Holiday Extras

2017 / 18



Placement Journal

John Taylor

Engineer

03/07/2017

I started my day getting ready for work having no idea what to expect out of my first day, but I was still excited. I was a little nervous too but knowing how relaxed HX has seemed so far calmed me down quickly.

We started the day with Denise who gave us some basic introductory talks before helping us to collect our work laptops. Once back downstairs she gave us a presentation about the company’s mission, earnings, projected earnings and we learnt about the German and Bulgarian branches as well as the sub-companies like Airparks.

She also had us setup professional email signatures, showed us some of the intranet and explained some of our employee benefits.

We then toured the HX campus, checking out fire exits and fire assembly points as well as the kitchens, and other lounges and self-development areas that can be used for working. We were also shown the Oak Creative building where the insurance team has been working due to the main call centre being too loud.

After the tour we took our lunch and met some of the previous IPs again and played pool with them and our technical mentors. It was nice to spend time with them and helped me feel comfortable chatting to them if I ever needed help.

Post-lunch Luke gave us a talk about the process of onboarding, time at HX and how we can make the most of the year. This also included the exact schedule for the first 5 weeks of on boarding and the pod rotations we would go through. We were then given our assigned technical mentors, mine was James McNeill. After this we were sent home early (4:30pm)

My first day at HX was full of information about the company and how we’d be working for the next year. I’m really excited to get past the information filled induction days and start getting my hands dirty.

04/07/2017

We spent the first half of the day setting up all of the software that we needed during our year, including; node, git and slack.

When installing slack we were pointed in the direction of certain channels to join such as #developers, #web-general and my permanent pod channel: #pod-cust-experience. Once joining each of these channels we were strongly urged to introduce ourselves to the groups which seemed like a daunting task; throwing our first message in to the mix in the midst of other conversations. However, replies were friendly and re-assuring. When joining my full-time pod the Agile Lead, Han Cork, welcomed me before I had the chance to say anything; which was a welcome relief.

After this we setup various accounts and had our GitHub accounts invited to the Holiday Extras organisation; allowing us access to push+pull all of the HX repos we would need for development.

Then we went through with the long process of cloning and setting up the main repos and systems we would need, including HAPI (Holiday Extras API), Render and Tripapp(lite). The main time consumer was that each repo had different initial setups which were sometimes complex and more often slow to download/unpack/install. Although this was still a reasonably enjoyable process with our friendly mentors Damian and James.

Eventually, once we were done with everything besides Tripapp we went to lunch. It was relaxing to spend time playing pool and getting to know our mentors and peers further. I looked forward to the workshop after lunch in which we would begin to learn more about the structure/architecture of the technologies we would be involved in developing.

The workshop covered elements of HAPI, CHIPS, Tripapp and render, as well as showing some of the older legacy problems and explaining a few hacked workarounds that have come from the legacy CHIPS base. (I.e Chauntry, Hotels, Insurance and Parking [CHIPS] is not built to handle lounges etc so it has weird flags and workarounds to store lounges as ‘car parks’). It also showed us how each of these technologies work together to serve different elements of the business for different purposes. For example, Render is built to support older browsers (Ie8-) and uses typical server requests throughout operation. Whereas Tripapp serves more modern browsers (ie9+; Firefox; chrome) and therefore is able to run as a single page client-side application where everything is handled client-side with Ajax requests for page changes/information loading. All of these systems rely on CHIPS (booking information storage etc) via HAPI. This shows some of the architectural structure of the system:

Render <-> HAPI <-> TripApp

/\

|

\/

CHIPS

After we covered this we had some spare time so us IPs, our mentors and Luke (manager) went to play some pool and table football before the end of the day.

I headed home, tired from constantly paying attention to lots of new information being thrown at us but having enjoyed gaining a deeper understanding of the systems we’d be interacting with daily.

I look forward to tomorrow where we’ll be pairing with testers and shadowing them; beginning to see some of the processes involved and experience them for ourselves.

05/07/2017

First day of tester pairing with my tester, Jamie Matthews

Met Jamie, Mark and Becky, talked somewhat; general introductions

Went to the sprint planning meeting

Introduced to my final pod

Looked at current tickets planned for sprint

Helped with estimating ticket difficulties and times

Was assigned 2 of my own tickets to estimate

Jamie gave me a casual presentation of his presentation that is for testers to help them gain the right mindset; for example in relation to cognitive; motor and visual strain it is best to sacrifice motor strain if you have to sacrifice any of them. Since an extra click or two is less of a delaying/annoying factor than cognitive strain

Jamie struggled to find something to show me since it’s the beginning of a sprint and then JIRA went down

Whilst JIRA was down we just relaxed and chatted

Once JIRA was back and Jamie had a meeting Tom came over to assist me with my first ticket. It went quite well; although it took a little getting used to the code base and the workflow for committing/jira commenting at first. In the middle of inspecting the code for this ticket we decided to go to lunch.

We played pool for a while and relaxed before I went back to solve the issue alone.

Once I had it fixed I asked for Tom’s help on how to deploy the code to GitHub for the PR.

After that I began to investigate the second ticket assigned to me when there was a fire drill all of a sudden.

Once back inside I continued to investigate where the right area of the code base was make the appropriate customer number changes. Once I’d identified how the process worked (which took some time since the contact us box is populated by 4 separate sections of the system) I began to think of my solution

I managed to quickly get my local test page to look similar to Mark’s Marvellous Mockup but I had to figure out where I would go to make the “quoting…” line appear continuously with the one above; rather than starting below it.

After figuring out where exactly the contact us box was populated from (easier said than done) I fixed the linebreak and the aim of the ticket was met

I then had to commit this code to my branch (CEX-1668)

After this I ran ’npm test’ to test the repo and ran into some teething issues with syntax which I fixed. Although I still had a problem that would occur without showing much reason.

I spoke to Tom and he instructed me that I need to leave Tripapp running whilst I prepare it for tests since it will automatically re-build itself if it is running simultaneously. After it built itself the test passed with no issues and I was ready to commit the test changes.

After this, I pushed to my branch and submitted the PR for the code to be deployed once it had been tested.

During the final stretch of my second ticket my first PR request was approved by the pod and was moved on to being ready-to-test

It felt great to be on my third day at HX and already have 2 PRs created with one already on its way to testing. I’m glad the pod had some bitesize work ready for me so I could begin to get a taste for what I’d be doing for the year.

