

Team Experiences

**How I experienced working with
three teams at Hyper Island**

Team Looop



Pizza Lunch

What we did:

In response to our group feedback, we recognised that fun was a missing ingredient, so we had lunch at Noi Quattro, and enjoyed some stress free time together.

Reflection:

This gave us the boost needed to complete a lengthy process of selecting a solution for our problem statement. This provided a rare opportunity within our project when we were at ease, laughing, and helped to build the rapport that we initially lacked.

Stinky Fish



What we did:

A short activity to do early in the team project. Its purpose is to share fears, anxieties and uncertainties related to the program theme together. The purpose is to create openness and a deeper understanding for the group members.

Reflection:

The Stinky Fish gave us a deeper understanding for each other. We realised some of us had more experience about the project than others. We also supported and encouraged each other thanks to the Stinky Fish.

Feedback



What we did:

Feedback is helpful information or criticism about action or behaviour from an individual, communicated to another individual or a group. It broadens our Johari Window and promotes positive actions and behaviours.

Reflection:

Our first feedback session was team oriented, instead of individual oriented. We determined our group lacked fun and a general feeling of not being heard by the group. Our final feedback was more individual focused. By then, we were well aware of some of our shortcomings. We also acknowledged accomplishments through two stars and a wish.

Change of environment



What we did:

To add variety, and offer a break from the work environment with all the whiteboards full of lists and post-its, we took our work to nearby coffee houses.

Reflection:

Our team was open to the needs of other teammates. Working in a different context was inspiring to some of us and benefited the overall mood within the team.

Team Canvas



What we did:

The Team Canvas is a tool for teams to use before they get in the project. It is a helpful tool to state the teams values and goals in order to unite the team and teamwork. It helps leaders, facilitators and consultants to organise team alignment and bring members on the same page, resolve conflicts and build productive culture, fast.

Reflection:

Only when there was friction felt in the group, did it get mentioned but not acted upon.

Reflection



What we did:

Reflecting helped us align as a team. Because of reflecting we realise our differences and common needs. We're able to express things that we aren't able to while focusing on the work.

Reflection:

Our first reflection session was, as they say, "*too little, too late*". We were already quite fed up with each other and didn't really dare to speak our minds during this session. Our second reflection session was more successful. Likely because this reflection followed the high point that was our pitch after an otherwise difficult process.

Design Thinking - Individual Reflections

Team Looop



Eli Catalan

Learning by doing is a Hyper Island strategy intended to prepare students to make sense of the unknown. As this was our first project and not all teammates were versed in teamwork, facilitation for our project was based on trial and error rather than experience, or best practices, and proved extremely frustrating. One factor leading to our poor collaboration was a failure to adopt a 'yes and' attitude. Instead of building on each other's ideas, lack of empathy created an unsafe environment where members' needs were not met. That said, not everything functioned poorly. Mid project feedback did help us recognise and address some pain points, a team building excursion for pizza provided a much needed ceasefire, and in the final stretch, differences were cast aside to create a respectable presentation with a novel solution.



Luisa Skwirut

One key learning I have from working with Team Looop was that it was easier implementing Design Thinking towards the client rather than implementing it in our group. Due to lack of time we didn't look back to our Team Canvas or followed our rules we had with weekly reflection and feedback sessions. In the beginning we rushed too fast and towards the end we were the group that finished last. Keeping the Pizza Challenge in mind, sometimes it is better to go slow and steady instead of fast and unstructured. Because you end up with too much work and uncertainties towards the end.



Pooja Vaija

Design thinking being our first module, it was a challenge to adapt to the Hyper island way! We all came from different backgrounds and adapting to the Hyper methodologies and each other's way of working took most of the first half of the project. At the start of the project we filled out the tools like stinky fish or the team canvas, these tools were seldom looked back upon. As the project progressed, empathy and active listening were lost within the team. This led to poor functioning of the project, and the process being rushed towards the end.



Nils Westhoff

I've learnt it's important to split up work, and trust in your team mates's abilities. Working together could feel like a slow freight ship, which might be what you need in certain situations. But sometimes it's better to all go in our own speed boats and look for treasure islands at 4 times the speed and we can come together with our findings.

My role in this team, as the person with the most experience in traditional design, was that of a facilitator. I had never really taken this role while working in an educative or professional environment. My confidence in. the process allowed me to do so and show my (partial) leadership within Team Looop.

