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Final paper on
Job Application
(Data gathering, User research, and Evaluation)

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Introduction

'Job application'- a task/process which almost everyone has to go through at least once in his/her career. It can be a really frustrating and burdensome. Once the application process is started, the applicant needs to keep track of the information about each position they applied for. At any point, the applicant might have a dozen or more jobs for which they are somewhere in the middle of the application process, and that process can stretch over weeks or even months. For some, this process can be really frustrating, especially if they are not very organized kind of people. After searching and sending resumes and cover letters to dozens of organizations, the applicants might forget to follow-up. They might even forget to which companies they applied for. Applicants need to remember the deadlines, the details of the positions they applied for, and also keep track of the resumes they sent for different job positions. They should always be prepared for when they might get a response for their application.

The applicant might get calls for interview from more than one organization, or for different positions. If that happens, it might be difficult for the applicants to keep track of the date, time and place for that specific interview. Keeping these situations in mind, we performed questionnaire on 12 participants, and realized that many people do find it difficult to keep track of the processes in job applications. After the questionnaire, we framed the following Problem Statement:

Problem statement: Keeping track of Job applications is tricky. Sometimes, when you apply for different job positions, keeping track of interviews' time and location is difficult. Sometimes people even miss the deadlines for applications because they can't remember them.

Related Work

While looking for solution to our problem statement, we came across many websites, where users can create profiles, and apply for jobs directly. There are many, where users can only search for available jobs and apply on their own. But there are very few, which deals with the problem that we are discussing- keeping track or following up through the complete process of job application, until acceptance or rejection.

Websites, which somewhat dealt with our problem were: LinkedIn, glassdoor, hired, monster etc. All of these provided the interface for job search or application. But none of them addressed our problem statement. We also came across a few websites, which provide guidelines on how to effectively keep track of job applications. But those websites do not maintain the system to do it. As mentioned earlier, if the applicant apply to dozens of companies/organizations, then he/she should organize and follow-up the entire process with rejection or acceptance all by him(her)self, and that might be really burdensome.

Some of the solutions to our problem statement are:

1. Using Excel sheet:
   Applicants make use of excel sheet as a tracking system for job applications.

2. Using Google calendar:
   Applicants can create reminder and update their schedules. They can get an alert around 1-2 hours before the actual time of event.

3. Using Sticky notes on desktop or wall.
   People can use sticky notes as reminders for things to do as well as when to do them.

User Research

A questionnaire is a set of questions asked to gather some information about the interviewee and arrive at a conclusion suitable to the survey. During this research we came up with certain questions pertaining to the person's ongoing job application process and have tried to come up with their overall review about their experience, their individual learning and their set of notes to take care while in the process.

The questionnaire for the survey involved scales ranging from 1 to 5, Yes/No type questions. We ran questionnaire on 12 participants for our survey. The questionnaire had the following questions:

1. What is your age?   <=19, 20-25, 24-30, >30
2. Have you ever applied for job?   Yes, No
3. Have you applied to more than 1 job at the same time?   Yes, No
4. If yes to 3, then how many?   <3, 3-10, >10
5. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the easiest) how easy did you find it to remember the deadlines for your application?
6. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being easiest) how easy do you find it to keep track of the interviews' time and place?

After the questionnaire, we ran an unstructured interview, with detail oriented and opinion based questions. The following are the questions which we used for our interview:

1. Have you ever applied for jobs?
2. Did you apply for same job positions or different?
3. If you applied to different job position, did you send same resumes?
4. How did you remember which resume you sent for which job position or organization?
5. How do you keep track of time and place for interviews?
6. Do you find it convenient?
7. Have you used or heard of applymate.com?
8. How does your interest in the job you are applying to affect you approach towards the application?
9. What kinds of features would you like to have in a system which would   keep track of all the deadlines and application status for you?

Mostly, people apply to various jobs at a time. Majority people opted that they do like to keep a track of their application while in the process and they also would love to have an organized approach to tracking especially for the jobs that interests them. It was also observed as

a pattern that people do usually forget the deadlines however once reminded, they do keep a note of their interview details.

We found that around 60% of our participants use excel sheet to keep track of their job application process. 70% use folders in the computer to organize and remember the resume, cover letter they had sent to various organizations. And we found that 90% of our participants use google calendar app to remember the dates for interview.

User Testing:

In order to evaluate the solution to our job application problem we decided to use the website applymate.com. It is a website found online that allows users to create a profile, manage and track documents, set deadlines and other application management services. For our usability testing we gathered 12 participants ranging from the ages of 20-30 in order to use the website. Before user testing began we provided them with our questionnaire from our first powerpoint which got a general idea of how people approach applying to jobs. We also told our participants to 'Think aloud' as they do the tasks.

The tasks that we had our participants complete were:

1. Login (username and password was provided by us)
2. Create a job profile
3. Add job applications
4. Sync calendar
5. Upload a resume
6. Update your profile and
7. Set deadline application for 12/15/17.

We took notes while our participants were doing the tasks. Most of the users were able to carry out the tasks quite easily. Since the website interface mimicked a lot of websites which require a profile and account some of the tasks were done quickly and easily by our participants.

Overall task 4 which required the participants to sync to their calendar turned out to be the most difficult task.

After the user testing we gave an unstructured interview with four questions:

1. Did you enjoy browsing through the website?
2. Which features did you like the most?
3. What did you not like about the website?
4. Do you feel that it should include some other features?

The responses to the website that we received were generally positive. For our participants we had a SUS score range from 30-97.5 but our average came out to 74.79, which is very good. For the most part participants were able to navigate and use the website to the best of their abilities with the only complaints being that things looked out of date and that some stuff was hard to find at first. The favorite feature of the website was the ability to set your own notified deadlines as well as the website managing all your docs. The most hated feature of the website was the placement of certain menus that were important to performing some of the tasks. The last thing that we gathered was that many people were curious if there was a mobile app companion to go along with the website but there is not. Overall it seemed like the website was received positively by our participants many said that they would potentially use this in the future. We did notice that in the questionnaire those who generally were not on top of their apps or deadlines seemed to struggle with the site and may not be inclined to use it. But that was a small portion of our group.

Conclusion:

Going into this project we wanted to see if applymate would be useful to those applying for jobs. After running our questionnaire, testing and interviews we conclude that this website would indeed help those who struggle to keep track of their job applications. Applymate makes it easy to have one central software

that manages and tracks your applications. Many people at the beginning of our project said they struggle to manage multiple deadlines. Many people also said that they were willing to look into ways to improve their organization. Overall after the interviews and testing we do believe this is a viable solution.

Reflection:

From this project we have learned many things. First from the beginning to right now we figured out how to take a problem that we see around us and how to formulate testing and gather data to solve this problem. Through user testing and interview we learned that people struggle with organization and they are willing to learn a new interface in order to manage their job applications. We learned how to draw conclusions from our data and to see how we could later improve our user testing. Some things we may do differently in the future is:

1. We would probably use a wider amount of people at various age groups. By doing this we can explore if age has a correlation with the ability to manage job applications and we would have more data to analyze.
2. In terms of user testing we would probably first show users the   tutorial for the website before having them start. This would just help user performance more than anything.