06/07/2017

Today I worked closely with Jamie and Becky throughout the entire day. First starting with setting up gas mask and CC accounts to help me tests systems in different environments.

During the CEX standup everyone explained their progress and I gave updates on my 2 PRs, I’m glad this was an inviting process and didn’t feel like I was just tacked on at the end. In the standup Adrian said he was blocked by data being missing from HXCM which was a high priority, so Becky + Jamie + I all worked on putting this data into HXCM.

Then Jamie explained to me some information about testing routes and different paths you could take. Like the anti-social path where you’re purposely trying to break stuff.. The guidebook tour where you’re sticking to exactly what is expected and nothing extra

We went back to testing CC which I found what we thought was a problem where dover port would also offer airport hotels and parking but eventually it was decided that rather than being a display issue it was merely unclear text and the Airport will be changed to Port labelling

Jamie and Becky then left for a testers’ meeting which I was called into half way through when some of the less relevant (to us) topics had been covered

* Discussed some of the testing procedures, automation of certain white label merges etc (Becky opted to just keep doing it manually since it’s simpler)
* Just before the end of the meeting we were sent to lunch since we only had an hour until our workshop at 2

During our workshop we were shown some basic javascript; types used and some things especially in relation to the way the company prefers them. (i.e let and const rather than var due to var hoisting outside of the scope)

We also ran through 9 basic test lessons online which were relatively simple.

- Problem 8 was extremely simple once you googled the js function that would perform a Math.max.apply(…) for you rather than hand coding a “largest” comparison for varying parameter lengths.

- This was done to teach us that it’s perfectly acceptable to use google to find solutions; this isn’t a test environment it’s better to use google and do a job in a simple+concise way rather than redundantly re-making functs.

- After the workshop it was 4:10pm and I was due to work till 4:30pm so I went back upstairs; On the way up Jamie was on his way down and out for the day so I sat next to Becky

Becky offered me to help her with some cross-device testing for SEO of the mobile app for HX

During this we found a few seemingly minor bugs that we reported to the team through JIRA comments

I was enjoying working and chatting with Becky so I stayed till 5:30pm when she finished so I had more opportunity to socialise with my pod members. It was definitely worth getting more comfortable with people I’d be spending a lot of time with in future.

07/07/2017

CEX standup

- Talked about how my testing of cc + becky SEO (<br> booking) went the day before and what I would be testing with Becky today (SEO extra devices on booking; especially on the issue with selecting to include parking that we found yesterday)

SEO standup (since Becky works 50% SEO 50% CEX)

- People had only a few things being put out to testing

- 50-50 was becoming a struggle for Martyn and Becky agree’d.. Talked about swapping to 1 week on at a time and interchanging since it’s too hard to context switch multiple times in a day over a short time period.

Managed to get gabble working locally with the help of Simon Woodcock

Nick Loe-Startup approached me for a chat about new products since I would be rotating their next week. He said he’ll be away on Monday but he ran me through the pod structure and their unusual Kanban board (wangban).

All of the IPs, mentors and Luke then met up to chat about how it’s going and what we’ve learnt so far. We all had lots to say and it was nice to be given the opportunity to get together and share our progress.

10/07/2017

Today was my first day on my rotation into New Products, I was introduced to Nick Patrick and George Fisher as two of the engineers of the pod that started to help me get up to speed with new products and work on my first ticket.

This ticket was to re-align a price that was floating in the wrong position on the website, which didn’t take too long to fix but gave me some valuable learnings in the project structure.

I then started to look at tickets for added images to the limousine transfer and updating the SUV image on the resort transfers products. Unfortunately both images provided looked terrible when in use, they were the wrong size and didn’t scale/stretch very well. We delayed on the ticket until we get new images.

I think I hit the ground running today and managed to make a good early impression. It felt good to be able to get a ticket done within my first day in the pod thanks to George and Nick’s help.

11/07/2017

‘Wang’ planning

I was given a new ticket on e-commerce events but unfortunately the description was very lacklustre. Since Nick was too busy to help explain the ticket I spent time shadowing the tester of New Products, Andy Hart. He was testing payments on gabble as the call centre were reporting that they couldn’t make any fasttrack bookings. This was a bit slow since I couldn’t do much but watch as Nick and Andy worked to solve this issue.

In the afternoon we had an agile workshop that let us practice estimations and let us see different delivery approaches via a few games. One of these was an egg colouring exercise. We had 3 members to each team and we had to colour eggs to a certain specification, cut them out and have them checked by the quality assurance person. We had to estimate how many eggs we could do in a given timeframe before we attempted it. Initially with 15 estimated and 1 egg delivered it didn’t go so well. But as the rounds went on we got better at estimating and optimised delivery. When we re-analysed our approach we consistently had less waste and better estimates.

We then got shown the sprint and Kanban difference with a lego game and a pizza game. This was a really fun way to be shown the differences and it helped give a visual aid rather than just being a lot of definitons to remember. I really enjoyed this workshop and learned a lot from it.

Whilst I didn’t get to do much actual work today I did get to watch and shadow as issues were being solved, as well as participating in a fun and worthwhile workshop in the afternoon.

12/07/2017

Fixed issues that were raised in the PR review for the floating price; now works on mobile and the PR was updated and moved to test-ready with a new JIRA comment. Andy approved explanation of how to run the local render tests due to the weird gas mask disable for location lookup box. (‘Nice notes’)

Awaiting Nick at 11 for further progress on the ecommerce events or something else.

Talked to Nick about e-commerce events; he says it is more complicated than we originally expected and took me to meet Pedro, who made the current e-commerce events for the other products. He showed us about 5 different changes that we would have to make in order to make FastTrack work with the new e-commerce events for bookings (PROD-2223).

The first of these changes was to add fast\_track product type to the data platform’s e-commerce schema, we spoke to the data platform and figured out what we’d need to change and which version handling they’d want us to perform and then we made the appropriate changes. We changed the schema and submitted a PR; George approved it and now it is awaiting deployment.

