

Criterion A: Consultation

Interview with client

Client name: Mr. Brock

Date of interview: February 25th, 2022

Below is the excerpt from the interview

Me: Good morning! Can you please give me a brief idea about your work?

Mr. Brock: Sure! I am the administrator of the student volunteers in the school. The volunteers are mainly divided into three groups: the peer helpers, the marketing helpers and the PE helpers. The peer helpers are students who have been studying in the school for a certain period of time and are familiar with how the school operates, new students will be assigned to them for assistance in order to adapt to school life faster. The marketing helpers' responsibility is that when visitors come to visit the school, they will take them for a tour of the campus. The PE helpers are students who help with the setup of sports events such as flipping score boards, organizing boundary lines, preparing medical equipment and so on.

Me: I see. What do you do as an administrator then?

Mr. Brock: My job is to make arrangements for volunteers. For example, if there are visitors who want to visit the school at a certain time, I need to arrange a marketing helper who is available at that time to show them around the campus. There are also many detailed considerations, for instance, the marketing helpers who are arranged must know the language of the visitor to ensure that there will be no problem in communication; they also need to share the same available period in order to be matched. For peer helpers, they need to be in the same grade and have the same subject as the new student, otherwise they can barely be helpful. These are all things I need to consider at work.

Me: What's the current method of your work then? To give an instance, if a student wants to sign up as a peer helper, does he/she provide a document for you to check and you then do the pairing?

Mr. Brock: That's right. A form will be submitted by students if they want to register. There are various options in it, such as the student's name, grade, type of volunteer chosen, etc. For different volunteers, we will also have different requirements. Peer helpers need to provide their available time, as well as their academic strength. As I mentioned earlier, marketing helpers need to provide the language they can speak, plus the available time as well. PE helpers need to select the procedure that they can help with in the form.

Me: Okay. What about visitors who wanna visit the school?

Mr. Brock: There is a form for them as well, which includes the visitor's name, contact information, the required time period and the language they speak. Most of the visitors contact me by email and I take a note on the form to check later. Language isn't a problem here since I am able to use translation softwares. For the pairing work, I basically do it by looking at the paper forms, and if I find a match, I staple them together.

Me: That seems to be a really complex task to do. It must take a long time to read all these files, right?

Mr. Brock: Correct. I need to read through all the requirements and fetch eligible volunteers, and it takes a very long time. That's a part of the reason why my working method right now is very tedious and inefficient, and I've already encountered several problems in my work. In addition to the long reading time, the pairing itself is a very complicated and lengthy process, as all the forms of different volunteers are kept together while I have to put the right volunteers in the right places, so it takes lots of time to distinguish different volunteers. A lot of times for the convenience of pairing, I will put many forms on the table at the same time to quickly find the right pairing, but that makes my table very messy. My current work speed has become quite slow and it has negatively affected the demands of volunteers and applicants sometimes.

Me: Have you tried any solution before?

Mr. Brock: Yes, I have. In order to distinguish different volunteers I tried to use three different colors of paper to make records. This makes it more convenient for me to sort and match, but it is also doomed that I have to think about which color of paper to use every time someone makes a record. So it's indeed helpful, but not intrinsically helpful to me. Also, factors like available time periods are not something that can be solved by the color of the paper. And both the methods before and after the modification have a common weakness, that is, papers get lost sometimes.

Me: Got it. It seems like a computer system would be a lot more convenient in this case.

Mr. Brock: Exactly! That's why I really want a computer system right now because I need it to help me to do all the tasks I just mentioned more efficiently.

Me: Is there a reason why you still aren't using a computer system right now?

Mr. Brock: It is really hard to find an existing system that could fulfill my requirement since it is too specific. I don't want a system that is incomplete or overly functional. And even if I could find one, it might be expensive.

Me: That's reasonable. Do you have any other requirements for the system that I'm going to create?

Mr. Brock: Not really. I just want a system that could assist me to organize data and make the pairing process more efficient. If the program is user friendly that would be even better.

Me: No problem! I will be working on proposing a solution before our next discussion. Thank you!

Mr. Brock: Thank you!