (w/ rich text instructions).
- Instant messaging w/ trainer (including multimedia uploads).
- Tracking of progress via trainer-set goals & metrics.
- Progress and additional documents (outbound link to web app).
- Create account via invite link from trainer.
- View notifications.
- Edit settings (outbound link to web app).

TrueCoach covers a lot of needs for a user, and we can see in Fig. 2.10 the relevant tools for the trainer to facilitate these workouts. They are administrators of their clients and they’re the means by which a user gets login credentials. Trainers can upload relevant videos (Fig. 2.9) and documents, as well as provide metrics to measure users progress.

Technology Stack

Stackshare (as used for the previous apps) is not useful in this case, so the following conclusions have been drawn following the decompilation of the TrueCoach APK [10]:

- Kotlin & Java (for Android development)
- Firebase (for push notifications and messaging)
- AWS Amplify (for backend deployment)
- Numerous open-source development packages such as glide.

After decompiling and opening the class files using dex2jar and JD-GUI, I found that the application is not using a cross-platform JavaScript framework as is standard in modern times. The app is using the recommended native language of Kotlin³ and Java for all data objects and frontend display.

³Learn more: android development documentation

2. Project Research

2.1.5 Exercise.com

Exercise.com are the company providing the white-labelled solution behind PJFPerformance. We'll be using the **PJFPerformance** app to analyse their application.

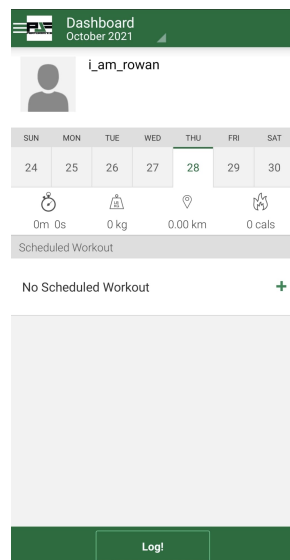


Figure 2.15: Home dashboard

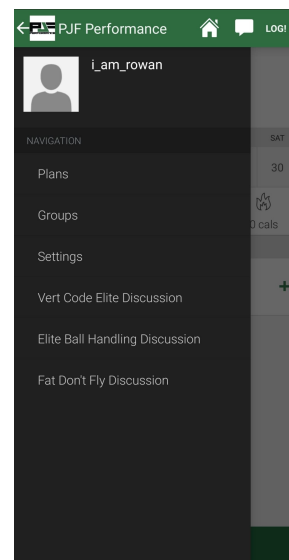


Figure 2.16: Sidebar menu options

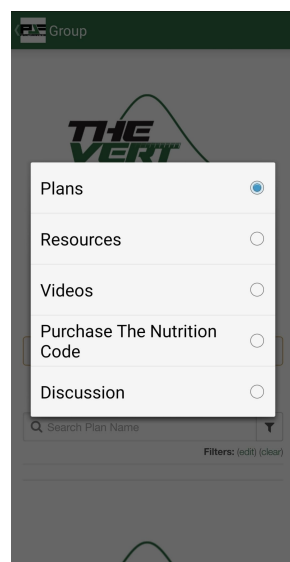


Figure 2.17: Viewing additional resources.

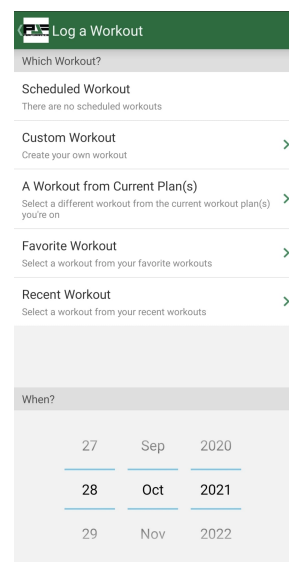


Figure 2.18: Scheduling/logging a workout.

User Story

“As a basketball player, I enroll to Paul Fabritz’ workout plan using the web application before receiving credentials for the mobile app. Here I schedule the programme to begin at the start of the month and I allocate days of the week for my workouts (Fig. 2.15). I create my profile containing my weight and other metrics, so I can ask relevant questions to Paul and others on the same programme as me via a discussion room (Fig. 2.16). For guidance on training during the season and managing load, there is a resources section (Fig. 2.17) (outbound links). I log all my workouts and make notes for my own use. I sometimes create workouts for myself (Fig. 2.18) using some exercises available through the app. Whenever I train, I can see exercises explained via videos embedded from YouTube.”

Features/Functionality

The PJFPerformance app includes all of the following features:

- Schedule workouts.
- Create custom workouts (using existing exercises).
- Log workouts (w/ notes).
- Enroll on phased programmes (made up of multiple workouts split over a given number of weeks & days).
- Edit profile.
- View settings.
- View notifications.
- Rest timer for timed sets in workouts.
- Videos (YouTube hosted) for exercises.
- Group discussions for programmes.
- View additional resources (hosted externally).

Exercise.com work on a 1-to-1 basis with trainers and white-label their solutions, this means any administrator view can only be presumed via the decompilation of the APK app file.

