

VIAPets

VIAPets – Process Report

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[Software Engineering]
[Semester 1]
[20.12.2014]

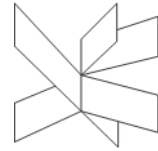
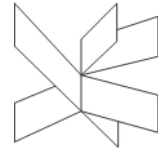


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1. Introduction

At the very beginning, this project was developed for VIAPets, a business owned by Bob Oldenuff that operates as both a pet shop and a kennel. Since the company provides two distinct but interconnected services, we set out to create a solution that is simple, efficient, and easy to use. By adopting a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach, we were able to create java-based software and website.

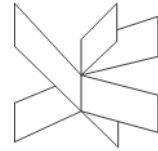
First for the **petshop**, the focus was on registering customers and sales, assigning purchased pets, and managing inventory.

Second for the **kennel**, we worked on booking management, tracking room availability, and supporting pet rehoming services.

The solution required a local software system to efficiently manage data and a website to provide essential information for customers. Allowing easy movement of pets between categories (e.g., for rehoming) was also a key priority to ensure flexibility and usability.

Our work process involved extensive discussions, both online and offline meetings, and guidance from our supervisors:

1. **Understanding the Requirements:** We gathered information from Bob's interview to define what the software and website needed, such as a simple interface and no login system.
2. **Designing and Prototyping:** We created rich pictures, wireframes, and diagrams for the website and software, keeping the petshop and kennel functions separate but connected.
3. **Development:** The website and local software were built at different times. The software handled functionality and data management, while the website focused on showcasing available pets.
4. **Testing and Refinement:** We regularly tested the tools, fixed any issues, and improved them.
5. **Final Delivery:** The final product was tailored to VIAPets' needs and integrated seamlessly into their operations.



2. Group Work

2.1 Group members

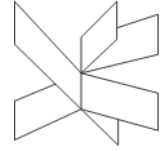
Ana-Maria Patriche, a 37-year-old Romanian who moved to Denmark a while ago. She has a lot of passions and has dabbled in multiple areas of expertise, like veterinary medicine, visual arts and graphic design. Software creation is now on the list as well. Her strength lies in simplifying, organizing information and finding eclectic connections between disparate fields.

Bartosz Kołando, a 20-year-old from Poland who thrives on independence and dislikes being told what to do. When he sets his goals, he works tirelessly day and night with a well-prepared plan and patience. He loves challenges that would make most people give up. He is determined, loyal and rebellious.

Elina Grumbina, 25 years old Latvian girl who came to Denmark at the age of 20 and has been working 4 years straight. She finished her high school and college (degree SPA masseur) in Latvia. She doesn't have any IT background and is learning everything from the start.

Piotr Gała, a 19-year-old from Poland, has come to Denmark to broaden his expertise in his chosen field. Ambitious and intelligent, he is eager to embrace new experiences and challenges. Piotr is a determined individual who works diligently to achieve his goals with speed and efficiency. A quick thinker with a bold, adventurous spirit, thriving in dynamic situations and unafraid to take on challenges that involve calculated risks.

Neegam Singh Kunwar, 19-year-old girl from Nepal and recently moved to Denmark in search of new opportunity, currently living in Horsens Denmark studying at VIA University College. She graduated from high school in 2022 AD back in Nepal, currently working part time job in Munkebjergvej Hotel, Vejle.



2.2. Team dynamics

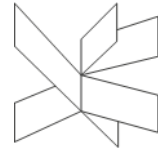
Our group was formed by the decision of our supervisor, bringing together five members. Among them, Ana and Elina expressed a group wish to work together, and while Piotr and Bartek, being from the same country, also expressed a group wish. Neegam, on the other hand, didn't express a group wish, as she was open to being any part of any group. Despite these initial dynamics and our varied cultural backgrounds, the supervisor's decision united all five of us in a single group, encouraging collaboration and collective effort.

i. Positive Aspects

- We divided tasks and responsibilities equally among members which helped in reducing individual pressure.
- We worked together as a group making use of our diverse perspectives to approach problems creatively.
- We were challenged collectively and supported each other throughout the process.
- We learned from one's another skills and experiences.

ii. Challenges

- We struggled with managing time for group meetings as some of us had work commitments that were impossible to align.
- We faced challenges with communication, where misunderstandings or lack of clarity delayed progress.
- We experienced team conflicts due to different ideas and approaches to completing tasks.



