Individual

Project Report

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# Introduction

This report expounds on my personal inputs regarding: a) my project experience, b) the project team relationships, c) lessons learned from the project, d) past course knowledge application to the project, and e) overall project conclusions and recommendations.

# Reflections on the project experience

The whole project could be described as something that went through a slow start but eventually made its way into completion.

The project began with Hardik proposing a SQL Server Database Evaluator which got approved by Robert. Hardik was looking for a VB developer back then for his approved project. He asked me if I know the language and also presented his idea to me. I really didn’t know any VB programming back then but I had an idea of how to implement his project based on my experience with programming in Java and my brief experience with using Visual Studio.

With what Hardik told me, I proceeded to researching how to connect to SQL Server Databases using VB. I was able to find some sample code and was able to make it work enough to demo to Hardik and get his approval to let me join his team. With me on-board his team, I proceeded with doing research on how to actually build the application he had in mind. This led me to discovering that I can use C# instead to create the application and using Visual Studio’s Form Generator to create the UI of the program.

Much of my difficulty at first was how to make any computer run the application and successfully connect to the available SQL Server instances. Because I did not have much knowledge of SQL Server, I felt it was impossible to make an application that can be used on any machine with different SQL Server configurations. With these challenges in understanding the SQL Server side of things, Hardik was there to guide me as this area was his expertise. This project was his whole idea so he knew exactly what needs to be built and what are the exact requirements so he was a big help in every part of my development and research phase.

When the project officially began, I had already collected some sample codes to build upon to start developing. However, as the initial phases required doing the documentation rather than the actual coding, my time was split between continuing building a prototype of the application and helping create the required documents for the initial phase. I personally like doing more of the programming than having to create documents.

The assignment of tasks was split in such a way that we who know programming will do the development work and Matt who does not know programming will do the Project Management / Admin / Testing / Documentation work. With this division of labour, I expected Matt to be hands-on with us and be active in following-up on us. Given that we were still starting the project back then, we were lax and just did what we wanted for the project with me trying to focus more on creating a working demo of the application Hardik wanted.

With our situation of us being relaxed and all, we weren’t doing much progress in the documentation. We did not expect that very much importance would be put on the documents that will be produced. For the proposal, we initially made just a mishmash of our assigned parts. Robert noticed it and was not happy at the very first proposal. I guess it could be said that not much thought was put into making our documents cohesive and proper.

We were depressed at the results of the initial meeting with Robert and were forced to do better in creating the proposal. Eventually, we were able to create a better version that Robert was more pleased about. With that, I think the group became relaxed again and this time not much attention was placed in creating the meeting / admin related documentation which was needed for the first audit. With the proposal seemingly done, I was happy to be able to focus again in doing my dev work and just hoped that the Project Manager will just handle the rest of the documentation. I was thinking back then that as long I produce the core application that was proposed, everything will be okay in the end.

However, I also thought back then that we might end up losing points with how our admin / documentation was being handled as it seemed to have no structure. I tried telling this to Hardik but nothing seemed to come out of it and I just instead focused in researching for the application development. I just counted on the Project Manager to know what he should do and whatever mistakes the team may be doing in the management side will be made known in the first audit.

Alas, when the first audit came, my fears of having a bad process in the management side was realized when Robert showed his dismay in our documentation / admin. Some of what Robert commented were things that did not cross my mind also so I guess I could not fully blame the Project Manager for it. We were devastated again in the results of our meeting with Robert and had a very serious discussion among ourselves immediately after the first audit. We discussed where we went wrong and fortunately Hardik volunteered to help Matt in fixing the Management side of our project since based in the audit, it seems most of our grade will depend on it and not on how good our product might become.

With Hardik, taking charge and helping Matt in the admin / management / documentation side of things, I was still able to focus in the development of the product. I was thankful for this and said to myself that I must finish the product as described in the proposal.

However, since Hardik had to help Matt, his focus on creating the SQL Scripts, which I needed, was shifted. This created a slight road block on the development of the product since it is very dependent on Hardik’s scripts. I was very concerned about it but I just tried to adjust and understand because Hardik has his hands full in helping Matt.

With this kind of situation, I tried to find other things to program while waiting for Hardik’s scripts. I just focused in making the UI of the two applications involved in the project. I also jumped to learning how to produce PDF reports using C#. Some of these tasks were planned to be done towards the end of the project but I just tried doing some little research already for them while waiting for the initial batch of scripts from Hardik.