At this point we went to talk to Nick Loe-Startup who agree’d that this ticket would take up too much time right now since Nick Patrick had other work to do rather than spending all of his time going through this ticket with me so we re-prioritised and I moved on to ticket 2355 which was to remove the mobile input’s popover from being displayed on mobile devices and replacing it with text underneath. This was an easy ticket to undertake and didn’t take too long besides some bootstrap css figuring out. Once I had this PRed and looked for a reviewer; Andrew Hart asked me for some clarification on why ‘Shared Limousine’ hadn’t been given information with the Render changes I made to give ‘Limousine Transfer’s information popovers. I told him I had no idea shared existed and that it wasn’t in the JIRA. I then investigated the config and found that SHARED\_LIMOUSINE does match the kv pair for info popovers but we hadn’t been given a description to add so I requested Emma Pozzeti do this for us.

This eventually lead me to being out of tickets after a bunch of JIRA comments/boring re-moving of stuff on there. At this point Nick Patrick went home and since I had nothing else going on I decided to take a look at the e-commerce events by myself and I now have finished the first 3 steps of the implementation (schema, passthrough function in FT index.js, chipsBooking.js) which will all need checking to ensure I have done them correctly.

Overall, this day felt productive. It was good to be able to get quite a lot of work done independently whilst also working as a team on the e-commerce events. It was nice to be able to network with other employees and gain insight into the ticket from Pedro and Nick together.

13/07/2017

Today I basically messed with the e-commerce events all day. In standup Andy appointed me to help him test but that fell through once we found an issue with all bookings that weren’t live; then during the downtime I got busy with my e-commerce event work. I have it working now and have spoken to Erkin who seemed to give some bad answers about the schema format that I should make the transformer produce.. He complained about the booking-date format but that is created by the base transformer (transformer results are just a json merge of baseTransformer + actual product-specificTransformer). He also talked about the supplier being wrong since it isn’t an ‘’airport’’ and it should chips/fritten etc; George+Patrick confirmed that it is all handled by chips.

I’ve tried to push back as much as possible since some of the changes requested weren’t my responsibility in the first place. I was asked by Chrissy to raise a new ticket for the data team to go and fix the date problem at its core. Some debate was still occurring on the PR which hopefully I can resolve soon.

14/07/2017

Today was my first Project Lounge experience and I got to sit with Becky and Jamie. I enjoyed some of the social aspects with them as it was good to get to know my future team better.

Whilst doing this I was also busy working on my New Products presentation to wrap up my rotation and present back to Luke and the other IPs later in the day. This presentation went relatively smoothly, and I did a reasonable job of conveying exactly what the pod does and who is involved. I could have probably spoken a bit more slowly to ensure I kept my words clear, but otherwise it went well.

17/07/2017

Today was my first day with the API pod. It started off with a hugely technical overview from Connor Meredith who explained:

* Data safe guards – small copies of chips for scaling (can respond to availability lookups to reduce load on actual chips so it’s reserved for actual booking retrieval + creation)
* Chauntry Service – Chips+Fritten combined into one bypass service, it sits as a middle man between HAPI and CHIPs as part of the testing process for the thunderbird project
  + Every request that goes through it is duplicated, being sent to Ingrid and Sunset to compare the differences in the two requests, when 100% aligned the thunderbird project will be complete
* Sunset = chauntry’s test area for chips+fritten

Finished off Chauntry tidy ticket 2068 and submitted a PR for Connor to review; then took a look back at PROD-2223; looks like I need to change it slightly to match what the schema expects/requires. Then it should be ready to go. Will submit this as a PR to Nick once I have finished the changes.

Overall, this day felt very productive. I gained a huge amount of insight from Connor this morning into how some the biggest systems at HX fit together, especially those involved in the big thunderbird project (merge chips+fritten, uk+de). It was nice to also be able to complete a ticket for the pod, even if it was just a tech-debt maintenance ticket. It’s a good place to start.

18/07/2017

Slow start to the day, nothing left in this sprint that isn’t blocked, in progress/PR/done at the moment. I’ve been here for an hour and a bit and I’ll I’ve done is re-run a travis build after a re-base. Connor is moving around a lot so I can’t really get anything to do from him either.

Waiting on HAPI deployments to be clear so I can deploy the HAPI cleanup branch.

@15:01; Jamie took my position in the HAPI merge queue so I’m now merging TECH-2068 into HAPI.

New ticket - TECH-2086 (Chantry-service) to remove some old TESTT test code that forced the sunset environment needed to be removed. 10 Minutes later it’s all removed; documentation updated and put in PR. George reviewed quickly and approved it, now merging into chantry-service and ensuring the travis build log is successful. Build was successful on the merge to staging; hxtravis generated a branch PR from staging->production which I have now merged into master and am awaiting the travis build for. Successful build; code deployed successfully.

The morning started out slow but when I eventually had a new ticket it felt great to be able to complete it quickly. I’m enjoying the challenge of solving tickets so far and I’m addicted to wrapping up and closing a ticket with a well-done piece of code.

We then had a workshop on unit testing. This showed us the libraries and tools (mocha + chai) that could be used to prove code works as expected. We were taught about when to employ unit tests and how they are one of the most basic forms of testing which purely proves that the code’s logic is in order. We were also taught about spies and stubs, which can be used to monitor a function or completely prevent the functionality respectively. Each of them having a unique use case In unit testing, including the ability to check whether a certain function was called.

This workshop eventually came to a close after a few exercised to put into practice the unit testing methodologies we’d been shown. I enjoyed being able to actually try out what we’d been shown and use it in a practical way. I’m sure this knowledge will help me a lot going forwards, ensuring I can provided the basic level of testing needed to prove my code is logically correct.

19/07/2017

Couldn’t sit with anyone from pod and after stand-up there isn’t much going on. I’m waiting on NOMREP files from Lyndsey before I can start to figure out diffing those which should be fun. In the meantime I’m working on finishing up a ticket for new products (fast track events) - need to conform to schema validation.

George Bates eventually talked to me and helped give me some guidance. Eventually, I decided I would start to script the NOMREP files in a fake comparison; comparing a single NOMREP file to itself rather than waiting on perfect matching files to compare across. I started to work on this with George’s assistance and right now I need to work on extending the makeJSON function to turn the arrays of rows related to each booking into a set of JSON values related to the booking ref key. This shouldn’t be too complicated; especially due to the fact that in the afternoon Lyndsey managed to get correct NOMREPs as well as a file containing 78 header titles, so we aren’t completely clueless about the values of each field since the titles weren’t included in the tab separated mess. Just before I left work I was investigating why I have 83 columns of values instead of the described 78; will look more into this.