I've also learnt that it's important to do reflections and invite feedback early and often. Our frustrations kept growing which made us procrastinate our reflection sessions even more. That hindered creativity and productivity. Which is especially important during deadline week.

Understanding People - Team Development Tools

Team Observing Otters

Team Culture Building



What we did:

We figured out that constructing team culture will glue us together. We spent some time on creating a cool logo, handshake and some inside rituals.

Reflection:

Simple things like a cool name and logo really bonded us as a team. We were almost a bit competitive about it towards other teams. We were proud of our tiny club which definitely worked in our favour.

Stinky Fish



What we did:

We shared the positions we normally took in a group. Personal traits we were ‘working on’, and how we could act in situations under stress. This makes it easier to understand and prepare for each other’s behaviour in different situations.

Reflection:

From the start all Otters were open and understanding towards each other. We didn’t really refer back too much of our Stinky Fish exercise throughout our project. There was a lot of reciprocal understanding within our team without it.

Kanban Board



What we did:

A Kanban board organises tasks-at-hand. Each day we planned what to do and organised them in three sections: *do*, *doing* and *done*.

Reflection:

Our Kanban board made us much more productive. We knew what we wanted to finish that day and made effective decisions to push certain tasks to the next day.

Energisers



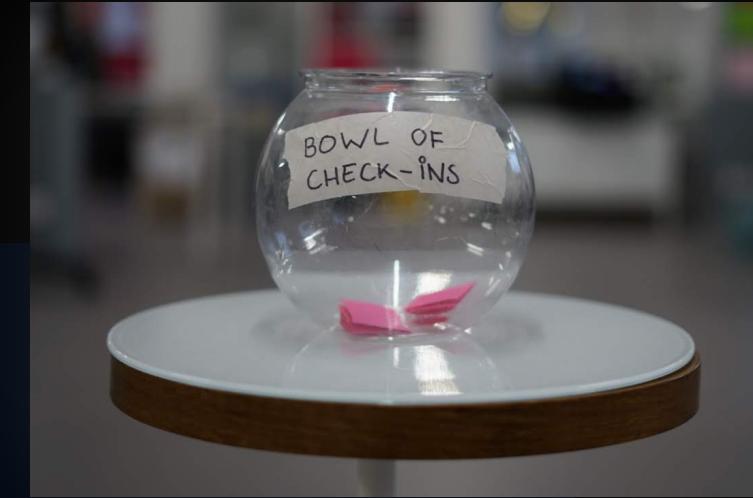
What we did:

Energisers help boost our energy level when we’re in a slump. At the start of the project it wasn’t really necessary, but after switching to remote we felt drained. We decided to sing ‘Wonderwall’ one time to decompress.

Reflection:

Singing in front of people requires a lot of trust. On top of thinking of something else for a hot second, it showed the Otters could be themselves within this team.

Bowl of Check-ins



What we did:

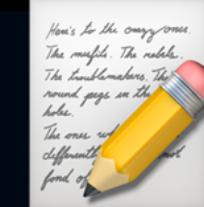
With Observing Otters, I created the *BOOOWL OF CHECK-INS*. We were often struggling with coming up with a fun check-in, so I outsourced them to the entire crew. The bowl was quickly filled with check-ins forcing us to make animal sounds, talk to each other in our native tongue and much more fun ways to start (and end) the day.



Reflection:

This was really easy to implement and solved the problems we had to quickly start our day. We had a lot of fun with it. The only drawback was that it was easy to catch a double.

Miro



What we did:

Having been hit by remote work suddenly, we had to start using a white-boarding tool. We started organising on a Miro board. It’s a big benefit that you can see this from anywhere you are. No longer did we have to think ‘well damn, we left that in the studio’

Reflection:

Since we weren’t alone suddenly using Miro, it kept disconnecting, and there was often nothing to do. Creating **backups**, and having another way of working as fallback would’ve been smart.

Understanding People - Individual Reflections

Team Observing Otters



Sophie Arntsen

Working with Observing Otters was the most rewarding and fun team experience I had in Hyper Island. We managed to fit in 5 research trips and a user workshop in 7 working days, and had our first ideation session 22pm the night before practice pitch. How?