Eventually, Hardik was able to fix the things pointed out in the first audit and Matt was able to grasp what needs to be done. Hardik did the exact pinpointing of errors to fix but we still helped as a group to produce the missing artefacts and documentation.

With Hardik having more time in his hands to code, I was ultimately given the SQL scripts I needed. I wanted these scripts badly because I am not sure if his scripts is easy to integrate with my C# code. I wanted the scripts early so that if ever challenges were faced in using them, we would detect the problem earlier instead of later when there is no more time to fix our core product. Fortunately, even if some compatibility issues were discovered at first, problems were patched up nicely with me and Hardik working hand in hand to resolve them.

With our documentation and programming work slight gaining better traction, we were eventually able to do something that Steve, who was initially sceptical of our work, approve of. Things looked better and we felt that we are making good stable progress.

Right now as of this writing, we are still catching up with our testing and the close out report. We are slightly behind on this but I see that Matt is handling it fervently. I am seeing his dedication to see the project through and I believe he can finish the last documents needed from his end. Of course, if help is needed, we are here to support with anything.

# Project team relationships

The relationship that the team has can be described as having many oral discussions with some misunderstandings sometimes due to maybe cultural differences. However, despite all these, the team always reach an amicable settlement on what we need to do and everyone participates in whatever resolution we come up with.

To give an exposition, we usually have regular team meetings during Sunday to Wednesday. It starts with Hardik presiding and giving his ideas. He is the most knowledgeable of what we are to do due to his long IT work experience. He then usually asks each one of us for our inputs. With this, decisions are really made as a team.

For the development work, I usually talk things through with Hardik. He is sort of the client of the application that I am trying to develop for the team. He is very knowledgeable on the product that needs to be produced so his input is always valuable. I also ask him for comments on the UI and PDF Report as the target users are Database Administrators like him. This work dynamic between us is I believe a very important thing in driving the completion of the project to success. I am able to quickly develop releases of our application and have Hardik immediately check it. This allows a fast turnaround in the development progress. There are times though that we encounter misunderstandings when talking things through. He and I are expressing our ideas which sometimes does not get through clearly to one another. This creates some little issues but in the end we are always able to work it out after several attempts at explaining to one another.

Matt our project manager had difficulty handling the management work at the start but after the audits and Hardik’s intervention, our management and documentation work started to pick up. Matt regularly creates detailed reports and meeting minutes. After what happened in the audits, he began creating close-out reports after every phase as instructed by Hardik. He sends emails for every advisor meeting and handles the printing of the documents that Steve and the group has to sign. Now with testing, he diligently tests the product I created and creates documentation for it. I am thankful that he was able to rise above our initial problems in administration and documentation.

All in all, the atmosphere in the team is a pleasant one wherein I feel like that we can argue with one another and express our own thoughts without fear that in the end no work will be ultimately done. In my experience, there are teams who hold their own thoughts to themselves and not able to freely express themselves. This results in problems later one when the project goes awry. There are also teams that only argue amongst themselves but no resolution is produced at the end. Fortunately in our team, we are able to argue with one another and always reach a conclusion at the end of the day. After a day of arguments, each one jots down their list of things to do to solve a particular issue and work on it. The tasks assigned is double checked as Hardik always follows-up on us whenever we meet. At first I felt some fear that people won’t do their assigned tasks. However, as we moved further along in the project, I became more confident on my teammates especially when I see them produce acceptable work.

# Lessons learned from the project

The main lesson learned from this project is related to peer interaction. I learned that it is very valuable to be able to work with people whom you could argue and freely express your ideas with and at the same time come to a resolution with. Also, having existing expertise is also a big thing as this allows for a smooth progress through the project. However, a good behaviour and relationship with each other is always important as having a big ego will destroy the project even if all the members are technically adept.

The very main thing I found helpful in doing the project is that we are able to discuss things and find a resolution that we all agree to follow. There is no one-person who dictates what will be done and everybody complies with what is discussed. We are also able to meet regularly at WelTec so we are aware of what happens in each other’s lives and progress accordingly with the project. We are also able to check each other's work because we meet almost every day. It is also easy to request input and comments from each other as we are always together. Each one is ready to help one another and willing to listen to each other. There is no one person doing all the work. When one commits to do a task, it is done to completion.