@2pm we also had a retro meeting; where we retrospectively talked about how well the sprint went and things we could improve. I partook even though I was only in the last 3 days of the 2 week sprint. The first task was to write an amazon review of the sprint with a star-rating and description. I gave it two different star ratings; one for productivity (5\*) since the team had obviously got a lot done but a personal rating of 2 stars; because it was boring for me since I got to the sprint at the point when everything in the sprint scope was complete or close to completion with nothing to really pickup so it was pretty dead. Then we used a system of ‘Something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue’ Where you write 4 post-its each for each of the categories where

\* Something old = something we’ve been doing for a long time that needs feedback pos/neg

\* Something new = feedback on a new technique we’ve been doing or a suggestion of what we could potentially start doing

\* Something borrowed = feedback on something we have borrowed from elsewhere OR a suggestion of what we could borrow

\* Something that hasn’t gone well; everyone said the revolver deployment delays at shortbreads

20/07/2017

Today I worked on my NOMREP diffing ticket and it currently diffs and makes the JSON in some form, I just have to figure out an issue with JSON generation before I can have it properly formatted in HTML. Other than that, I also attended sprint planning for the first ~20 minutes before I had to leave to go view a potential property in dover.

This afternoon we had a workshop on selenium/nightwatch testing. This looked like a step above unit testing where the tests would check if the website behaves as expected in an actual browser. We were informed about page tests and user journeys. With page tests being a set of tests that target a single page and prove that ALL functionality works as expected. Whilst a user journey aims to prove that a single path through the website functions as expected, for example making a hotel booking for 3 guests. We were also taught about fixtures which are similar to stubs in unit testing but instead block out network requests and return a fake pre-recorded response. This prevents tests from being slow due to network latency and also removes the chance of them failing due to network failure, which wouldn’t prove the code was actually the problem.

I really enjoyed my day today, it felt like I got to make some good independent progress on the NOMREP work and expand my technical skills whilst doing so. I also found the workshop in the afternoon beneficial, it was interesting to learn more about automated testing as I’d never really seen any of it before joining HX.

I also chatted to Luke in my 1-2-1 today and he said that he’d received feedback from Ryan (API pod lead) that he was impressed with my work. Luke seemed to think that Ryan wants to keep me in the pod, which might put me in the technical area I would enjoy anyway, win win.

24/07/2017

Today we spent our time downstairs in the Call Centre. CEX apparently does this once every 2 weeks as the call centre staff are technically one of our consumers. It provides an opportunity for them to come directly to us with issues they’re facing or suggest any improvements they want.

I spent my time working on new designs for the gabble login, which is the system the CC use the most. They would see this login every day so I planned on coming up with three designs to show some of them and gather opinions. I struggle for a little while to find a third design but eventually had enough to survey the CC. Han offered to go with me since it was a bit intimidating approaching these people. She made me feel a lot more relaxed and it actually went quite well. Everyone unanimously picked the same design so that was the one that I pushed through and prepared for testing+deployment.

The afternoon was then filled with a workshop on HAPI by George Bates, who I’d previously worked with in the API pod. He described how HAPI is monolithic in it’s packaging but is actually quite modular in its design/functionality. He talked about the main areas including controllers, the supplier factory and the product factory. He then began to explain how HAPI is being broken down into smaller sub-systems, these are known as microservices. This is being done as an attempt to kill the monolithic API and keep everything as a smaller system that’s easier to maintain and work on.

Overall, I found today very productive. I managed to come up with 3 different designs and survey the CC with them so that I could provide them with a new login screen that they’d enjoy, it also brought the old page in line with our new branding styles. The workshop in the afternoon was packed with information and overloaded my brain a bit but it was all valuable knowledge. I’ll forever have a better understanding of how the systems at HX work together thanks to the detailed explanation given here, all of which will help me implement changes in an effective and efficient manner.

25/07/2017

Today I was invited by Han Cork to attend a washup about an expedite involving the MasterCard Payment Gateway. She said this was nothing to worry about and she just wanted me to attend an expedite wash-up as early as possible, because she’s heard horror stories of engineers whose first wash-up was caused by their own work. I appreciated this opportunity and got to see that the wash-ups are actually quite chilled, there isn’t any worry about who’s to blame – everyone just cares about a good solution and ensuring it doesn’t happen again.

I spent the rest of my day implementing my original design in gabble. I managed to get all of the changes into PR by the end of day, so it was ready to review in the morning.

I enjoyed my day today and really appreciated Han’s thoughtfulness in bringing me to that washup. I’m glad my first washup is out of the way and I’ve had insight into how they’re run. I was also proud of being able to get my gabble work in to PR, I’m still thriving off the enjoyment of getting work completed and closing off tickets.

**Gabble design shared and feedback in pod channel!**

[**https://cloudup.com/cG69HN1a6vi**](https://cloudup.com/cG69HN1a6vi)

27/07/2017

For this project lounge I spent some time on a website called Code Wars which Tom Price told me about. It essentially gives exercises for you to complete in NodeJs and has various difficulties to improve technical skills in a practical and fun manner. I enjoyed this.

I also had booked in for the afternoon time with Tom for him to hand over work that he’d been doing in the pod. He ran me through all of the booking history work and some email work he’d been doing in Render. This included some PRs that were awaiting review which he wanted to pass on to me, putting me in charge of them if someone requested any changes. At first this felt quite strange as I wasn’t expecting as much responsibility, luckily Han had already been in touch and told me that I just had to speak to her if the pressure of being the only Dev in the office got too much.

Today felt quite productive, I managed to expand my technical skills in the morning through exercises on Code Wars and then had a successful handover with Tom Price. I managed to pick up a lot of information about the tickets he was working on and plenty of useful knowledge I could carry on for the benefit of the pod. I’ve enjoyed stepping up and trying to absorb this info so we don’t suffer from losing the genius mind of Tom Price.

31/07/2017

Today we had day booked full of workshops, both of which were introductions to certain teams.

We started with an introduction to the data team. They taught us about different data pods within the business:

* Data-platform – Build architecture and our in-house data pipeline
* Data-products – Data on transaction view aggregation, business stats
* Insights team – Split test data and other data that comes directly from the website to them

They taught us about the complicated legacy architecture that keeps HX’s data flowing on the day to day. This batch process seemed overly complex and it involved a range of scripts that ran daily to pull data from Webp+transp -> S3 -> Talend -> Redshift to eventually be available in Looker. There is a huge reliance on this data being readily available every day as it affects many offices and stakeholder when this process goes wrong. They also told us about how they’re working to re-invent this process into a new Airflow system combined with Google’s cloud storage and BigQuery solutions. There was even more information about these systems given but it was quite hard to follow and to be honest it wasn’t hugely interesting.

