Web Development Reflective Essay

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Roles and contributions

When I started working on the team project for the web development module, I was originally a member of the team 65. I tried to communicate with my teammates, and only a few answered before team allocation took place. While in that team, I took the initiative and started the first part of the team assignment and wrote a piece answering the main questions about theme parks, stakeholders, content, etc., analyzing the websites and creating a basic idea for the theme park.

After that, Fahad Khalid created the Slack chat with my new teammates, reaching for us and saying that we all are members of the team 61. After a few days of a quagmire, we were able to establish communication and started working on this project. We used my piece from the team 61 days as a foundation and built upon it, changing it and adding more information in a week, as we discussed in a few zoom calls. As we established from the first meeting, our group mostly consisted of people not familiar with web development. Ross Holland took the leading role as a most experienced developer, so we specified roles between us. Ross Holland and Fahad Khalid started developing basic outlines of our future website. Chi Zang and Fiona Dam prepared wireframes for the desktop and mobile versions of the site. And I wrote down our meetings, discussions we held, and the main points we agreed upon. We completed and submitted the first part of our team assignment late, but I was positive that is was just a rough start, and we will be able to quickly ramp up the pace.

In the next meeting, we divided our 3 pages between us: Ross Holland and I were supposed to make the main page, Fahad Khalid took upon himself a web page with the interactive map of the theme park, and girls started working on the image gallery page. My part was mostly preparing content for the main web page, and Ross was supposed to mark everything up with HTML tags. A few weeks later, we still were late, communications were scares, and I was hoping that everyone just worked the hardest. In the meantime, I watched different YouTube tutorials and even took another web development course. The one we were given here was all talking about semantics and other theoretical concepts with links to the w3school, while there was no real web development practice. I'm so grateful to the creators of this course because week there taught me more than almost two months here, I just wish my money went to them because when Ross disappeared and time was really short, I took it upon myself to create the main web page based upon the initial wireframes. And I would not be able to do it like that if I was just reading w3school. Later, Fahad and girls presented their pages, but our work still needed some polishing to look like a website and not like 3 separate webpages.

After a few days, Ross came back, apologizing for some personal issues that took a toll on his study. With his return, we pressed the hardest to blend all pages and started applying styles in the same groups. Hopefully, this time there were no distractions, and we completed everything before the deadline.

Your use of HTML and CSS

From what I learned from this web development course – HTML is like a skeleton of your website, outlining its structure. Similarly, there two main parts of the markup: the head – that contains important information about the web site, but does not affect how it looks, and the body – which describes visuals and structure. Markup of the website must be logical and follow the main goal of creating a pleasurable and comfortable user experience, that may differ from one web site to another. The good HTML structure that is appropriate for a website for online shopping will vastly differ from the one suitable for the personal blog, etc. There are a lot of different tags in the latest version of HTML, created for particular reasons. I learned some of them while working on this site, while some others, more specific ones, that I yet have to master both for body and head parts. I think that the hardest part about HTML is to create a tidy and logical structure, that will satisfy the needs of both stakeholders and users. HTML is a simple concept, but it will take more than creating a few pages to memorize all the tags and to master appropriate ways to use them. As for negatives: I think, too much time was spent on the talks about semantics, markups, analyses, and discussions - the first time we have to write some code was like 6 weeks into the course, for one small exercise. In my opinion, semantics have more to do with the web site design, than with development, and for the basic course, there should be more accent on how to use these tools right.

CSS, on the other hand, is the complete opposite of CSS: there are tons of styles, each of which has additional properties. To learn and master all of them will take a lifetime, but the possibilities are almost endless. With the right styles, you can create almost anything: from a humble position adjustment to advanced animations and interactions. I memorized some simple styles and their properties, as for some others, I did them following instructions, and there are even more styles, that I missed completely. I hope, someday, I will grasp a better understanding of the existing styles, but for now, this little knowledge should suffice. There is also a cascade aspect of the CSS, that helps a developer to save time and optimize the code. It is an interesting concept, the right application of which can separate the amateur from the master, and I learned a little about how to put it to good use. As for the negative aspects of the CSS use, the only one thing I have a gripe for is that there was so little material about such a broad concept without any practical exercises (look at code quizzes at the ITP course). Because of this, almost all my learning process was unsystematic and made mostly by trial and error.

In conclusion, I am pretty confident, that, if needed, I will be able to create a simple web site using a box model. Style the text, images, and containers themselves, add some animations and interactive elements and adjust it looks on the different devices.

Positive aspects of your team work experience

There are some pros and cons when you work with other people. Positive aspects are: a team is almost always working faster than one man by himself, also, teammates can help each other when personal matters affect our ability to work. Collective work is very advantageous when you trying to stay objective because different people see things differently, and one can fall victim to his personal preferences and views. Brainstorming is also a very team-oriented concept, the more variants you work through while developing, the higher the chance that the final result will be better.

Negative aspects of your team work experience

As for the negatives: it is very very hard to organize a group of part-time students with day jobs from all around the world. Also, I realized, that without proper guidance and leadership even a good team can fall short. It was not an issue in our case, but I think that sometimes a group could have a hard time agreeing on something, and a final product can look like the jumble of ideas and visions.

Effects of team work on the quality of the work

As a whole, I think that the team aspect of our work made it better because we used more ideas, everyone added their flavour to the web site, we equally distributed the work so no one was under too much strain and, in the end, the final product looks greater, than the sum of its different parts.

Tools you and your team used

As I said before, I am new to web development and computer sciences in general, so in the process, I have learned a few tools that helped us to complete this project. First of all, "Slack" was very helpful for communications, especially since we had a hard time synchronizing our timetables, and most of our communications were in a chat form. On a few occasions (mostly in the weekends), we organized live video calls using "Zoom". Some aspects of the personal contact are not interchangeable, so it had its uses, albeit not very frequent. Also, team leader Ross Holand organized our git repository and taught us about how to use it to better synchronize our collective work. Besides version control, the software we were using - "GitKraken" - has a very handy GLO board, and I have learned to use it to better organize the workflow. All coding was done (at least on my part) using the "Brackets" code editor. Working on this project, I learned a lot of helpful features of this program and its extensions, that speed up the working process substantially.