2.3. Conflict resolution

While working together as a group, we encountered conflicts many times due to different opinions on how to approach tasks. Additionally, some members occasionally arrived late to group meetings, other times others would leave early instead of staying for the entire meeting.

Resolution approach:

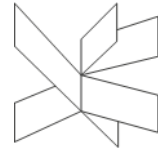
- We created a group contract that every member was expected to follow.
- We confronted member and asked them to explain their reason.
- We encouraged everyone to share tell their viewpoints.
- We motivated each other and made an effort to understand and accommodate each other as much as possible.

Results were not always optimal, but we managed to keep functioning despite that.

2.4 Team types

Our team is a group composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds, each bringing unique skills, perspectives, and experiences to the table. This diversity helps us approach problems creatively and find effective solutions. By valuing communication, respect, and collaboration, we work together to achieve our goals and overcome challenges.

We are not a well-oiled machine, but we manage to take our projects to some finality despite it. Our general lack of experience in working as a team has taken a toll on our team functionality, but we are now better at understanding the nature of group work and our weaknesses, than when we started this project.



2.5. Team roles

Roles were assigned based on individual strength and preferences. It was hard to tell which these were from the start, so they fluctuated along the project process. Hazardous events such as health or family emergencies also contributed to this fluctuation.

Ana – strategizing task approach and structure

Bartek – task support and front end

Elina – Time management and diagrams mastery

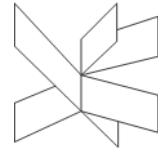
Piotr – structuring support and back end

Neegam – task completing

2.6. Social loafing

Social loafing refers to the phenomenon where individuals apply less effort when working in a group compared to when they are working alone. It occurs because people feel less responsible for the outcome in a group setting, thinking others will do the work.

Our group experienced this phenomenon as well. Despite our group contract stating that decisions must be made by present group members, when others are absent, this did not happen in a number of cases, which delayed our progress when certain members were unable to participate for various reasons (ex: when the person in charge with strategizing fell ill). Some of our members also repeatedly avoided participating in the brainstorming process entirely, despite constant prompting from the rest of the group.



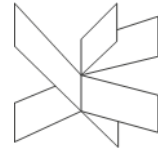
3. Project Initiation

At the start of our semester project, we were all strangers, unfamiliar with one another. We were assigned to work together in a group by our supervisors, and during the first few meetings, we felt somewhat hesitant to share our thoughts, especially as some of us are introverted and unsure of how to communicate effectively in a new group setting.

To create a comfortable and productive environment, we began by establishing a group contract, which helped us better understand each other and set clear expectations for how we should collaborate. The contract helps us define our roles, outline responsibilities, and ensure that everyone felt comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas.

Rather than jumping straight into the project, we took time to get to know one another. We shared our thoughts, discussed our individual habits, to help us understand each other's strengths, weakness, and communication styles, which were essential for effective teamwork. This allowed us to see each other's unique skills. By doing so, we were able to align our efforts, create a sense of shared purpose and mutual respect.

When we were handed our first tasks in the semester project, we were given the task of conducting an interview with Bob Oldenuff (VIAPets Owner), we encountered another challenge. Our assignment was to create a rich picture, a visual tool to help us understand the various aspects of the project. As this was the new approach for some of us, we felt unsure about how to begin so we consulted our supervisor for guidance. We asked some questions to have a clear understanding of the work. With this newfound direction and clarity, we proceeded to create a rich picture, focusing on key elements and relationship within the project, such as its objectives, stakeholders, and underlying challenges. This process was not only a learning experience but also an opportunity to enhance our teamwork skills. We learned how to effectively collaborate on a complex task, combining our individual ideas and insights into a cohesive visual representation. The experience helped us gain a deeper understanding of the assignment and provided



a solid foundation for moving forward with the next stages. As we reflected on the process, we recognized the importance of communication, trust, and collaboration, which will be vital as we continue working together throughout the project.

To better strategize our workflow, we all took an Enneagram test that was oriented specifically on work culture interactions. It became clear that most of our group members preferred individual work, except for one that would have thrived in a more paired work system. We considered restructuring our team composition, but decided to power through as we were, in the end, by following the majority preferred workflow type (second at the top of Image1).