After lunch we then had an introduction to Tech Foundations, something which I was a bit more excited for. We were rune through a lot of information about HX’s infrastructure including the datacenter in Maidstone. The session then turned into a lesson about containerization using Docker from Mark Fermor. This was extremely complicated and due to how much info we’d already been exposed too today this was hard to take in. Ultimately it felt like to much knowledge being chucked at us in one day.

Overall, I didn’t particularly enjoy this day. There was too much information thrown into one bundle. It’s quite hard to sit through for an entire day and still find value by the end of it. I probably didn’t benefit from the second talk as much as I could have purely because my brain was tired from the morning. I think these would have been better as separate sessions on different days.

02/08/2017

Today was my first day in the pod after Tom’s departure since I had workshops all day on Monday and Tuesday this week. Because of this I turned up 30 minutes early (8:30am) so that I had time to read through some of the prioritised backlog and get an extra grasp of what we’ll discuss; as well as reading through the notes I made from my meetings with Tom Price before he left the pod. This gave me the best possible chance of being able to properly explain Tom’s tickets to the group as I wanted to help pass his knowledge on and really get deeply integrated into the team by stepping up to the responsibilities of being the only in-office dev. During sprint planning I managed to help explain certain elements of Tom’s email PRs that I’m taking over from him as well as some of the duplicate-booking-service that we had discussed. This really helped make a better impression back into the pod that I’ve been focused and dedicated to picking up the pieces from Tom’s departure and helping the team to move on in the right direction. After the meeting I began to work on CEX-1726 which involved sending SMSs to customers when a duplicate booking is detected via a pubsub event. This was my first real chance to dig into a serious ticket in the CEX pod rather than small bitesize changes; which I really appreciated. I’m looking forward to the API work and back-end of some of the upcoming projects that the pod is taking on. This ticket took a little while to get going properly because there was a lot of dockyard-local setup to actually run micro services locally successfully. However, once done with this I managed to get the contact-service API to send me an SMS once dispatched by the duplicate-booking-service - All locally. Right now I need to fix a 404 error when dispatching the SMS through the production version of contact-service instead of a local version. Progress on this includes the fact that Tom Vance (big contributor on contact-service) noticed that the API endpoint now operates at http:/contact.dock-yard.io/sms rather than http://contact-service.dock-yard.io/sms like the documentation wrongly said. Hopefully I’ll be able to resolve the final stages of this 404 issue tomorrow morning and get SMS working through the production API endpoint.

Overall, I felt that today was a great start to my time with CEX without Tom Price. I managed to provide valuable insight into some of his tickets during the sprint planning session and I hope the pod found value in my doing this.

03/08/2017 – 16/08/2017

During this sprint I paired up with Mike Holloway quite a lot. Together we were looking at tackling the duplicate-booking-service. This was built to work alongside the booking history service, with the booking history publishing an event when it detects duplicates. This could then be actioned by the duplicate-booking-service, allowing us to use the contact-service to send an SMS to the user – alerting them to the duplicate booking mistake.

The ticket for this were broken down quite small. Myself and Mike ended up working together on a variety of the tracking-based tickets.

We initially held a meeting with Viktor and Brad to discuss what exactly should be tracked. We took suggestions from them on the best way to go about tracking the information necessary and they told us we should define a set of event schemas for each of the areas we want to track. Which we went ahead with, this helped us to ensure that we always sent the correct information as we tracked our events.

Following this meeting we added tracking points throughout the flow of duplicate booking detection. This included from the point of detection, customer notification and even customer cancellation.

The trickiest part of this was tracking when a user had cancelled their duplicate booking thanks to our SMS. This was important to track as it would show how effective our system was at remedying the accidental duplicates. We achieved this by adding an “origin” query param to the URL we sent users in their text message. This meant that anyone who landed on our website from the SMS link would be recognizable. From this we then set a cookie on the user’s computer, meaning that when they continued on to MMB to cancel their booking we could still identify them. Then when a booking was cancelled we could send our specific tracking if it was cancelled with the cookie being in place.

Most of the other elements of tracking were quite trivial and just involved triggering events at the right times. None of them were quite as complex as the query param and cookie solution.

I enjoyed working closely with Mike throughout this sprint and it definitely helped me to get closer to my remote colleagues now that Tom Price was gone. It still felt strange not having any engineers in the office, but I’d done quite well with talking to Mike remotely. I was glad my communication skills were good enough to have a positive working experience with him.

I also spent time this sprint investigating the problem with actual duplicate events in the booking history. Rather than being genuine duplicate bookings we were just receiving the same event twice. I spent a long time trying to figure out exactly why but didn’t get very far. Eventually, after chatting around the office I lot I concluded it was probably a fault in CHIPS. Due to the busyness of the thunderbird project Chauntry had no time to fix CHIPS at all so this problem wouldn’t be going away anytime soon. This was disappointing as the problem is outside of our control and there’s no real way for me to contribute to a solution at the problem’s source. I would instead have to figure out a workaround next sprint.

17/08/2017 – 30/08/2017

With this new sprint came the joining of a new engineer, Sam Smart. It turns out he was an IP the year before last and he’d just finished his degree and came back as a graduate employee. I really enjoyed getting to know Sam and it was nice to have another engineer in the office again. It was helpful that he’d had previous experience at HX as I don’t think I could have taught someone from scratch, although I did manage to catch him up with a few of the changes since he’d been gone. Including the microservice architecture which he told me didn’t exist during his placement.

I spent some time running Sam through what I’d been up to and my progress with the booking history service and duplicate booking service. I also talked him through the duplicate event problem that was discovered last sprint.

I aimed to solve the duplicated events this week with a caching solution. My proposal was that if we cache every booking as it arrives, and we check that cache before storing a booking to the database we should only ever store the same booking event once. I ran this by other engineers in the team (Oli Rumbelow, Pedro Romano) and they all agreed with the idea.

