**Group 4 Focus Group Interview**

**Interviewer:**  I will just state who I am first, and maybe we can take around, everybody can say who you are, and what is your study background. So my name is Z, doing research on software startups and yes, and student mindset for startup formation. Yes, basically it, I've been at Ed for almost two and a half years now, almost at the end of my PhD.

So now I'm trying to researchify on this course, and to see what we can make as improvements for next year, hopefully. Yes, so maybe the team leader can continue, and the rest state full name and yes, what's the study background.

**Interviewee:** I'm W I'm on my fourth year at computer science with specialization in software development.

**Interviewer:** Yes, thanks.

**Interviewee:** Lon, do you want to continue?

**Interviewee:** Yes. My name is X

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee:** I'm in my fourth year of computer science, and I also specialized in software development.

**Interviewer:** Thanks.

**Interviewee:** I'm on my fourth year, and I specialize in databases and search.

**Interviewer:** Thank you.

**Interviewee:** My name is Christopher Augustine, and I'm on my fourth year of computer science with a specialization within Computer Engineering, what wait what is it? Software engineering.

**Interviewer:** Is that everybody? Nice.

**Interviewee:** My name is X but I'm planning on switching to a bachelor, so this is really my last course in that case, so yes.

**Interviewer:** Thank you, David. Can you tell me a bit what is your project about?

**Interviewee:** Alan needs to go as well.

**Interviewee:** My name is Y and I'm on my fourth year of computer science, specializing in software development.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. Okay, so can you tell me a bit more about the project you're running within the customer driven?

**Interviewee:** Han, do you want to take it?

**Interviewee:** Okay. So we're making a query profiler and our customer is someone from Oracle.

**Interviewer:** You are the team that finished earlier? And didn't know what to do?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** We have had something to do throughout the whole.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's good. This is pretty broad, but what are the motivations for being in the course? Meaning that, are you sort of obliged to be in the course? Or is it like you can choose Etc.? And if you could choose, what motivations do you have for being in this course?

**Interviewee:** I think we have this course as an obligatory course that we need to take. But regarding motivations, I think it's for me, personally at least, it's a good experience in how the interaction between a development team, and a customer is when it comes to developing a software and getting new demands and requirements from a customer throughout the development process.

**Interviewee:** And it seems like a very relevant course for working in the software industry, and as we're actually working for an actual business and developing a product. So yes, it's motivating to know what you're doing is relevant, for what you're going to do when you're finished with studies.

**Interviewee:** I could give a comment on something that might not be motivating. Since we're not able to choose our project or the groups, as in the bachelor project, you could be really unlucky, which could impact your whole semester because you spend so many hours with the course. So for me, I'm really lucky with the project and the group, but I've heard of many students who haven't been that lucky though.

**Interviewer:** Yes, thank you. And sorry for the background. And yes, when it comes to skills, what kind of technical skills do you think you have learned? And what challenges did you have during the project development? And since you have been so good, you might not have had so many challenges.

**Interviewee:** I think that even though most of us have some experience in group work, for example, the software development course, I think that working together as a group is something that you need a lot of experience to truly master, and this course has been, it's worth a lot working together as much, as many hours as we have this semester, and it has made us all organized, better at working together as a team, which is a really valuable experience.

**Interviewer:** But then, when it comes to technical skills more than communication skills. What do you think you have gained?

**Interviewee:** I think it depends a lot on the, sort of the starting point for people. Because when we started the project, we all wrote down our prior experience with the different programming languages and frameworks and such. And I think everyone has learned something during this process, whether it be new frameworks, or being more familiar with Frameworks that you already thought you knew very well, but it turned out you didn't.

So it differs from person to person I'd say, and we've obviously had different sort of responsibility areas within the product as well, some people have been working heavily with UI elements, some with back-end elements, and of course, what parts of the product that you've been working on will affect what technical skills you've gained.