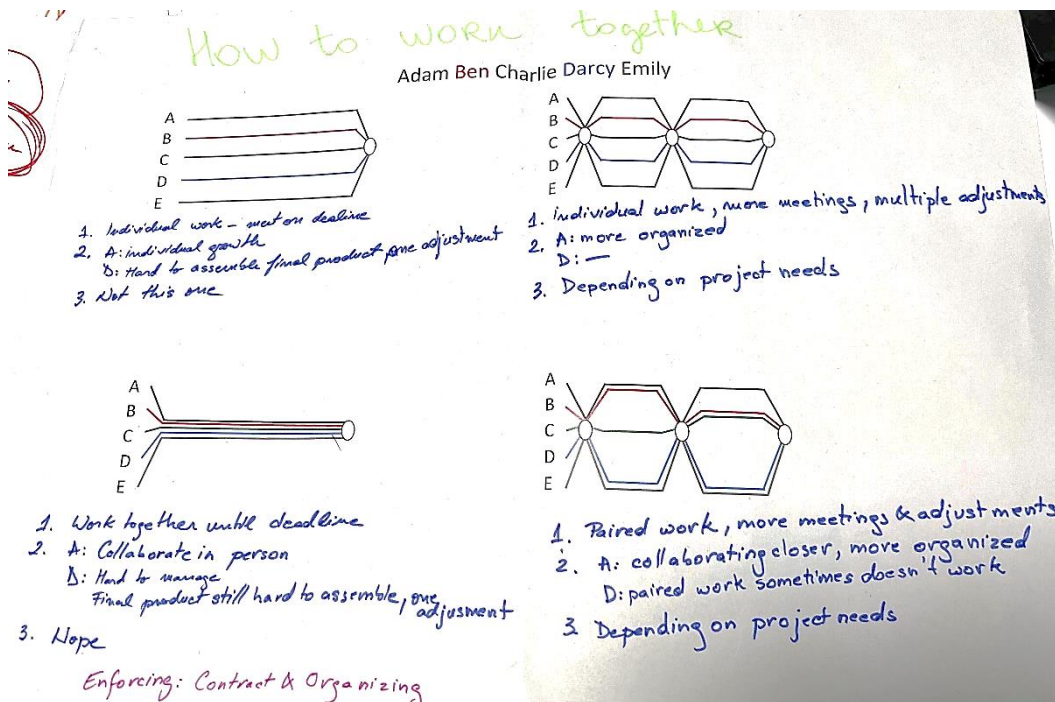
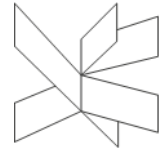


Image 1 Workflow strategies that we considered

Some of our group organizing decisions were not the best, but we now have the experience of making these choices and are better prepared to approach them in future group work.



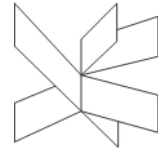
4. Project Execution

4.1. Project description

We started working on this project by reading and deconstructing the case interview provided by our supervisors. Understanding the client, Bob Oldenuff, and his business was valuable in establishing and simplifying his needs, so that our software solution answers his concerns in the most user-friendly way.

Some of our concerns were also related to our group members' workflow needs. After analysing the case and boiling it down to the main functions that the system needed to perform, in such a way that we each could focus on one main functionality element.

We assembled a plan to approach the execution of our project, but many elements were difficult to estimate precisely. Our starting plan suffered changes along the way, and we adapted our progress to the unforeseeable events that occurred throughout the project work period. The difference can be followed by comparing the plans in Project Description (Appendix 1) with the reports in the logbook (available in the Appendix 14 file).

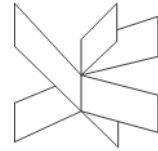


4.2. Project progress

The Analysis stage of our project took much longer than originally estimated, in part due to communication problems between the group and the project supervisor responsible with guiding our design process.

We chose to wait until our supervisor approved our plans, which proved to be the least efficient path, thanks to our communication difficulties. The time was not entirely spent on tweaking diagrams, however. We also worked on improving our workflow and communication methods in this time, we all got to a workable familiarity with github functions and strategies to keep our coding work updated in real time, which saved us a lot of time in the next stage.

As the deadline approached, we decided to start working on assembling the software system, which proved to be the best way for us to understand and complete our system design. While we assembled the code and methods needed to answer the user's needs, we also came to understand the design elements that we were struggling with before. This led us to the understanding that planning project work is best when adapted to the team members' needs and the events that the team goes through, instead of to a rigid schedule. Skipping some steps, only to return to them after completing those that we better understand how to approach, proved to work best for our group.