I began to implement this solution over the course of the sprint, using a redis cache provided by the microservice architecture. I built up a promise chain in my event handling code so that the asynchronous code would run smoothly. This allowed me to appropriately check, cache and eventually store bookings in the database. This entire process took me a few days to implement but it eventually began to work. I proved it extensively locally and built specific fake test events to DEVQA it to Sam, who also saw it working. However, when I deployed this it didn’t work which made no sense to me. I was baffled and kind of annoyed, the code I’d worked on for a few days was useless in the production environment.

I spent a good few hours digging into this and came up with nothing. Even more experienced engineers didn’t really have any suggestions. Our best bet was that a race condition was occurring between 2 instances, and the cache was being checked at bad times in each request. Having no real way to fix this was quite frustrating. It was back to the drawing board once again. At this point I left the booking history alone for a few days to rest my frustrations, picking up some basic tripapp tickets in the meantime.

On the last day of this sprint I spoke to Tom Price to see if he had any genius ideas. He said we could implement a second set of caching operations before we get to the main set, this pre-cache could be the very first step in the process instead of being behind any logic at all. Oli Rumbelow also suggested that instead of using a hosted redis instance we use in-memory cache which has less latency. At this time I also checked with Tom Price if there was any disadvantage to making this database transactional, which would solve the problems but feels a bit dirtier. He agreed it would still be suitable for all purposes, if it comes to that.

I attempted to implement this pre-caching solution combined with an in-memory cache and I managed to push a solution live before heading home, allowing data to roll in overnight for evaluation at the beginning of the next sprint.

Overall, this sprint has felt quite frustrating. I’ve invested time into implementing solutions to this duplicate event problem and it’s been extremely annoying seeing them perceivably work locally but fail in production. It’s quite disheartening to be battling a problem that you can’t re-produce until it’s already deployed. I’ve chatted to Han about some of this and she thinks I need to be less harsh on myself, saying that I’ve done amazingly with what I’ve been given – especially as an IP. I can see where she’s coming from, but I just wish I could have solved these problems already.

31/08/2017 – 13/09/2017

The start of this sprint essentially continues exactly from where I left off yesterday, this project now kind of just exists outside of sprints and is always on the to-do list.

I started out by investigating the data from the night before, checking to see if the pre-caching solution made any difference. Unfortunately, it hadn’t change anything. By this point it wasn’t just my own frustrations I had to deal with either, the stakeholders were failing to see the value in these services. I really didn’t want to see my work go to waste and just be thrown away because it’s taking longer than expected.

Because of this I spoke to the people who I knew were waiting for the service to be ready, including Cameron Viner and George Fisher. I asked them all to send me a justification for what value they’ll receive from the booking history or duplicate booking service. Once I had a good list of reasons I passed these on to Mark and Han – they thanked me for taking the initiative to make their discussions with the stakeholders easier. The case we put forward helped us to continue the project to completion with less pressure from them. I was proud of doing this and I feel that I made a pivotal difference to the lifetime of the booking history project. It was important to me that this project was kept alive as I’d worked so hard on it and I could see the benefits it would provide.

Having eliminated almost all options I then decided to implement the backup plan that I had previously spoke to Tom about. He’d already agreed that it wouldn’t be detrimental to the function of the service even though it did feel a bit unclean. Essentially, instead of storing a single row per booking we would store every single event we received and when queried only return a single most recent row. This would give the illusion that our table only maintains a single record of each booking whilst actually accepting multiple.

To implement this all I had to do was re-jig the structure of our database to accept multiple entries and then adjust the query that we do to insert data to the tables. At this stage I set the event timestamp as part of a composite key, meaning that *some* duplicate events could be rejected automatically to save space.

For the integration with the duplicate booking service I had to tweak the query that detects duplicates, this would no longer work with multiple rows per booking. I created a new query that could still detect duplicated bookings even with multiple data entries per booking.

Now that I had a solution that seemed ready for production usage I wanted to write automated tests, helping to ensure the code remains correct and the system stability is consistent. I spent about three days purely focused on writing tests. It was a really good experience for me as I hadn’t actually had the chance to employ the skills I had learned in the testing workshops. I liked being able to apply them to real-life projects and see exactly how they work.

When this work was finally deployed and seemed to be working successfully I rejoiced. Whilst I loved having ownership of the project and facing the big challenges it was also becoming too frustrating to deal with. It’s hard to find motivation to work on a service that nobody seems to be able to explain the problem behind. I’m glad to have eventually sorted everything out and I can step away for a little to work on other projects.

14/09/2017 – 26/09/2017

Coming in to this sprint I was excited to find some new things to work on, I’d got quite bored of always working on the same exact project for so long. I happily picked up some work the react-car-reg-lookup.

It was reported that this component, which looks up car reg’s and pulls back model/manufacturer details had been broken in some way. Jackie reported that CDL (the supplier) reported they were receiving a lot more junk requests than usual.

When I investigated this problem, it looked like it was coming from the fact that the car-reg field would submit a request whenever the user had stopped typing for more than 1 second. This seemed like too short of a threshold, especially for something like a car reg which a user could be slow to type. It also meant that if someone slowly typed their reg we’d send 7 requests before they’d got their actual reg. This seemed like a crazy method of submission to me.

My first change made the field lookup your details **only** when your cursor left the field, indicating that you were finished. This alone would have reduced the request numbers, but I wasn’t happy with it being quite unclear to the user. I decided to instead implement a button that submits the search for your car’s details. This made it much clearer to the user and ensured that they knew what the field was doing, it removed the guess work. I received good feedback from this decision by testers Jamie and Becky who agreed that it was beneficial for the customers.

This sounded like a project well done that was ready to deploy at this point. However, I ended up having issues with the selenium tests for multiple days. All of the tests which were failing on my build in staging were absolutely fine on my own branch. I battled against this with no idea why there was a difference between the success of the tests locally vs. in staging. I eventually sought help from Tom Price and George Fisher who after about an hour managed to solve the problem. I was glad this finally worked and could be deployed.

Overall, this sprint didn’t feel extremely productive. After all, I’d spent an entire 2 weeks on one focal point but had a few bumps along the way. Including having to get used to the funky way the react-car-reg-lookup component is pulled into tripapp and render from a single source. Especially having worked almost exclusively on the backend booking history service recently this took some getting used to. I’m glad I managed to get there in the end and I believe my front-end skills benefitted from the experience, especially learning more about componentization.