But overall, I think there is a lot of learning potential within the course as you're sort of almost, and no matter what you're forced to use something that you haven't used before.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's interesting. So how about soft skills? Somebody mentioned you had a good opportunity to work in a team, and to collaborate, but what kind of soft skills do you think have gained more like communication, I don't know teamwork, team dynamics Etc. What can you say? And did you have any challenges by the way?

**Interviewee:** I think one thing we learned is that, one which shows like what methodology you use, we looked at some elements from scrum, but we chose some elements from scrum that we didn't want to use.

And I think for most of the group, we realized that it hasn't really affected us negatively in any way. Still like by skipping the burn down charts part of scrum. I don't really think that was something we needed at all, so I really feel like the working methodology that we chose has worked really well for our team.

**Interviewer:** How do you connect the burn down with the soft skills?

**Interviewee:** Yes. Almost like thinking it has a little bit, it's something to do with teamwork-ish top skills, that was what I thought.

**Interviewer:** Yes. But let's say, if you had to, since you are on this project management aspect, and you had to connect the burn down with the budgeting for your project. How would you do that? Like for instance, in the burn down you write down hours, how much time you have spent? And then your project has a time estimation and some budgeting, how would you do that?

**Interviewee:** Yes. But then I think we're talking about another kind of project, because the whole discussion around choice of methodology is you have to choose a methodology that works with the project you're working on, and now we're talking about a different kind of project. But in our project, it has worked really well, and we utilized our time before we prioritize what we thought was important.

**Interviewer:** Just a second, sorry. I should have had no kids here, but it's after school now. But to get on that comment, what I was trying to say, burn down is more for yes, stating how much time, actual time you have spent and what was the estimated time for the project, for the sprint that you're doing.

So I'm not sure if this was relevant or not for your project, but still, it's part of the project management. And it's also commonly used to sort of, if you do our consultancy company, you'd charge based on the time spent. And in order to keep track well on that time spent on the project, I think the burn down is pretty useful. But maybe this is not the case, and yes, you're saying, please.

**Interviewee:** We do realize that it is useful in some cases, but for our case, it goes through prioritize your time.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's fine. How did you prioritize the time by the way, what was the approach?

**Interviewee:** I could comment. We estimated the user stories from extra small, small, medium and large. And then we discussed, first we tried to understand the user stories, what kind of functionalities do you have to implement to achieve the user story, and then we put it in a sprint, so we did some estimations of course.

And so far, when we managed to complete most of the user stories, so we didn't have to, we didn't have any problems not having a burn down chart, in our project though.

**Interviewer:** That's fine, yes. But you kept track of timing at least, right?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that's good. This answer is a little bit on the, my next question actually was what project management approaches did you use, and what challenges did you have? But sort of you answered it now, so it's more on that.

How about with the customer? Did you have any sort of challenges or communication challenges, or issues or things that you found that were difficult to understand or also to collaborate with?

**Interviewee:** From my perspective, it went well communicating with them. Although, the last week or so, Oracle was quite busy with other deadlines, so it was a bit tough to plan user tests. But we did manage to have them.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that's good.

**Interviewee:** Overall though, we were really lucky with our client, as he had, he knew what he wanted from the get-go and he always like had, he had the requirements ready and he knew what he wanted, and he could prioritize them which made him really easy to work with.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's very good.

**Interviewee:** I think you could put things into perspective by saying that our biggest challenge with regards to the customer was a miscommunication, that meant that our first Sprint demo was digital rather than physical, when it was supposed to be physical. But other than that, we've had no challenges working with our customers.

**Interviewer:** Okay, let's see how the next few weeks make the situation digital and physical different. Okay, then my next question is a bit, yes, shifting from what I'm asking now. But it's more what motivates you as a team to create a startup with the current project that you are conducting, during and after the course?

