INFO263 Assignment

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Introduction

We have created an application that can be used to review and make reviews about employers. This application is for all users, either a current employer, current/previous employee or casual browser. Its main purpose is to provide information from current/previous employees to help a possible candidate decide if the company they are reviewing meets their values and goals.

Solution

Our solution for this application was to make a clean, simple and elegant user interface (UI) that captures the key features we wanted to showcase. When brainstorming the initial solution we took a task-centered design approach. We identified four possible users:

Previous/current employees
- These employees are those who have been or are currently employed by a specific company. They can add a review to discuss what their experience has been like, give ratings (such as an overall rating), talk about pros and cons and anything they see relevant about the employer.

Casual browsers
- These are possible candidates that are looking for a new opportunity or want to check some reviews for companies that they might find interesting.

Employers
- This is an entity that has people looking into their reviews. It could be for marketing purposes, improvement purposes or privacy reasons. This would be a great tool for them to use and analyze.
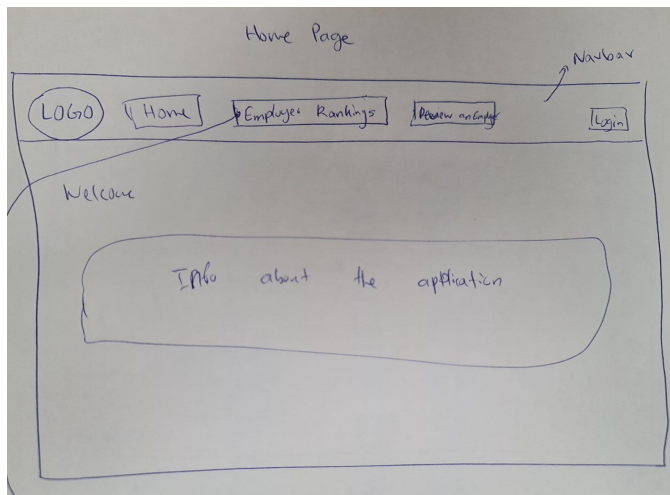
Candidates
- These are users that have had some interaction with a company, such as doing an interview. They can write about their experience so far and some tips.
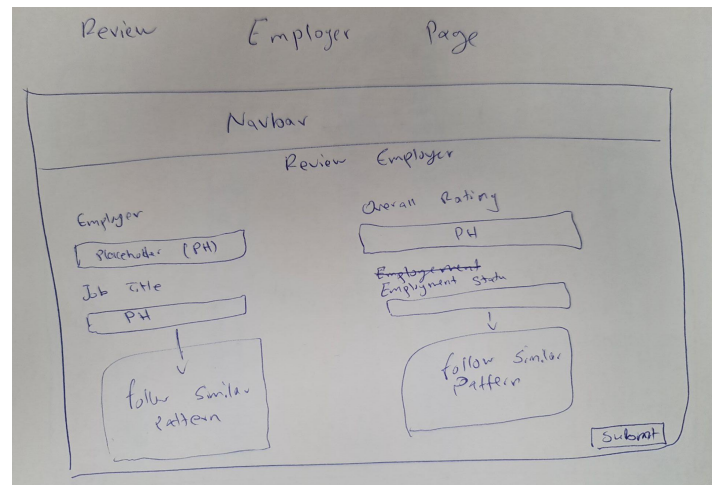
After this identification, we started doing sketches and came up with our initial design. The idea again was simple and clean.
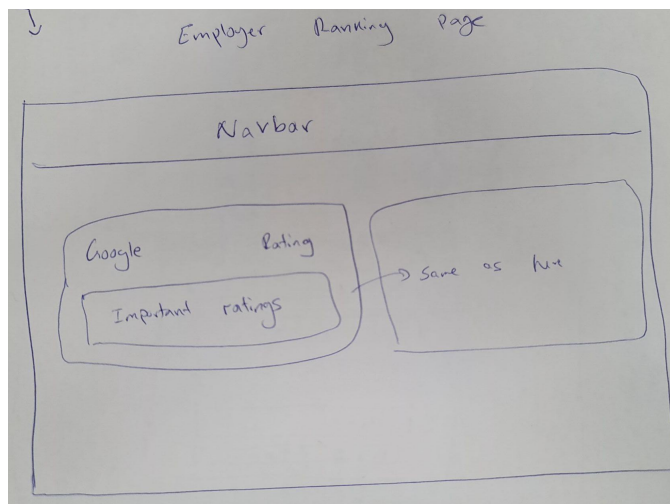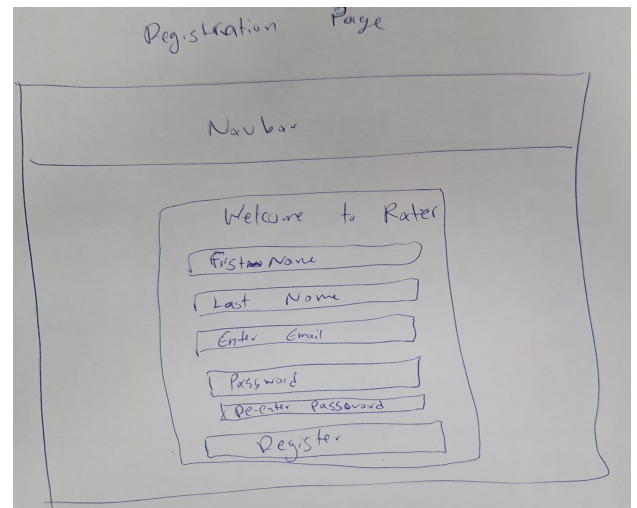
Sketches and design decisions

