Team Reflection

Ami Suzuki, Eunice Lin, George Du, Jeffrey Sun

Peer review

Constructive but candid evaluations of teammate performance

Reviews by Ami Suzuki

George Du

George was a really confident teammate who gave me the assurance that our project would somehow get done, even if we didn't know how to implement certain features initially. I relied on his confidence and knowledge often. He was very good at helping other teammates debug. When I was unsure how to implement something and preferred not to try because I felt like someone else could do it better and faster than me (especially George himself), if George asked me to do it, I felt pressured to need to get it done. Sometimes, it was stressful when I really didn't know how to solve something but felt like I had to figure it out on my own. However, it was mostly good because it made me really try to find a solution since I knew he expected me to. George spent a lot of time trying to understand what was causing any bugs or errors we would get, rather than using a "quick fix" that worked. At first I was worried that this might be too time-consuming when we were approaching deadlines, but in the long run it helped me learn a lot of things I could otherwise have brushed aside for time constraints. I appreciate the depth of his understanding that he has because of his patience and persistence to understand the errors.

Eunice Lin

Eunice was very efficient and organized. She was usually the first to get working whenever any task was required (such as initializing the project, creating documentations and meeting notes). She was a really good teammate to have because she helped us get started on each of the milestones by setting up times to meet. She also spent a lot of time on our project, even when other team members needed to leave for a while to attend interviews or other commitments. Compared to George's way of spending a lot of time on figuring out the cause of the problem, Eunice was more likely to use the "quick fix" that would seem to solve the problem (without us quite understanding why). I think this was good at times because it kept our project moving so we could focus on other parts under the time constraint. I think that spending more time later (when we didn't have approaching deadlines) to figure out why the "quick fix" worked, or what was actually causing the error would also improve all of our understanding for the future, not just for this project. Having Eunice on the team really helped us plan sufficient time to work together and to meet our deadlines.

Jeffrey Sun

Jeffrey was quite busy with interviews at the start of our project. As a result, he had to miss our first mentor meeting, and our first group coding session. I wish I could have spent more time working with him in general throughout the project, since he was really good at helping me find solutions to problems when I sat by him. There were a few times when I felt like he wasn't aware of our most recent group decisions and design changes. This resulted in the rest of the team changing the data model for a specific reason that we had discussed, and then him changing it back partially because he hadn't been with us in our coding and decision-making session. I think better communication definitely would have saved time. However, I really appreciate all the work Jeffrey did alone while he was away from us physically, and when he got back from his interviews (I understand that it is hard to work with a team when while being away). Jeffrey was really approachable and calm when other team members were having trouble. He was always willing to take on difficult tasks without complaining. He also made the extra effort to help with research and debugging when others were stuck. The links he would find and share with me for possible solutions were always very helpful.

Reviews by Eunice Lin

Ami Suzuki

I enjoyed working with Ami because she was very hardworking and productive whenever we worked together. She will keep working on the project until very late on her own even after we finished coding as a team for the day, and I really appreciate all the effort she put in for the project. She is also very productive and stays on task during our team meeting and coding sessions. She is also very willing to learn new things and work on any part of the app, even if she didn't know how to do it at first. Ami was also good about communicating with the team and responding to messages which made scheduling the meetings easy.

George Du

I enjoyed working with George because of his enthusiasm and interest in the project. I think his high expectations for our app made our app a lot better. For example, we originally were not going to include user reviews and reputation for the MVP, but because he insisted, we were able to spend time on other features later on. George was also very willing to learn new things, such as Angular.js even though a lot of people would have opposed learning a new framework for such as large project as it may have a steep learning curve and thus negatively impacted our grades. However, because we decided to use Angular.js, we all learned a lot from this project. I also liked working with George because he was very good at and willing to help other people on whatever problems they may be running into. I think it would be nice if George can be more on-time to meetings since sometimes we would start working without him and have to end up changing things later on since we decided something without the whole team there.