Another helpful thing in the project is that we are knowledgeable in the areas assigned to us. Because we are more or less familiar with the role we were assigned, the project progressed accordingly. Even if we were delayed in some documents at the start and ultimately delayed in the development afterwards, we were able to catch up because we have experienced SQL Developers and Programmers. We were actually poor at documentation so we took time on it. This caused delays in the development but we were able to catch up given that we can act more efficiently during the coding part. This situation shows how it is important to take advantage of each other's strengths and use it to make up for some obvious weaknesses.

However, in the end, it is always important to be open to each other and not be too egotistical as this will cause dismay in the group. When one asserts that he is the only one who is right, it causes hardships to each other and creates feelings of resentment. So no matter how good you are, you should always be gentle with each other, consider each other's situation and circumstance. There might be times that you want something done in a certain way but you still have to consider each other’s ability to do it. If you see someone having a hard time doing something, you should check out the person’s situation before immediately making a conclusion about that person.

# Applying past course knowledge

Being an International Student, l have less WelTec papers that I can relate to the project we had. I didn’t even take the System Analysis and Design class that should have helped us in doing the documents that are really needed. Fortunately, I had taken Project Management and Advanced Database Systems that helped me in the course of the project.

I believe having gone through Project Management and being forced to learn Project in a Box and Project Professional helped. Knowing how to use Project Pro is essential in creating and updating the Project Plan. With it, we are already familiar with Work Breakdown Structures and Gantt Charts which are required for the project. Another important thing that was applied in the Project was Project in a Box. With it, we were able to find templates to use for our chosen methodology which is DSDM.  With it, we did not have to worry anymore how to prove that we are following DSDM as using the templates somehow proves it. We just had to select which pieces of DSDM documents are actually useful as per Steve’s advice. Because we were trained in the Project Management paper to fill-out project templates, we struggled less compared to if we did not experience filling out templates.

The Advanced Database Systems paper on the other hand prepared my mind in understanding the nature of the project. Because database administration was one of the topics in the said paper, I was able to follow our Database Specialist’s explanations about the project. We also had assignments for the paper wherein I got to study SQL Server so I sort of had a previous feel on how it works when we started the project. Having database knowledge became a good thing as it really helped in my conversations and discussions with the Database Specialist.

# Conclusions

All in all, I could say that my most important take-away from the project is being able to experience working in a group wherein I can argue and fight for my ideas without having to worry about offending someone and not accomplishing anything in the end. I am also thankful that through this project I am able to practice peer interaction and practice having discussions with a group of people with different backgrounds. In my previous team projects, I was not able to experience this level of dynamics between team members. Usually I had to take on everything and worry about everything for the group. Fortunately, in this case, everyone is involved and concerned for the project. I believe I was able to create something satisfying and I would not have been able to do it without the help from the others as in reality I am not really that a master in for example GUI design. Inputs from others were really helpful for me and this guided me in the application development.

# Recommendations

My recommendations for a better Project experience is as follows:

To simulate a real world experience of the IT Industry, I think it would be better to have the group members assigned randomly. Students will just have to sign-up to a particular expertise then they will be distributed in a group randomly. This will allow people to work with someone they do not know but still share the same expertise or major with. I think being with people you do not know is a more realistic representation of the outside world and would force people to be open to other persons of different backgrounds. The topics could also be randomly assigned so that they are forced to study something which is still under their expertise but may not be entirely familiar to them. This would force people to really study something outside their comfort zone and learn to adapt as this is what the real world might actually be like. Also, it would be better to have actual outside clients for all the projects so that everyone experiences the joys and pains of having to deal with real life clients.

For the project to move more smoothly, it is recommended to fix the administration part first and gather from Robert all the academic requirements that are actually checked. This will avoid confusion in the long run as I have for example observed that students are usually not aware what is checked for the first audit. Even for the succeeding checks, sometimes students are still confused what actual documents should be passed and sometimes waste time writing documents that may not be needed.

Another important thing that I think should be included is having refresher sessions in: a) using Project Professional, and b) creating System Analysis and Design Documents. These things mentioned are essential to the project and are very helpful if taught again in the project lecture sessions allocated.

In the student-individual side of things, it is always recommended to be dedicated to the project and your team. You should always be open and understanding of one another and help each other out. Always be open to another’s opinion as it may be the right approach in the end. Also, you should always voice out your concern as this will prevent any resentments in the future. A good team will always hear you out and doing so will make things proceed more smoothly without too much debacle.

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Signed                                                                           Dated