Home Page

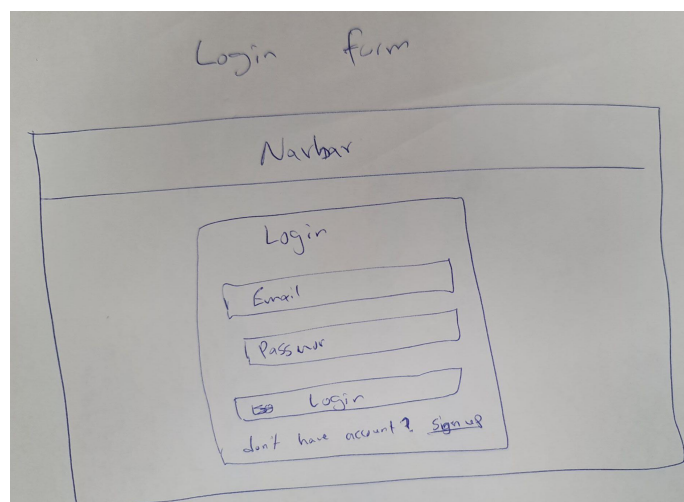
Review Employer Page

Employer Ranking Page

Registration Page

Login Form

From our initial brainstorm, we created rough sketches. We looked into factors such as what the identified users' needs, wants and preferences. This initial design was pivotal to the application as it drove the same theme (simple and clean) and also solidified ideas (as to what our UI should look like)

How to get started
To get started with using our application, use the information provided below.

Run locally:

1. Download ampps: https://ampps.com/ (take note of installation path)
2. Extract project archive in ampps/www
3. Run Ampps and click on the Globe button or Open via localhost using Ampps port
4. Navigate to the homepage by clicking on "INFO263-Assignment" and then "OpenReviewSkeleton"

If this doesn't work:

Download and install PHPStorm: https://www.jetbrains.com/phpstorm/

5. Open the project in PHPStorm by clicking open and pointing at project folder
6. Open index.php and in the top right corner click on the icon of your preferred browser
7. If that doesn't work, click on configure PHP in the bottom right corner
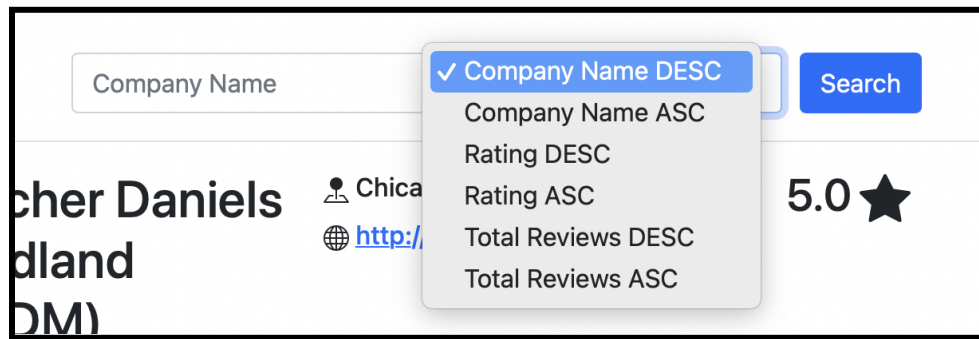8. Set the path to php.exe

Home (Index) Page
The home page welcomes the user and provides a brief but insightful paragraph 'About Us' which explains what the website is and its purpose.