First, the explorative spirit, humility, open-mindedness, and dedication was contagious and made it safe and fun to suggest experimentation. The team was not afraid of failure. Second, the active use of the team canvas helped us align and make quick decisions. The frequent referral to the team canvas, made team members commit the common goals and purpose we had set up as a team. When team members had disagreements, they aligned right afterwards by looking at the team canvas. This giving-and-taking for the team made us all dedicated to our purpose and goals, and built the essential trust that enabled the ambition of the team. Repeatedly showing alignment, trust and dedication I believe was the key factor that made the team confident in creating a solution right before delivery, which turned out to be very successful.

In this team, I believe my main role was to shape and challenge the research. I joined all field trips and conducted most of the in-depth interviews.



Wesley Matulevic

Observing Otters was a team of a transition phase; we started on the studio, and due to COVID-19 outbreak, we had to resume fully remote. Thinking back, it was heart-breaking leaving all of our material in the studio (post-its, boards, etc..)

It was also a team with a lot of unforeseen situations. We managed the transition well and started to "get used" to self-isolation mode, or whatever "get used" means in this situation. I like to see my role in the group as a creative facilitator; I did my best to bring references and past experiences to the group's table, also played an essential role as a visual communicator, from research material to deck's visual language for the pitch. I also engaged in facilitating ideation sessions, which became the "*Wexperience*", a workshop with lots of ideation tools in one Board which was later used successfully in all future groups.

My learning in this group is straight-forward; If we stick together, everything will be fine (as complicated it might sound, especially during COVID-19).



Hannah Simpson

Observing Otters had trust, determination and true ambition. This team had a few struggles over the course of the three weeks due to covid outbreak and sickness however remained to stay strong and put all their trust into the process.

Switching to remote working wasn't easy and we all had to take time to adapt however with perseverance we managed to get through it. In Observing Otters the schedule and often the design process didn't always go to plan however I learnt that the design process is not always going to be a linear process and its ok to go back and forth. Throughout this team we struggled with time management however the team managed to work quickly and efficiently through a design sprint in the last week, we really pulled it together and delivered our first remote pitch in style. I like to see my role in this group as a human-centred/graphic designer, I played an essential role in designing logo etc. I also learnt a lot about how to really understand people and conduct user interviews/ workshops

My main learning in this group is no matter what position we are in, if you have trust in each other, the process and stick together everything will work out in the end. Having trust is one of the main cores for efficient team work.



Nils Westhoff

I feel Team Observing Otters was a great mix of ambition, structure and heart. With overlapping and complementary skill sets. We were ready for success, couldn't go wrong.

But then.... I was sick a lot. It often made me feel I couldn't contribute and unfortunately, I missed out on the most valuable parts of Understanding People. I've tried to learn as much from my team as I could. Regarding content, I think we were able to do that quite well. However, I don't feel like I have a good grasp of what parts of our process worked well, which tools in the workshop were insightful and which were useless.

If we look at our process as a whole, there wasn't really an overarching framework to our work. The methods and tools we used kinda just *happened*, I don't feel like we deliberately picked them, understanding what they might bring. Since I was sick so often, I didn't really take charge to be more deliberate about that either.

On top of an already hectic module, Corona happened. I moved back to the Netherlands, and we had to suddenly pitch remotely. It was all quite stressful, but considering the conditions, I'm proud of what we accomplished. We were also able to completely turn our mediocre practice pitch around in just two days, which turned out to be quite successful in the end.

Team Tuentin Quarantinos

Daily Facilitator



What we did:

Everyone had the opportunity (essentially 'forced') to facilitate and manage the day. Not only is it a useful skill to bring to the workforce but the different ways of managing the day made it fun and exciting. No day was the same.

Could do differently:

The daily facilitator forced everyone to manage our process deliberately. This ensured everyone was comfortable with our way of working. Simultaneously, it also disconnected the process, since there was no hand-off between the daily leads.

Team Games



What we did:

Having games was a great way to bond together. It allowed us to build real relationships rather than one that just focuses on work. Getting to know each other outside of the workspace can strengthen our empathy for one another.

Could do differently:

Screen fatigue and exhaustion made it difficult to stay on screen after work hours. A possible solution could be having bonding sessions on weekends rather than straight after a long day on call.

Dotmocracy



What we did:

While dotmocracy is generally not a good tool to choose between a few ideas. It was often useful to quickly pick between lots of ideas. This eliminates endless discussions and allows for deeper discussions on the more fruitful ideas.