Jeffrey Sun

I enjoyed working with Jeffrey because he was always happy to help others when we were coding together. Whenever I asked him a question, he was always quick to point out possible solutions or look online for ways to fix the problem. He was also very good at taking initiative to work on anything he felt that the app needed. For example, our MVP looked very bad so Jeffrey spent time to make our app look nice. Before our app had full functionality, he also took initiative to start working on many of the features that were very important to the app. Although this could not really have been avoided, I wished that Jeffrey did not have to miss so many meetings due to interviews so that he could work with the team instead of remotely because it would have been a lot more efficient communicating in person rather than through messaging.

Reviews by Jeffrey Sun

Ami Suzuki

Ami was a solid teammate throughout our time working on the project. She was always available and communicative, whether through messages (planning meetings) or in person. Oftentimes, she was the one to point out issues that were important to resolve for the functionality of our app. I wish that she could've delved deeper into the quirks of mongoose in the beginning so we did not struggle as much in the middle with the database design.

George Du

George was an adept programmer and problem solver. He directed the group in an efficient and reasonable way, making good decisions that took all factors into account. It was clear that he had a deep understanding of our application from bottom to top. He effectively leveraged his previous knowledge of Angular to set up an environment that all of us could work in. When it came to our working sessions, he was always engaged, either with the code he was working on, or with helping someone else debug. I wish that he were more available to work, but it's understandable that conflicts such as interviews are unavoidable.

Eunice Lin

Eunice contributed much of the code on both the backend and frontend of our application. She took initiative in scheduling meetings and was always productive. In addition, she was quick to pick up the new tools that we had to use for this project. I wish that she were a bit more vocal in expressing ideas for the direction of the project.

Reviews by George Du

Jeffrey Sun

Jeffrey Sun was a pleasure to work with. He was willing to apply his skills to any task and never complained about how the work was divided up. Moreover, he clearly demonstrated his aptitude for javascript programming and visual design—in fact, most of the look and feel of the site was the brainchild of Jeffrey Sun. When it comes to areas for improvement, only one thing comes to mind. Jeffrey Sun could prioritize better, because at times, he would focus on

a particular aspect of the project, such as creating a visually appealing UI, and be less motivated to work on other aspects, such as fixing broken code.

Eunice Lin

Eunice Lin was the top hacker for our team. She was able to quickly and efficiently implement features that were to be put into the web application, overcoming the learning curve of angular.js with surprising speed Furthermore, she was the one who most often took the initiative to pull everyone together to work. However, Eunice can sometimes be discouraged by failure, especially long periods of seemingly hopeless debugging. As software engineers, we should try to acquire a tolerance, if not love for, debugging.

Ami Suzuki

Ami Suzuki was very motivated and agreeable. Though she had a busy schedule, she gave us a lot of flexibility in scheduling over her soft commitments, and was willing to make sacrifices for the good of the group. When she had to complete difficult tasks that required a lot of debugging, such as the population of nested fields in the REST backend, she stayed positive and continued to try new things until she succeeded. I really appreciated how her positive attitude kept the group's momentum going.

Evaluation
Evaluation of project from team planning perspective

(Ami)

I feel that our project was very successful in terms of team planning. Our plan to get certain features implemented for the MVP worked out in terms of time constraints, and we even found extra time to implement the transaction reviews feature which we were originally going to save for after the MVP. We planned to work together as a group often, and these sessions were very productive. In our teamwork plan, we had assigned certain tasks to team members. When this did not go according to the plan because of unforeseen problems, we were able to quickly reassign the tasks since we were usually working in the same physical location and could discuss and make decisions on the spot. Our decisions during planning were made unanimously because we shared our opinions openly and discussed our reasoning until we all agreed on a best solution. While this took long in the first meeting when we were deciding on a project, we became more efficient throughout the project. One possible improvement would have been to be better about possibly rescheduling our mentor meeting, when team members had conflicts. We often discovered conflict too close to the mentor meeting, and were unable to reschedule to a time when everyone could make it.

