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WRITTEN INTERVIEW

1. (Start of the hack)

a. If you look back to the start of the hack when you first learned about it, what made you want to participate?

- The possibility to learn new technologies which are essential in web-desing and generally in software development. The possibility of obtain class credit if I obtained good results in the competition also motivated me to participate.

2. (Training period)

a. Once the program had started, how did you make yourself familiar with the technologies during the

training phases (HTML, CSS, javascript, D3.js)?

i. How and how much did you use the material provided via www.ironhacks.com? Which materials were particularly helpful (e.g. videos, etc.)?

- The videos made by Alejandro Diaz where specially helpful since they provided a good insight on how every technology had to be used and also included some helpful tips in order to avoid problems, along with some practices for organizing the code.
- The recommendation of using W3 tutorials was also very helpful, since it allowed me to get started early on in the competition.

ii. What other sources and material did you use, and how did they help you in the preparation?

- Alongside the tutorials from W3, I used CodeAcademy to practice more about HTML at the beginning of the IronHacks. I also saw 2 or 3 videos in YouTube about CSS and Bootstrap.

iii. Did you interact with your tech experts during the tech sessions? If so, what did you learn there? What didn't you learn there what you were hoping for?

- The live training was very helpful, as it complemented the tutorial material available in the webpage. The tips and tricks that where provided by Alejandro during this sessions where very useful at the development phase.
- Although I learned most of the expected topics, the short time available for this sessions was a downside, as at the end of them there where always more questions to ask and different topics that weren't addressed.

3. (First submission): Describe the process and how you worked on you first app before the first submission

deadline. (probe: barriers he encountered)

a. Tell me how you tried to understand the tasks?

- At first I looked at existing applications that fulfilled a similar purpose in order to get ideas about design and UI. Afterwards I researched about the living cost in New York and how the different boroughs were priced for rental options. At last I asked a friend that went to New York about personal experiences to get a better insight on which were the pricing, mobility and security concerns to have in mind.

b. Tell me about your hacking process during the 3 days from start of the hacking phase until you submitted.

i. When and where did you work?

- All of the time I worked in my house during the night after class, since the quietness allowed me to focus on the development.

ii. How many iterations did you make locally before pushing your first submission into the Git repo?

- There were many iterations, after doing a little thing, I thought of other and kept adding them until the time ran out. I only submitted once, which was like 10 minutes before the deadline. All the iterations I preferred to work locally as the errors seen on the platform at the beginning of the competition made me wary of using it.

iii. From whom did you seek help and how often? (friends, professors, online sources like...?)

- I mostly looked for help online, from the Mozilla Developer Network and official documentation. When these weren't sufficient, I looked at Stackexchange for similar problems that were resolved. A few times I asked a friend about what recommendations he had after seeing the application.

c. Was there anything holding you back from building the functions and features that you wanted to implement? (If yes, probe)

- Yes, the use of Bootstrap limited my submission, as at first the documentation wasn't very clear to me and limited the presentation of the application. Also, at first using D3 seemed as an impossible task, since the amount of code used in the examples and the complexity of how it was presented made it hard to approach.

d. How did you make use of any material from the training during this process? (e.g. the tutorials, the videos, etc.)

- I watched the HTML and CSS video from Alejandro several times in order to fully grasp all the concepts explained. Also used the W3 tutorials to understand the basic concepts of HTML.

e. How did you engage on the discussion on www.ironhacks.com?

- At the beginning I didn't post any questions and in general any of the competitors did. I think it was because everyone was getting started learning all the technologies required that the idea of asking other competitors seemed not productive, as most probably no one would know the answer.

f. What was your reaction after you received the first feedback from the judges about your app via email and via the forum?

- I was surprised to obtain a good score, since I thought that only having the "skeleton" of the application without functionality wouldn't be well received by the judges. Now I think that it was precisely the purpose of the first phase, sketching the application without having a lot of functionality on it.

4. Following submissions:

i. In the following submissions, what did you do differently compared to the first round?

- Most of all I asked in the forums whenever I had a problem that I couldn't solve with the documentation or Stackexchange, which allowed me to get suggestions from other competitors which had similar problems. Also I increased the amount of time dedicated to the development of the application, after realizing the difficulty of learning new technologies in a short amount of time.

ii. In which phase did you think you improved the most?

- I believe it was in the third phase, as it was when I was able to implement the D3 graphs and obtain the data from the datasets, which felt very rewarding as it was the biggest step towards solving the problem of the IronHacks.

iii. How did you prioritize your activities?

- As top priority I always had to make the code work, implementing a solution even though it might be a bit brute force, if it solved the problem it was an important step towards the overall solution. Afterwards I focused on optimizing the code and reducing its size, making it much more understandable as well. At last, I tried to make the webpage look nicer for the final user.

iv. When did you change direction of your activities?

- After realizing that the application from other competitors was much "prettier" than mine, I dedicated more time to the way that icons and the presentation of the webpage was. Also, at the end I was very focused on importing the data from the Zillow API, as it seemed to me as a much better source of information than the last dataset made available.

5. Reflection:

a. What would you have done differently if you could start over again?

- I would spend much more time on learning how usability has an effect on the webpage and how to simplify things for the end user, as at the end I saw some very functional applications that were difficult to use, so the whole benefits were lost at the first moments of using it.

b. Compare the IronHacks to other hacks on campus, and/or traditional hacks.

- The IronHacks seems to me like a much more academic competition, as the long period of time available allows the competitors to learn as much as they can and implement their solution, while the traditional hackathon just tests the already existing abilities of the competitors, forcing them to come up with a solution fast without really taking into account the potential of all the participants involved.

6. Future activities:

a. What are you planning to do next with the app, if anything?

- If given the possibility I would like to extend further the capabilities of the application, like making it obtain data for multiple cities instead of being specific to just one in particular, although knowing that is limited to the available data at the moment. In the short term however, I don't plan on doing anything specific with it.

b. If you had a lot of time, what would you do next?

- I would improve a lot more the UI of the application, add the datasets for different cities or even other countries, and extend the reach not only for students, but also for tourists or even possibly for people that are planning to move to a different city, helping them find the best house to rent or buy having into account security conditions, transportation, supermarkets, health, etc.

7. Clearinghouse: Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

- I think it is amazing like a competition like this exists, as it allows people that aren't familiar with certain technologies to learn them and see them in action, thanks to the iterative process spanning almost a month. This experience allowed me to approach a field of software engineering that I wasn't interested in before, and now the IronHacks made me realize the complexity behind web design and the importance of open data, which in the long run would improve the life of many people through applications like the ones that were developed during this hack.