Could do differently:

Since our team consisted of four people, it occasionally happened that there was a tie. In such a case we were able to discuss our way to a final pick. However, that might have been much more difficult in a different team.

SDI Triangle



What we did:

The SDI triangle maps our motivation. Every human focuses on *people*, *performance* or *structure*, or a combination thereof. Being aware of these differences allow us to anticipate behaviour under stress.

Could do differently:

We learned the most basic version of the SDI triangle, and that's what we did as well. However, there's a much more elaborate version as well. We could try that one in another project.

Team Canvas (Light)



What we did:

The team canvas was our tool of choice to quickly define team culture and understand each other (as people). We shared our expectations and established rules. This creates a shared understanding of the project's goals and our values.

Could do differently:

We didn't really refer back to the team canvas throughout the project. It works best when we regard it as a living document. The TC should grow as we get to know each other better and know where the project is going.

Reflection



What we did:

Reflection sessions ensure team members align on certain needs. During one of our reflections we realised that we all wanted more/longer breaks. Screen fatigue was really hitting us. Things that we didn't know how to say throughout the week was being able to express during reflections

Could do differently:

We had set out to do many more reflections than we ultimately ended up doing. We generally felt very comfortable with each other, but even with great collaboration, reflection might bring to light certain needs (as practice has shown).

Business Transformation - Individual Reflections

Team Tuentin Quarantinos



Yash Dhavalikar

I went into this module with absolutely no idea what to expect. The client was brought in last minute, we were entirely remote so the industry leader interaction was also entirely remote. I had a rough idea of how a business runs or should run, due to my familiarity with our family business. The team dynamic turned out to be pretty good. The SDI triangle tool helped me understand the balance between the members. This particular team was the best team experience I have ever had as we complimented each other extremely well with our strengths. There was no conflict going into the project and sometimes made me question whether we are doing things correctly. The amount of trust I had in the team was also a lot as I knew them outside of work as well. The familiarity between the members helped to create a group flow that was very effective. The Day Lead introduced by Nils also helped me face my fears of leadership and improved my skills of the same. This team was a great learning experience of what a team should be like, and also the output. 11/10.



Victoria Ng

Approaching this module, I had started off with a fairly pessimistic mindset as business wasn't one of my biggest strengths. Unleashing this inner turmoil, I learned that being honest and open with my team is crucial because not only will others feel more comfortable sharing their insecurities but it helped bring team awareness. Regardless, this lack of confidence and excitement was quickly turned around as our team made a conscious effort to 'have fun'. This meant not only were there creative energizers but also taking regular breaks and working in shorter sprints. This was especially important when working remotely as screen fatigue had often led me to feel tired and distracted. From this experience, I had learned that efficient teams don't mean long hours but in fact, depending on the team dynamic short sprints can often bring mental clarity and a creative workflow. This practice was highly visible in the final week when we worked fewer hours but got more done.



Nils Westhoff

When working at an agency before Hyper Island, the people doing strategy and digital transformation were the ones I looked up to most. I was keen to learn but I'm not particularly well versed when it comes to finance. I'm also not a big fan of empty speech without doing the work, which is what business speak often feels like. Overall I had a mixed feeling going into this module, but was also excited to work with Victoria, Yash and Josefine. During this project I feel like we distributed responsibility and duties evenly. Partially due to the daily facilitator mechanic, but also because I feel like everybody was able to speak freely. My focus as a daily lead was to split up as much as possible, to reduce Zoom fatigue. Everyone had their own focus and that made it work. Ultimately, this team earned a lot of trust from me. This is the first time I've ever felt more productive working as a team than alone. Dividing tasks was effortless and combining our strengths worked out great. The fruits of our teamwork came together as a collaborative piece of art. A narrative driven, interactive, beautifully illustrated and well-grounded pitch.



Josefine Wetterwik

For this project, our working environment was greatly challenged as the COVID-19 outbreak had suddenly forced the team to work remotely. This caused me to learn a lot about myself and the way I function in a remote team. I learned the importance of being adaptable as life and projects can be very unpredictable.

Overall it was a great experience working in this team. We were well aligned with our goals and expectations for the project, and we were able to establish a culture of openness and trust which enabled a process that was smooth, effective and fun.