(Eunice)

I think our project team planning turned out pretty efficient in that we always got to finish just about everything we planned to do by each deadline. For example, we were able to our MVP before the deadline and end up including user reviews and reputations even though it was

originally not going to be part of our MVP. We also planned our time well so that we were able to finish our design documentation before the deadline and thus were able to take the time to make our data models look nice and add extra design challenges. I think our team planning was successful because we worked together for most of the coding parts. This allowed us to help each other in person and we were able to discuss and make decisions together efficiently and effectively. I think working together also made us stay on task more than if we had worked on the projects individually. An improvement is if we scheduled to work earlier instead of working many hours on the day or before the project is due. This would have made it less stressful.

(Jeffrey)
We were relatively successful in terms of our teamwork planning. In general, we prioritized correctly what we should work on. Meeting regularly allowed us to accomplish a lot each time we met. It also enabled us to keep up to date regarding data model changes, etc. Our MVP was reasonable and well thought out. We implemented all the features that we had planned to implement. However, I believe that it shifted the emphasis away from working alone, such that we could have gotten more done if we had done some more individual work.

(George)
Teamwork planning was successful in large part due to our ability to quickly identify what remained to be done and then quickly delegate those tasks. We all seemed to have a coherent vision for the final outcome of the site, and we also kept a todo list with small, medium, and large tasks. Moreover, we strongly emphasized collaboration. Not much of the work was done outside our long group coding sessions, where our members frequently consulted each other for help and put out ideas for discussion. One thing we could have done better is to better estimate the amount of work remaining. For the MVP, we ended up very implementing a lot of features the day that phase was due. We were fortunately able to implement all of the features we wanted, but it may have been better to have done that without the associated stress.

Lessons learned

Summary of key lessons learned
(Ami)
The main lesson I learned from this project was the importance of working together in one location as a team. Most of our coding was completed when we met for 5 hour blocks in the McCormick penthouse. We were able to easily help each other out with bugs, reassign tasks, change any designs to solve unforeseen problems, and ask others directly how the code they wrote worked, because our teammates were right by us. I also discovered that rather than having each teammate trying to solve an error each, it was often more efficient to have multiple teammates working together to solve single problems, since they were more likely to find a solution quickly. It also provided a lot of moral support, especially when we were closer to the deadline and something needed to be fixed quickly. Because we were working together

often, it was also easier to delegate tasks, and then to connect the work that we did individually.

(Eunice)
I learned about the importance of separating the different components of the code. For example, we had different views and controllers for each different page of the application. This makes it easy for us to know where to look when we wanted to add additional features or debug something. Another examples is how we had different methods provided in the services.js file so that whenever we need to make any http calls, we can easily call a method that takes care of the http request. This makes the code a lot readable and clean, making it easy to understand and debug for everyone. I think using a framework like Angular.js made it easier to modularize our code.

(Jeffrey)
This project taught me the importance of scheduling and sharing information among team members, especially in the early stages of a project when important fundamentals are being hashed out. I learned through this project that it's important to clearly think out the requirements of a project before setting out on implementation. We had a data model and a sketch for an API, but as we progressed, it became clear that some things needed changing. In addition, I learned that it is important to read the documentation for the tools that one is working with (in this case Angular and mongoose). Only by doing so is it possible to create a predictive model to use to diagnose bugs.

(George)
One of my two biggest takeaways was the importance of flexible scheduling. Initially, we had informally set a fairly ambitious goal for meeting every week on both Tuesdays and Thursdays. We ended up having to deal with conflicts and irregular workloads, which forced us to react accordingly. My other takeaway was the importance of a website's look and feel, and that that should be carefully considered when designing the website. I was able to fully appreciate this after finding the experience using the Grand Exchange to be very different after reworking the visual design, even though none of the functionality had changed. One implication of this was that we had to cut out one of the website's features. We wanted to give users the ability to upload pictures for items that they posted, but realized that the pictures would likely clash with our website's color scheme. Furthermore, low-quality and irrelevant images would destroy the website's legitimacy.