5. Personal Reflections

Ana-Maria Patriche

This is not my first formal education in Denmark, so I expected that I would be better prepared to work in a group now than I had been the first time. And in truth, certain elements did catch me much better prepared than my colleagues, which allowed me to help them to a degree. This ended up setting expectations that proved difficult to keep up with, in my group dynamics.

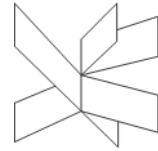
The learning process was different, however, from my first education, with a much quicker information distribution pace and assignment frequency, which affected my ability to keep up. I had to prioritize some tasks over others, while also making sure that I at least keep a surface level of understanding on lessons and tasks that I had to downgrade priority-wise.

I am much more efficient at strategizing information than at managing people, and by taking over the first stages of group work, I ended up being expected to keep doing this throughout the project. My attempts to share my struggle with the group and involve my teammates in taking over some of these roles were not efficient. This is in part also because I need to work on my communication skills and be more open about it with my teammates. In the future, I intend to be more direct and insist that my teammates also express their concerns and struggles along the way. I also intend to involve our supervisors earlier when team management concerns arise, to make the best out of their far more extensive experience in team management and communication.

VIA University's 'Learn by Doing' approach proved good for me. Working on a project from start to finish, experiencing difficulties and overcoming them through both my own efforts and the help of the network set up by the campus community (teammates, supervisors, mentors, counselors, etc) ended up in giving me valuable tools and understanding that I can see helping me in future projects and group interactions.

Bartosz Kołando

Working on this project, I gained valuable knowledge and experience. I have never worked on such a project before. I had to learn how to collaborate with other group members and how to split tasks among us. Working as a part of a team was both fun and challenging. Very important lesson I learned during this project is the importance of all group members sharing the same vision of the project. When everyone is aligned on the goal and follows clearly defined plan (approved by everyone), the work becomes more organised, and the process flows much more smoothly. In our project, we sometimes experienced moments where a lack of clarity led to delays or unnecessary work. The atmosphere was very friendly the whole time. Everyone spoke their minds



without hesitation. All of us were helping when someone had questions or problems. I was sceptical about working on the project with a group at first but now I feel more confident and motivated about this kind of work. Moving forward, I am eager to take part in more group projects, continue developing my teamwork skills and apply the lessons I learned so far.

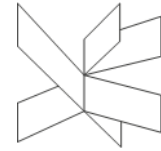
Elina Grumbina

Time to time I was reflecting on group project, university life, because for me it was drastically different from what I had before (mainly work). I knew that we would have in this education group work, and I was ready for that, yet it also opened another side of me that I forget or didn't know about. At first study was easy, then at one moment I opened my eyes and I was sinking in assignments and deadlines (which is good, this is experience), and it was hard also to keep up with work at the same time. But alone I wouldn't go thought it, so I am thankful to my kind class-comrades that helped me and support a lot. If I go back to the group project reflecting part, I found out that long-time project for me is something that is hard to keep up with. Procrastination, lack of focus, lack of knowledge and lack of experience in programming and academic writing was and is challenging for me. And about group dynamic and how we interact with each other are also interesting experience to me, because we all from different countries, ages, experiences, and based on that we had our ups and downs. And this is my first time working in the group like this.

I came to conclusion that, even though I don't understand something or something seems hard, I better sit and go through it, because maybe not from the first try, but from another I will understand it. And now looking at our project and things that we wrote I can't believe that we really did that (that's amazing, if I can write it here).

Piotr Gała

My first days in school were, let's say, 'weird'. I convinced myself and instead of being so quiet and not so talkative person, as I have in common, I tried to be more open and invited some people to my closer space, but for some reason it came much easier to me than I imagined. Fortunately, I chose right, and most of people that I started to talk with, became my best friends here. First studying days where so though, everything was in English, everyone was talking in different languages, and I was super stressed that I won't be able to catch up with all of this stuff. Luckily people in Denmark are different, they are so kind and helpful, everyone that I had talked to always had a smile on the face. Job was the next thing that I have to deal with, but here also I found people really helpful and trouble-free, what allowed me to cope with work, school, friends, family and myself at the same time.