27/09/2017 – 10/10/2017

During this sprint I ended up focusing on work surrounding the “Real Reviews” project. This initial ticket involved trying to make the reviews that appear on the website more brand-based. Right now, no matter what brand is in use we show the HX-specific reviews which isn’t as useful for customers. As much as products might not change between brands those products can still operate slightly differently per-brand and receive different ratings. It seems only fair that reviews are separated by brand.

Upon initial investigation the entire database filled with reviews seemed to be flawed. Most of the reviews we have don’t actually have a branch attached. However, when I spoke to Ricardo he told me that reviews which have an empty brand are technically HX reviews. Meaning that HX reviews could be branded as either ‘’, null or ‘HX’ which was annoying.

At least this meant it should still be possible. I paired up with Adrian remotely for a lot of this work. We initially made the change to HAPI to be able to pass in a brand and a language so that we can pull back the appropriate reviews. We ran this by Ricardo to check he saw the expected data. Whilst he couldn’t confirm that the data was the exact same he still approved of our source and said that once we have it working he would point his work to use our query. I saw this as a success as we’d essentially been told we’d written a better query than what he was using.

Having had this confirmation Adrian and I started to work on changing tripapp and render to actually supply the brand params when querying for reviews. This was a fairly trivial change, besides tripapp in which I did have to go and add the brand codes to the site-config files.

During this implementation step we were made aware of the reviews-service too. Which was one of the smaller services trying to replace functionality of HAPI. It was entirely focused on supplying review data to dependent services – we’d now have to change this area as well as HAPI. Although annoying Adrian and I managed to convert it to use our query quite quickly.

We now had faith that our complicated query had been changed in all of the correct places – including the core change in HAPI + Reivews-service and the parameter pass-in change in Tripapp+render.

This piece of work went pretty well and gave me a lot of exposure to HAPI and some other microservices besides BH. It was interesting to investigate some of the legacy areas of HAPI, including this database. The work could have been a lot easier if the design was different, but we managed to make do with what we had. My communication certainly benefitted from working remotely with Adrian so much!

16/10/2017 – 1-2-1 notes

Hx new objectives

Fortnight 1

- Explore other/core systems

- Recently paired up with Adrian on work in HAPI to change how reviews are pulled back and accidentally became the go to guy for reviews for a few days. A couple different review problems were highlighted and asked of me during this work.

- Jess Everton - Asked me to investigate certain product codes that were coming back with no reviews on live trip app (was before I had deployed and it seemed my updated code would fix it anyway after checking oldcrone)

- Jackie King/Cridders - Asked to investigate why Cardiff Parking products show that there are reviews but won't actually pull them back when you open the modal. This was highly important since we just signed a contract with Cardiff and it turned out that HAPI wasn't stripping out all product prefix codes correctly, meaning the 'NC' prefix that Cardiff products had would fail a lookup in oldcrone where the reviews are stored against a non-prefixed product ID.

(https://github.com/holidayextras/hapi/pull/2060)

- Also reflected my changes in the reviews-service so that it would be ready to exactly match HAPI when it becomes used fully. I also raised the prefix issue with Joseph Norman and thanks to that he has now figured out a lot of the earlier issues the service had since he had missed some of the reviews functionality in HAPI.

- Some really basic trip app stuff: https://github.com/holidayextras/tripapplite/pull/6847

- Contribute more to technical discussions/conversations/planning

- Not really had any big discussions, slightly happens in day to day conversation with Sam but nothing particularly key

- https://monosnap.com/file/6nPimtkEQ2CSF7nC9UX8CGvLWwUuFN.png ?

- Improve mindfulness/self-reflection

- Nah

17/10/2017 – Post Onboarding regrets

Today was our first call center day in a while and we due to the HARP issues and different things that came up. After our previous successful visit and chat with the CC staff we didn't do much talking this time.

I spent the day looking into the duplicate booking dashboard further and did manage to find a fix a couple of bugs that caused rendering problems. These have been difficult to tackle with Oliver Rumblelow (biggest knowledge of micro-services) being on annual leave for 2 weeks; how inconsiderate.

I then had my 1-2-1 with Luke Hansell after lunch where we spoke about how things have been going since onboarding. I regrettably had to tell him that my previously full diary had become bare and that I've gotten a little lazy on collecting feedback now that I've onboarded. We spoke about ways we could try to target this and now I'll hopefully be back on track with this journal as well as continuing to write about personal developments during the day; which will help me reflect on soft skills and things I don't notice usually.

After talking to Luke and being encouraged back into my old habits Louis Pryer and Jess Everton of the Parking (booking) pod approached Mark and I. They had problems with Tripapp failing to retrieve any reviews and wondered if it was related to the recent changes I'd been making to the way reviews are calculated and retrieved. It turned out it was because of some silly duplication of code across platforms. To put it simply: HAPI, which is in charge of fetching reviews, was removing 2 letter prefixes from the product codes which are simply used to identify what system they were made in. However, when Tripapp was requesting reviews it was also removing the 2 letter prefixes, meaning in certain complex scenarios we would end up removing the first 2 letters twice. Which obviously leaves an invalid product code and the reviews couldn't be found. Louis and I quickly agree'd a fix on both systems and I pushed mine into a PR very quickly for his review. Although we decided to merge this in to production tomorrow since HAPI builds can take up to an hour.

I feel the day was relatively productive and I quite enjoyed having responsibilities over the review changes even if I don't like when errors occur. It's important to see why these things happen and keep them in mind for the future; and think of ways to centralise this sort of thing to avoid it in future.

**Personal developments**

Today felt like a good day for my social skills within the pod since we were all sitting together. This is obviously an important part of being able to communicate with the team.

I also feel that I have improved slightly with my assertive language. This was clear when Jamie had some issues testing my work and throughout helping him and providing solutions I spoke with certainty. For instance, telling him "that's caused by caching" instead of speaking with my usual habits of prefixing everything with "I think...". This is something I brought up in my onboarding review and I really want to improve my use of language to give firmer instructions/opinions/contributions that sound like I believe in them.

26/10/2017

Went to look at hammertime, got pulled into a stupid backlog call, then helping germans in a groupchat then a meeting then investigating then making a ticket then doing the work and trying to figure out why lang is EN.....

31/10/2017

Did a bit of work on Kiril's PR, mike's PR but barely anything. Now looking at SSG pages, trying to talk to SEO but they're mostly gone home

17/11/2017

Got pulled into a random meeting with Nathan Scott and Sam Smart today since apparently some stuff me and Sam complained about Jamie in the office came off as tester-hatred and he wanted to see how we feel about the process and understand our problems.