Technology Stack

Similarly to TrueCoach, finding the technology used by Exercise.com for the mobile application is only possible via decompilation using existing tools [10]. Based on my look into the source code, we can safely conclude that the app uses:

- Kotlin & Java (for Android development)
- Firebase (for push notifications and messaging)

- Amazon S3 (for data storage)
 - They expose data from the S3 instance via their web application API. This is where the mobile application is pulling data from.
 - The S3 instance is using some form of SQL database (we know this based on SQL migration scripts in the source code).
- Numerous open-source development packages such as FastJson.

Similarly to TrueCoach this app is written using Kotlin and not a cross-platform JavaScript framework. The MaterialDesign⁴ influence is noticeable in this app and so it is less surprising. Performance to the User feels somewhere between average and slow for this type of app.

2.1.6 Comparing TrueCoach and PJFPerformance (Exercise.com)

TrueCoach has a larger focus on the client-trainer relationship and is more suited to the public (anybody can become an administrator and begin using their platform for their business). On the other hand, PJF provides a greater reliance on the community of people following the same programme as the User. Our project aims to blend both of these concepts; the core functionality will be developed first (focusing on the end user) before producing administrator views and allowing a many-to-many relationship between clients and trainers.

From a technical standpoint the implementation of the applications are similar (both using Kotlin and Java, with some use of open-source packages for specific needs - such as confetti in TrueCoach when completing a challenge). Both apps also make use of Firebase messaging for push notifications. This is easily implemented and simplifies the implementation of push notifications across platforms (Android/iOS). This is noteworthy for the development of our project and will prove useful if Firebase is used instead of or alongside the technologies outlined in Chapter 3. Our application frontend will be built using Flutter. The reasoning for this will be outlined further in the document, but performance is not expected to be adversely affected. Whilst the technology will be different the functionality and user experience aims to be similar to that of both apps.

⁴a design language invented by Google (Android parent company) in 2014.

TrueCoach has a simple 3 screens - logging and monitoring workouts (Fig. 2.13) has a much better UX/UI. The ability for a trainer to add new exercises and accompanying video (both via embeds or uploading raw video) is unique (Fig. 2.9). These are features that are greatly beneficial to our project and reducing the number of app screens and keeping the interface minimal will both provide a much better final product and ease the time stress of development and testing. Only in the PJJF app can a user create their own workout and log this (Fig. 2.18). This ability is core to our app. On the other hand, the TrueCoach app is entirely dependent on a trainer/administrator supporting you throughout your programme. Furthermore, TrueCoach allows for the measurement of set metrics (by the trainer) and goals to surpass. The PJJF app lacks these features but does allow for further planning in the form of a calendar view and a “traffic-light system” for workouts on a daily basis. A red circle appears under missed workouts on the calendar, amber for pending workouts for the day and green workouts for completed workouts. TrueCoach has personal goals but no extensive calendar view and there is a simple “mark as completed” feature for scheduled workouts. Both of these elements are planned to be included on our project; looking at the preliminary prototype and feature set should provide more clarity on how this will be achieved.

reference
prototype

reference feature
set

The final difference I consider notable between the apps is the use of timers. TrueCoach makes use of both a stopwatch and a timer for users to utilise during exercises. Alternatively, PJJF includes a rest timer which Paul suggests to use for other functions but no stopwatch if needed (for example, when training for speed). We plan on following TrueCoach’s example here and allowing users the option of both. Implementation is relatively easy and should enhance user experience.

Many of the differences outlined above come down to the business objectives of the relative applications. TrueCoach is building a SaaS company whereas Exercise.com is building a fitness application product that they can white-label to notable trainers in the fitness industry. This core difference means there are certain design decisions that differ between the apps. A common and core feature with both is the ability for users to view videos of exercises during workouts and to log their progress as they exercise. This is important to the success of *the product* and the approach we are looking at following involves a dashboard upon registration where a trainer can include their branding and thereby personalise the end user experience - similar to Stripe (Fig. 2.19).

2. Project Research

This functionality falls beyond the scope of the outlined *project* but will help you form a long-term understanding of the proposed system.

There are many small differences both in the technologies used (such as AWS Amplify vs S3 storage and a self-hosted API) and in the feature sets. Ultimately, elements of both applications should be used in *the project* in order to produce a market-suitable *product*.