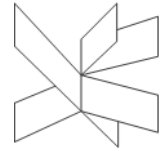
When I started working with my team on the project I faced many difficulties. It was not only technical and programming skills but also communication ability, listening to others

Neegam Singh Kunwar

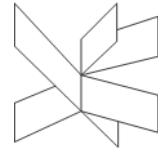
Moving from one country to another to study is something I could have never imagined in my childhood. I always dreamed of working in a technical field and wanted to study something that is related to technology, so I searched online for the best universities. I found that VIA University College was the best fit. I applied, luckily, I got accepted. After moving here in Denmark, I was excited for my first day at VIA and eager to learn new things. I made friend here named Kabita, who is also from Nepal. Later I made another friend, Faduma.

Talking about my studies, I find it challenging because I don't have a background related to technology. When I first joined the class, I didn't understand anything. I talked about my problem with Professor Joseph, and he reassured me that it is difficult for everyone at the start. He advised me to take things slow. After that, I started to understand the material better. Whenever I have any problems, I ask him, and he takes the time to explain things. My friends and I learned together as well. If I face any difficulties, and we try to solve it together as well. If I face any difficulties, I ask them, and we try to solve together. We have a SEP group that was formed by our supervisor, and we are required to work together as a team. When I first meet my group members, I found them very soft spoken. I am naturally shy and hesitant to speak my mind. Sometimes, I would stay quiet during group meetings because I was afraid they might judge me, especially since I wasn't always fully aware of what was going on. One day, they addressed this issue with me directly and encouraged me to share any problems I might have. I opened up and told them I was dealing with mental health challenges. From that day on, I started participating more in group activities and gradually became more comfortable with them. During assignment deadlines, I often felt stressed, but my group members were very reassuring. Three day before the final project submission, I told Elina that I was feeling worried about whether we could finish the project on time. She reassured that we would get it done. I feel truly lucky to be part of this supportive group. During my first semester, I faced significant challenges as the academic workload increased day by day, making it hard to keep up with the studies. At the same time, I was working, which added to the difficulty of balancing my studies, personal life and work responsibilities. I realized that I had underestimated the demands of university life. The goals I had were not SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), and I lacked effective time management and consistency. According to Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, learning through experience helps student develop critical thinking and personal responsibility (Kolb, 1984).

Reflecting on this experience, I gained many valuable insights and experiences. I realized that asking for help from friends and group members is not something to be



hesitate about. I learned the importance of being consistent and staying actively engaged in my studies. I also understood that perfection is not about knowing everything; even having a little knowledge can be valuable. I will carry these lessons forward and apply them in the future to improve myself.

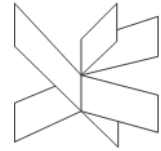


6. Reflecting on Supervision

Maintaining open communication and seeking proactive guidance from the supervisors were key to our project's success. Supervisors Mona and Joseph played a vital role in ensuring the submission of our assignment. They were always ready to provide help whenever asked. Whenever we faced any confusion and asked for their help, they promptly offered support. This approach significantly enhanced our confidence and clarified our understanding in most cases.

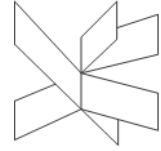
Supervision played a big role in helping our project move forward. In the beginning, the guidance on how our team should work together and the “rich picture” task made new assignments easier to understand and boosted our confidence.

In the future, we will keep detailed notes on supervision insights and action plans, but also allow ourselves a higher degree of independence regarding our task progression. We will share feedback for continuous improvements and seek advice more frequently from our supervisors to correct our assignments and help when struggling with teamwork.



7. Conclusion

Effective group work relies on clear communication, strong motivation to complete tasks well, and a structured way to tackle assignments. It is important to follow guidelines, such as understanding each member's role, so that certain tasks can be accomplished even when someone is unavailable, respecting each other's opinion, and providing constructive feedback. Developing the ability to handle tasks involves making decisions, seeking help from peers when something is unclear, and 100% effort in everything. By reflecting on these experiences, we can continuously improve and adapt our strategies for future study or work contexts, ensuring more successful outcomes in collaborative efforts.



8. References

VIA UC, 2024. *VIAPets.pdf*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://via.itslearning.com/ContentArea/ContentArea.aspx?LocationID=33802&LocationType=1&ElementID=3781498>

Appendices