**Interviewee:** You mean what would motivate us to create our own startup?

**Interviewer:** Yes, based on this project. I mean, you have delivered the product right now, and I think you have done it earlier than anybody else in all the different teams in the course.

And then this minimum viable product, does it have potentials to become a sort of a service in the market for some companies like Oracle or you name it, other database, company-based companies? Or yes, is this an interesting product? It becomes a startup company for you guys?

**Interviewee:** I think it could. From the user test we had today, the test object said that our products would have been really valuable to him, and to his research on his master thesis. So I think the application can have a lot of value for many people in working with databases, trying to understand the data.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee:** Our customer also, on our last demo on Friday, talked about, because obviously he thinks this is important, and has constantly sort of told us how he can already see what results are going to come using this product.

But he also mentioned maybe getting us in for an open-source conference in February where we could talk about our product, to unlike on an actual conference. So that was, at least to me, it seemed like a sign that this was a product that he felt other people in the industry would like to see and could benefit from.

**Interviewer:** What is the conference name?

**Interviewee:** I don't remember what he called it, it was some open-source conference in Belgium in February, that's all I can remember. I don't know the name.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that's good. But when it comes to you as a team then, how do you perceive this work that you have done? Can you commercialize it as a team, including each other, or other team members, I don't know.

**Interviewee:** Belongs to Oracle.

**Interviewee:** Yes. And I'm not sure if it can be commercialized, because it's open source. So it's more of, it would be a voluntary project instead of something we could earn money on.

**Interviewer:** What is the license that has been mentioned?

**Interviewee:** There's an OCA, the Oracle contributor agreement that we've signed, and in that contract, it says that our code is sort of contributing to Oracle, and therefore, they kind of own it or something.

Also, there's like, we're going to have later on, a thing where we sort of officially hand over our code to Oracle through, what our customers said was he was going to create a bug report, and then we were going to submit our code as like a solution to the bug report. And when that solution was submitted, then Oracle owned the code. So that's like their way of sort of taking a code, and getting the legal hits to it I guess.

**Interviewer:** But from a pragmatic standpoint, how do you feel about this? Are you happy that Oracle wants to own the code that you have developed? Or do you have preferred to have the startup that was selling this code to Oracle? Oracle is not a small company anyways, can afford the development of an interesting project?

**Interviewee:** Well, it means that they actually like what we made, and that's a really good feeling that they want to utilize it. And I think going into the project, everybody was aware that we made a product for Oracle, and this was going to be something that they could use.

**Interviewer:** Yes. But can I put it in a different context, for example, say you are a small company of how many are you? Eight people?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And you create this product, innovative product, but it really fits to the needs for Facebook, I'm putting Oracle out of the context, out of the picture. And then what do you do? You develop this product and Facebook says okay, this is a startup, they have made an interesting product, what can we do? We can buy it for instance, that's it. And then, of course, this happens, buying small companies happens all the time from bigger companies.

And what they do, they hire the people who have developed the product, the service Etc. and they sort of are interested in the product, and they can, of course, offer a good opportunity for this company to be sold at different estimates. I can't put numbers here, because I don't know the scale of your product, the relevance Etc. But would this be interesting for you as a team of eight people, who has worked for two months almost?

**Interviewee:** I mean, the idea of it seems interesting, it does. I think the main sort of hindrance is that our product, I don't see how our product is something that could be commercialized, and something that could be sort of a viable product, that's more of a usable product rather than a viable product.

**Interviewer:** Why does Oracle want to own the code?

**Interviewee:** You have to ask them.

**Interviewer:** No, I'm not asking them, you are asking them. I'm not asking them, it's not my project. But I'm trying to make you reason on that.

**Interviewee:** Sure. I think the reasoning was because what oracles are ordered from us was prototype, and not a finished product necessarily. And what they intend to do is they intend to take parts of our code, and utilize those parts in new products that they might make themselves, new software analytic tools that they will create.