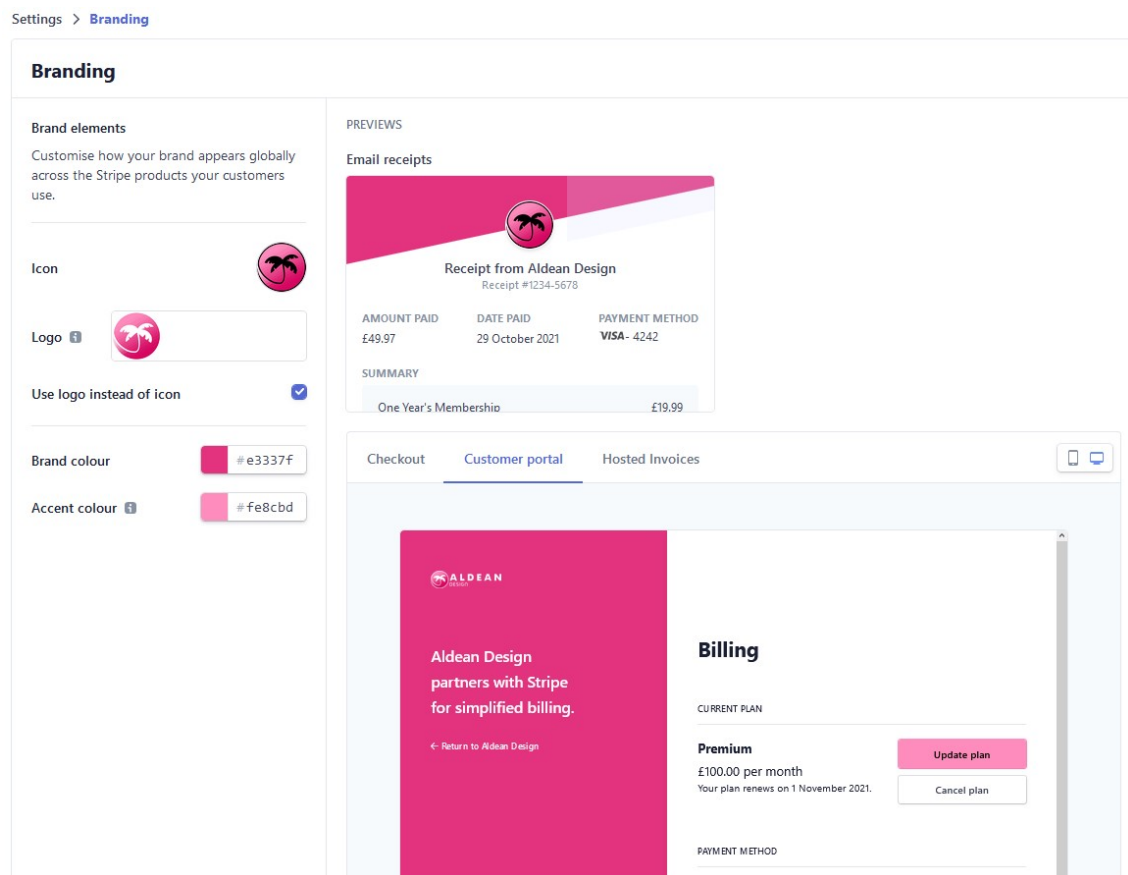


Figure 2.19: Customizing Stripe products using personal branding.

2.2 Existing vertical jump calculators

There are few *modern* jump calculators on the market right now. None are combined with existing fitness platforms - our research shows all of them being standalone mobile or web applications (2.2.2 to 2.2.4).

There are multiple methods of measuring jump height, often this is important to athletes where success is caused/correlated with jump ability i.e. Sprinting [11], American football, Basketball, Volleyball. We also know vertical jump is an important test to assess the explosive strength of the leg musculature of athletes [12, 13]. We'll be using the time-in-air (TIA) to estimate jump height. Whilst this is inevitably not perfectly accurate, when using a force plate ⁵ it is no worse than other methods (in terms of consistency) [14]. Thereby still proving useful to the target demographic.

To summarise, the vertical jump calculator created for the project is intended for use as a measurement of progress and not a concrete result. There will be some deviation from other measurements (such as using a Vertec).

⁵A measuring instrument that measures the ground reaction forces generated by somebody.

2.2.1 Maths behind calculating vertical jump using video

Below we'll be considering the mathematics involved in finding vertical jump height using **only smartphone video footage**.

2.2.2 FitnessMeter - Test & Measure

2.2.3 What's My Vertical?

2.2.4 My Jump 2

- HoopsGeek App
- Old ass iphone app
- MyJump2 itunes
- MyJump2 in use
- Maths
- Detailed maths courtesy of thehoopsgeek - legend

Read link below
and add content
here

Chapter 3

Project Specification

3.1 Feature specification

3.2 Requirements

3.2.1 Functional requirements

3.2.2 Non-functional requirements

3.3 Technology Stack & Considerations

3.3.1 Frontend technologies

- Discuss flutter motivations
- Discuss reasoning for/against

3.3.2 Backend technologies

- Discuss mongoDB motivations and advantages. Don't cover specific design approach.
- Discuss deployment and scalability.

3.3.3 Security and deployment considerations

- Emphasise this is hypothetical

Chapter 4

Preliminary Work

4.1 Software architecture

4.2 User interface design

4.3 Database design

Chapter 5

Project Plan

5.1 Time management

Gantt and refs to risk mgmt plan

5.2 Software development strategy

Feature Driven development

5.2.1 Choice of model

Agile

5.2.2 Testing lifecycle

Behaviour driven development

5.3 Risk management plan

5.3.1 Risk analysis

5.3.2 Risk mitigation

Chapter 6

Summary

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