Employer Rankings
The most important page is our Employer Rankings page. On this page the user can view the aggregate ratings for any company that is stored in the reviewedEmployer_S view. The page displays 5 companies per page, and further companies can be viewed on each page.

Each company is displayed in its own tile, showing the company name, location, website, number of reviews and overall rating at a glance. If the user would like more information, they can click the 'Detailed Summary' button to view ratings in a range of detailed categories. They can also click the 'View Reviews' button. This will take them to another page about the company, which lists the 10 most recent reviews of the company, in full.

The employer ranking page also has a search function so the user can find a specific company. The user can type a few alphanumeric characters into the search field and then select the ordering they'd like from the drop down menu and press 'Search' to view those results. The user can also choose the ordering of the Employer Rankings without searching by selecting the desired ordering from the drop down menu and pressing 'Search'.

User Profiles
Users can view employer ratings without being logged in but must log in to provide ratings. 'Guest' is shown when the user is not logged in.

A user registers by providing their first and last name, along with their email address. First and last names must contain only alphabetical characters. Password is entered twice to prevent the user from typing an incorrect password. Password lengths are limited to between 6 and 15 characters inclusive and any ASCII character can be used.

After registering users can login in by providing their email address and password. They can logout by clicking the 'Logout' button in the top right of the screen. Additionally, they will be automatically logged out after 1 hour.

Profile Page
Registering for the website automatically creates a profile page for the user, which has their first name, last name and email address as fields. Users can view their profiles using the navigation bar. When they click on the image icon on the top right they will be directed to the profile page. To edit your image use the "Choose File" button, select the desired image and click the "Update" button. To edit user information, click the "Edit" button, changed the desired fields and click the "Update" button. When logged out, clicking on the profile page thumbnail takes users to the login page.

Review Employer
Users can use the 'Review Employer' tab to submit a review of their current or former employer. If they are not logged in they will be directed to a login page, otherwise, they will be directed to the review submission form. The required fields are indicated with asterisks, and these all have input validation.

The user must select an employer that already exists in our database, which is searched as the user types more information in. Overall rating, employment status and the current job must be selected from one of the options provided. Job title must be shorter than 255 characters and consist of only letters. 'Job ending year' is only entered if the user has selected that it is not their

current job, and cannot be a year in the future. Finally, years employed must be an int between 0 and 100.

If a field is filled incorrectly, the field will be marked in red and the review cannot be submitted until it is filled correctly. Upon submission, the user is taken to the Employer's page where they can view their freshly submitted review of the company.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
SEO is an important process for search engines. They are used to rank the most relevant websites that the users are looking for. We implemented this feature by adding a robot.txt, which is a file that the search engine looks for to see what information they can index and what pages they can access on our website. We made the index page and employer ranking page accessible. We also added meaningful page title tags, meta descriptions and meta keywords so that our website will match what the users are looking for when searching.

Libraries Used
Jquery was used to change CSS stylings upon user input to add interactivity. PHP was used to feed HTML back to the client which contained class labels which could be used by JQuery CSS selectors to get input from the user. PHP was used alongside SQLite to open a .db database file (create a connection) and user queries were appropriately cleaned to ensure safe SQL queries.

Bootstrap was used to simplify the implementation of the design by using pre-made customisable CSS templates. This provided simplification in implementing forms, the navigation bar, dropdown buttons and SVG icons.

Conclusion
A good extendable base for a rating website has been completed with basic features which could easily be extended to provide more full functionality to end users.

While creating this site we prioritized the user experience. As a result, the website is very easy to navigate and does not put users off by overloading them with too much information. Additionally, security has been a focus in development and we have taken care to prevent unwanted access to the database.

At this stage, our website does not allow users to view the rankings of all employers, just those that have been included in the reviewedEmployer_S view and new ones made. To extend this project further, this is something that we would like to implement. We'd also like to make more use of the user registration functionality by linking reviews to the user's account and letting individuals view all their reviews and potentially edit them.