

### Group Project – Initial Individual Report

When our group was first formed we didn't follow any established procedure or come up with any concrete roles for individuals to undertake. Most of our group were somewhat reserved so I and one other member of the group established ourselves as unofficial group leaders. If you were to define these roles then he would be considered chief programmer and I am chief organiser in charge of planning and task allocation.

Being slightly older than my peers I have already had a few years of exposure to a professional business environment and have utilised these skills to the best of my ability. While only ever a junior member of the team in my previous endeavours I was always allowed to ask questions and my opinions were always considered. I have tried to recreate this friendly environment where questions and challenges are encouraged as I think this builds towards a more coherent team with a higher level of understanding.

I have always been a task orientated person so looking at the work we were required to do I found it very easy to split this up into sections and these sections were split further into tasks. At our group meetings I would read out the tasks one at a time and members could volunteer to undertake them, once some of the tasks were assigned the rest were allocated to the individuals who had not volunteered. I always try to ensure that everyone has a roughly equal amount of work to do and that they are comfortable with their tasks. I encourage others to speak up if they have any inhibitions or issues that may prevent them from completing their task so that it can be re allocated to another member and that everyone is always happy with what is expected of them and can be utilised to the best of their individual skills and abilities.

I believe that the key to success is short term achievable goals, I have reflected this in group meetings and in the Gantt chart that I have designed for the group. Other than the project itself there are no long term overarching tasks that can be left to the last minute and trip us up. Everything is organised into short term deliverables e.g. come up with two survey questions by next week, write up client meeting notes by Friday and other such short term tasks. I believe that this helps to raise morale amongst group members as they are constantly hitting targets with very little effort, and the manner in which we collaborate our work via Google docs and our Facebook group there is a slight air of competitiveness, if one person finishes a task early and shares it; which I believe to a certain extent can act as a positive motivator.

In addition to allocating tasks to other members of the team I was always sure to give myself a fair share of the workload and to undertake the tasks that the rest of the group seemed unsure about, this is what led to me creating the Gantt chart in the first place and defining my role within the group. I always try to lead by example and complete my own tasks first so that others can use my work as an example and so that I am free to provide assistance where necessary. When it came to writing the group report I wrote the work plan, the scope, part of the introduction and conclusion, as well as actually merging our individual work into one cohesive document, editing the content and formatting and styling.

During the process I have learnt many things about the group and group work as a whole. We were taught a lot of theory about group work in a module last year in which we explored the optimum group size which turns out to be approximately five, so when we were allocated a group of nine for this task it was an interesting challenge.

Having this many people in a group made it difficult to synchronise everyone's schedules and to arrange regular meetings other than our timetabled slot with our supervisor. Personally I commute to University so I am unavailable outside of normal hours and many people live in different areas around Cardiff and have different obligations. Extending from this our group was divided into pairs and individuals based on ease of collaboration, people who could easily meet up and work together were assigned slightly larger tasks and individuals were assigned slightly smaller tasks and were left to work at their own pace. This work was then shared using our Google docs and discussed in our weekly timetabled meeting so everyone had an idea of what everyone else was doing and was free to make suggestions or ask for advice with their own work. This has been a very effective method for our group to work coherently but separately, relying on social media for contact and scheduling.

However this led to a problem with 'bottlenecking' and certain individual's not hitting soft deadlines. I have tried to arrange our tasks so that there are very few bottlenecks and everyone can continue with their own work at their own pace up until it needs to be compiled where a bottleneck situation is unavoidable. But one task that was allocated was to create a survey which we could send out and use the data gathered to further develop our requirements and features of our project. Everyone had been tasked with coming up with questions which were mostly completed in time and one individual was tasked with actually creating and sending out the questionnaire. This individual actively volunteered for this role and seemed content and able to perform it well within the time limit we had set. However this task was not completed for several weeks and as a direct result we have much less data than we anticipated to work with.

As most of our group did not know each other well prior to the task and due to our efforts to maintain a friendly approachable atmosphere this was left uncontested for too long and ended up becoming a major hindrance to the rest of the group.

The other issue we have is that some of our group members are still very reserved, these individuals also happen to be part of the pairs our group has split into so it is very hard to track individual contribution, the other team members haven't complained and the work they provide as a pair is of an acceptable standard and amount so there is very little to go on. This just concerns me slightly when it comes to stage two of the project and we may have to divide tasks further and approach more tasks on an individual basis and I don't know what to expect from these individuals.

From our experiences as a group I have drawn some conclusions about mine and other peoples performance and how I would approach this task differently if it were to be repeated, and also alterations which can be utilised for stage two of the project.

The first few weeks of the project were very unproductive as our group met for the first time and we were waiting for our client meeting to move on with other tasks. Some of this has already been resolved as we now know each other and are more comfortable in ourselves. Next time I would make sure the group got together at the earliest stage possible for introductions and not wait for our first timetabled meeting as this added another unknown person to the mix in the form of our supervisor. While the client meeting was an important concept we already had a wealth of material in our criteria sheet which some members had not read prior to the client meeting which would have given us a much stronger starting point to ask our client more detailed questions. Moving onto

stage two and continuing my role as organiser I will endeavour to make sure that every individual has read and understands the content and criteria prior to work commencing.

The next issue of bottlenecking is a little more difficult to solve. My plan in stage one was to try and avoid these situations and if they were absolutely unavoidable then to undertake the tasks myself, i.e. final collaboration of the report. However the only other major bottleneck that was allocated to another individual turned out to be a major problem and my trust in this individual has been damaged. In stage two there will inevitably be more bottleneck tasks which will be impossible for me to undertake myself, therefore I will impose and enforce stricter deadlines on bottleneck tasks and if an individual is unable to adhere to them the task will be re-allocated or shared.

Finally the issue of reserved individuals and contributions. While I still think collaboration is paramount to the success of the group and to lessen the burden of some of the larger tasks I will try to split these up into more individual tasks to make sure that everyone is pulling their weight for the group. Also at this stage where we are starting to build the software it will be more important to try and organise meetings outside of our timetabled slots to make sure that everyone is involved in the process and nobody is left behind and doesn't understand the project.

While the importance of producing a quality piece of robust software is extremely high, if this is to the detriment of our team and not everyone can at least follow the code and understand what is happening then we have failed as a team.