**Interviewer:** And then they sell those products, right?

**Interviewee:** They aren't specifically mentioned, but maybe yes. I think it's mostly though for interviews within Oracle as a development, an aid for developers to further develop MySQL.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Okay, I mentioned this a little bit, but I'll skip this, would you involve each other in making this a potential startup, because I heard that you said something already. But if you had the opportunity to have at the very beginning of the course, and activities such as innovation boot camp activity, or hackathon or innovation workshop activity for three days in a row working tightly with the customer, and exploring all these things that I am discussing now and brainstorming a little bit, but not so much.

Now like what are the potentials of the product in the market, why do you need this solution? Maybe you need to know different solution. And also, to get acquainted with technologies perhaps and so on. Would this be interesting to have this external activity at the very beginning? Working closely with the customers for three days in a row?

**Interviewee:** That could be nice in order to figure out the technical constraints in advance, and figure out what works and what doesn't. We kind of did this kind of in an independent way, where we just individually made like small proofs of concept just to see that it works. Just a simple like okay, here's a connector from SQL, and here's just running a query and getting the results, so you could just see that okay, this works. So kind of.

**Interviewer:** Well, what do the others think?

**Interviewee:** The idea of sort of a boot camp like that seems somewhat interesting. I think for us, the idea of what the product was going to be, and what it was going to be used for was quite clear from the beginning. I'm pretty sure that that's individual to our project, and not the other groups. So there was no sort of, it felt like we knew from the get-go where we wanted to sort of end up.

But on the other hand, getting to know the customer better, and maybe taking the product in a different direction through a conversation with them, in the beginning of the semester could have been interesting, just to see how it would have affected the outcome from where we've ended up now, to where we could have potentially ended up if we discussed the idea more with the customer before we started working on the idea that he already had.

**Interviewer:** Yes. More opinions? Or maybe not?

**Interviewee:** I think that's it.

**Interviewer:** Yes. But then, I'm actually done to be honest. I wanted to hear more or less what you thought about this, these things. But should you have created a startup out of this project? Would you have involved each other in the startup itself? I know it's an awkward question, you are leaning towards saying yes.

**Interviewee:** I mean, it's also a difficult question to answer, because you would have to sort of ask each individual person, okay, is there anyone you don't want to be in the startup potentially? And that's always, so it's going to be an awkward situation to be in of course.

But I think all around, we're all really happy with the team, and we feel like we've worked well together. And I don't see any issues working with this group of talented individuals moving forward.

**Interviewer:** Yes, thanks. Well, my advice would be like, if this product can be commercialized, ask Oracle representative, what is our take into the commercialization part of the product aa team, this is my suggestion.

But if he says no, then it's okay, that's it. Do you have anybody that hasn't spoken or yes, do you have any questions or something that you want to say regarding the force or regarding the approaches? And yes, something you'd like to add or change? Or how's the report writing so far? Has it been, okay?

**Interviewee:** There was something we discussed about the lectures. So I think we would have preferred it if there were more likes running intensive period in the start, but there were more of the important lectures that you need for planning the project, and the getting requirements and assigning and everything.

So that everyone had the required information at the start, and then the rest of the lectures that worked like immediately needed could be like during the semester.

**Interviewer:** Yes. Let's say Ireland, maybe the boot camp could have included some of these activities that you mentioned now? Those presentations, to make them in the first three days, and then know all the specifics, of the course, of the project and so on. What kind of project management approaches have used apart from scrum, fairly quickly?

**Interviewee:** We just combined scrum, and at least pair programming from XP.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Anybody else wants to add something or? I know it's late afternoon now, so. Okay, but then, thank you so much. I'll just close the meeting, that's how I think the recording stops.

I wish you good luck with the final presentation in the coming two weeks, and I hope you do well. But I see that the team has already done a good job. Just ask Oracle what is the perspective of the project itself. So thank you very much, and have a nice evening. Bye.

**[End of Recorded Material]**