1. Describe what you think went well in your capstone project process.

I had a bit of a head start when it came to my capstone project. I received an override to take the course and had to submit my capstone idea and provide in-depth details. I had also completed a beta phase of the products for my proposed company – so I had data coming into this course.

The thing I found most beneficial was the timeline requirement. I created what I thought would be a feasible timeline for my project and stuck with it. Some “sprints” were harder than others or took a significant more time than anticipated. I stuck with it after countless long nights of reading and writing.

1. Discuss what you would do different in your capstone process, if you were to start over.

In my timeline, I gave myself 14 days to submit my paper to the UW-Writing center and make any corrections. The lead times for review were estimated to be 5-7 days – giving me a week. I actually received feedback in 2 days and had only minor grammar-type corrections to make. Maybe I wasn’t expecting minor revisions. If I was to start over, I’d alter my timeline and allocate a few more days on my marketing and operations sections (instead of having some long nights).

1. What are the two key lessons you learned from completing your capstone project?

Business plans are hard (when things aren’t 100% up and running that is). In all honesty, I thought the products and services section would be the most time consuming. Cereus is small, so not a lot of content for operations and financial planning. The marketing section is over 1/3rd the content in my business plan. It’s very detailed since accurate estimates can be made.

The other lesson is to be prepared to change your approach(es). The feedback from my peers was insightful. The research also made me change a few components towards my business processes and data processing. Most of the core products remained the same, but there were some minor changes towards functionality, workflow, and features.

1. What advice do you have for future DS program students who are preparing to start the capstone project?

Create a timeline and stick with it. You’ll be thankful that you did. Deadlines come up quick.

1. What would you add to the capstone course, if you were teaching the class? If no changes, what did you like about the course?

As a teacher, myself, I can say that the capstone course has an excellent timeline. There’s nothing rushed and the discussions are valuable feedback. I did have some issues navigating the modules looking for resources (writing templates, rubrics, and examples). The other issue I had was the change in the format for the business plan. There are two examples: one that follows an older format that matches the business plan template, the other is APA-like that doesn’t match the rubric in some components. My final paper doesn’t line up to either of these examples. Instead, I stuck with what was in the rubric, APA 7 formatting, and feedback from discussions.