22/11/2017 – Don’t look back in anger

The last 2 weeks

* Cautions
  + Be more careful with what I say
  + Take longer to think of who might be impacted, who's around?
  + Time, place, people - What is appropriate in the situation?
  + Bring problems up with the person themselves in a fair environment
    - Good points:
      * I took feedback on board quickly, talking to Jamie straight after the incidents and seeking a solution and re-assuring him that I didn't mean to offend him. We both agree'd that we know that, we have a similar attitude and he understands the way I am
      * 40 Minute call
      * Messaging him about scenarios
      * Sharing my unit test scenarios with him, explaining the differences
* My attitude towards tickets needs improving
  + Probably settled in too much, being too honest, or too vocal even though I'd still do the tickets
* Actual approach to work is still strong, always communicating with people when I need to,
  + been a bit better at approaching Kiril/Adrian and calling them sometimes
  + (previously talked that I don't really seek their help too often)
* Need to get more involved with stuff outside of sprint work
  + Expedites
  + Projects

Find a stretch - talk to some people who hold it and message Luke

29/11/2017

After being forced to rush out the FAQlink work yesterday I accidentally left in a bad test URL in the config (http://take.ms/8oeSd) - Putting out a fix for this as early as I possibly can but it still feels silly that I let it happen. Just purely from the rush and pressure that was on the ticket yesterday in order for it to be ready to demo to Matt.

08/12/2017

Today I spent the day teaching a new guy the ropes of CEX.

Jordan Claque is his name and he spent the entire day shadowing me from about 10:30am onwards. We started having a chat with Sam and I, both helping him get to know all of the projects that CEX has. It was a bit awkward at first trying to scramble for things to explain and say but eventually we sat down together and I talked him through the work I've been doing and we loosely pair programmed some of the work - Using his input for validation and sometimes coding improvements (input cookies check instead of a callback param)

He will be joining this pod so it's good to hit the ground running and start building a bond at the early stages, as well as helping him get to grips with the projects we have. Towards the afternoon we found a bitesize ticket for him to do: CEX-2025 - To add a "current product" title to MMB's P2P page we've been working on. I helped get him set up on Adrian's branch and then tried to let him find his feet a little, answering some questions as he went. It took a little bit of time but he found the right area and made the change. I told him to use Jamie for advice on UXUI and they made a prettier design with a paneled header. We then spent time trying to get an automated test working for this but struggled with bad re-mock dates since the branch was so old. Some of this will be automatically fixed when we merge master back in and take Sam's recent changes. However, I feel that it really helped me notice how far my social abilities have come to be able to spend an entire day with someone new and not really struggle to talk much and survive the day whilst being productive and teaching him as much as I could. I don't think I would have been near this confident or comfortable to help guide someone so much had I not had 5 months experience at HX. I also noticed that I used a lot more assertive language and prompts now; which is something I mentioned in my previous review - that my language was too wishy washy and unconfident. I believe that has made a change for the better nowadays and I confidently lead this newcomer to a reasonable understanding of CEX and some of our systems.

11/12/2017

Today was quite an eventful Monday, it started off quite normally - Just trying to write tests and helping Jordan a little bit. It was also extremely snow-y but none of it 'pitched'. Anyway, early in the morning there was an expedite on Render that I got a little bit involved in since I set out to in my objectives with Luke. I mainly helped Rosie/Sam investigate and it was caused by an issue where Slav merged his HAPI work before his Render work by mistake and left the payment page broken. This prevented customers making bookings on some older browsers as well as the partner sites that use Render.

Throughout the afternoon we were having a lot of discussion about how to handle the requests to the Priority Pin service on Heroku. It's hosted externally on Herokuapp and I asked Adrian to check with Pod-PII (Personally identifiable information team who fixed previous data breach issues) and the approach seemed a bit off. Upon some further investigation we found that our changes to allow the Manage-My-Booking (MMB) pages to use the service had actually put customer data at risk. We were storing their booking reference and user\_ext\_id (identifies the user) against the priority pin which is publicly accessible. This means that any person (or scraping bot) would be able to pull back this information and be able to View/Amend and even Cancel customer's bookings. Obviously this is a huge security flaw that we'd introduced via Render. However after a bit more investigation Tripapp was also storing customer emails against these numbers and could have been exploited by members of the public for potentially 3 years. At this point our discussion got pretty involved and the entire Pod joined a call to resolve the issues. We ended up deleting all current entries in the Herokuapp database so that all currently stored information was removed from public visibility. We also then put in a pull request into the Priority Pin service to disable all of it's functionality - prevent generation of numbers (and therefore the storage of customer info) and re-culled the database once this was live. Looking back, I knew it was a publicly accessible source of information but hadn't realised that we were storing such important information there. I always thought we only stored basic information about the customer's search etc so that the CC could provide contextualised help. We'll hopefully move the service all to a micro-service instead which will put the features under the .dockyard-io domain which is already internally secure. This is something we discussed at this sprint planning and I pushed for over the christmas period where we're not allowed to deploy anything big anyway. We'll see tomorrow what happens to this sprint since it was all based on the customer number and now that is on a hiatus. Fun fun!

JANUARY REACHED

03/01/2018

After a bad sleep and barely waking up on time I had to be in a 4 hour meeting from 9am to 1pm without haviing breakfast. This felt quite long but Mike and myself did a good job of keeping the process moving with presenting tickets and running the plan-it poker since Nathan was away for.

http://take.ms/aMSjR

Right after the meeting and a lunch break there was a euro kinda expedite that Sam, Rosie, Stobie and I got involved with investigating to see why there was an issue in the payframe rejecting seemingly valid cards in the german CC (non-customer facing). Then had my 1-2-1 with Luke but lost all of my prep time to the expedite so winged it a bit but still had a few things to talk about.

Then towards the late afternoon Mike wanted a hand with merging in 4 of Adrian's PRs for the customer number work to make it secure again. We merged in Tripapp and Render successfully before merging in the Priority-Pin work which caused the Heroku app to crash a couple of times and fail requests. We investigated up until about 6:20pm before we decided to revert it all out since there was no obvious solution and deployments/reverts are still going to take time to get done. We ended up leaving around 7pm

http://take.ms/raRnZ