PERSONAL PROFILE

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Hi! My name is Chevonne. I'm 28 years old, vegan, and a mother of two dogs: a Chow Chow and an adopted mixed-breed street dog. I was born and bred in Singapore but my ethnicity is quite a tongue-twister — Chinese, Burmese, Peranakan and Kadazan. If you trust a Mongolian Shaman's words, then I am part Mongolian too. I often grew up around Buddhist monks due to my father's job in a temple and was given a Tibetan name, Sonam Gyalmo. While I speak English, Mandarin and broken Cantonese, I am slowly learning Tibetan.

When I'm not a student at RMIT, I'm a freelance digital content and brand strategist. Before moving into Information Technology (IT), I studied marketing and spent the last decade working in public relations, media and communications. At 17, I was a lifestyle and beauty blogger managed by Asia's leading social media agency — where I first heard that the term "influencer" would replace "blogger" long before it did.

However, to appease my strict Asian parents who thought blogging was frivolous, I pursued marketing as a day job. I worked in a 3-star Michelin restaurant group before moving to a digital publishing start-up, and eventually to Singapore's oldest and largest animal welfare organisation. In other words, I went from getting paid to eat fine dining food to getting a pay cut to use my skills for needy street animals.

Being in a one-man department in the animal shelter, I covered multiple roles — social media manager, photographer, videographer, web and graphic designer, content strategist, customer service officer, writer, counsellor, and even basic tech support. With coding skills of a hamster, I struggled to troubleshoot errors and hence decided to pursue an IT degree.

INTEREST IN IT

My interest in IT started when I was a toddler. My mum had bought me two Windows 95 CD games: one was about a dollhouse, and the other was about mathematics (James Discovers Math). For my 7th birthday, I even begged my parents for an email account as a present, which remained unused for none of my friends had accounts I could write to. Eventually, I moved into playing Gameboy's Pokemon, Neopets, Habbo Hotel, Counter Strike, and

Playstation's WWF. In school, I also discovered Dreamweaver, Garage Band, Blogger, and Friendster.

Today, IT still plays a huge role in my life as I work in digital marketing. While working in an animal welfare charity, I was able to publicise campaigns, reach more donors, and appeal for information (for cruelty cases) digitally. However, I only considered pursuing an IT professionally after seeing how my IT colleagues could create wonderful systems; I aspire to code like them one day.

Why did you choose to come to RMIT?
I chose RMIT because it's a recognised university in Singapore and offers a 100% online study option in a field of my choice (IT). I love studying online as it gives me more freedom to organise my schedule and my lessons are not affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

What do you expect to learn during your studies?
I hope to build up my general knowledge on IT and learn useful skills such as programming and web designing. I recently watched a Netflix film called Coded Bias, a documentary that investigates the bias in algorithms after an M.I.T. Media Lab researcher uncovered flaws in facial recognition technology. The film reminded me to learn more about technology as average consumers may not even read and/or understand T&Cs. I'm also interested in UX, AI, cyber security and machine learning.

IDEAL JOB

Frontend Software Engineer
Job link: https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/frontend-software-engineer-at-abillionveg-pte-ltd-2604494046/

This job describes a Frontend Software Engineer role for an Asia-based food technology application featuring reviews for vegan and vegetarian restaurant food/products. Being a Frontend Software Engineer means I can help to shape what customers see and how they interact with the platform.

This job sounds interesting because I believe in the brand's mission — to create a sustainable ecosystem and promote plant-based living. It also allows me to be creative, create meaningful work on my computer, and learn from other developers/engineers. I will get to design and build new features on the brand's websites and mobile applications.

To have the technical skills that the job requires, I will need to be proficient in JavaScript and React, with at least two years of experience as a web frontend software engineer. It would be advantageous if I am also familiar with React Native, Redux, and have worked on mobile applications and backend development.

While I still lack experience and coding knowledge in HTML and CSS, I have spent many years working in teams and in a managerial/founder role. Also, I am passionate about the plant-based movement. Nonetheless, I believe technical skills can be brushed up by studying hard for my Bachelor of Information Technology degree. I am learning Python now but will eventually move into Java and React, and eventually web applications.

PERSONALITY TESTS

Myers-Briggs Test
www.16personalities.com
Results: Advocate (INFJ-A)

Learning Style Test
www.educationplanner.org
Results: Visual learner (Auditory: 25%, Visual: 55%, Tactile: 20%)

Creativity Test
https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/creativity-quiz.htm
Results: 60 (Creativity is one of my strengths)

What do the results of these tests mean for you?
These tests remind me that every person has unique strengths and weaknesses and that we should find a learning style that suits us best. When I took the Myers-Briggs test a decade ago, my personality type was ENFP — now it is INFJ-A. Hence, I believe there is room for improvement/changes depending on which trait(s) we wish to hone.

How do you think these results may influence your behaviour in a team?
As a visual learner and creative, my strength is being able to visualise how an end product or service may appear to consumers. Hence, I could take on more design-focused roles. As an INFJ-A, I'm also especially motivated when working on projects that are meaningful. However, I have to be mindful of not getting discouraged by strict rules and structures.

How should you take this into account when forming a team?
Although I am relatively introverted, I should be confident in sharing my ideas and promoting creativity among my teammates, as creativity appears to be one of my key strengths. However, ideas involve more than just creativity. To ensure ideas are both feasible, creative and meaningful, I would need multiple perspectives from people (especially logical ones) who may be able to find flaws in areas I cannot. I may also work best under a team leader who is more strict with deadlines and steps, as I may fixate too long on imperfections and get lost in a creative bubble.

PROJECT: PAWGRAM

Overview

Pawgram is a virtual pet game that prioritises real life pet care knowledge, starting with basic care needed for dogs. Unlike many animal games that prioritise entertainment value with little to no realistic pet care information or encourage pet fighting, Pawgram will provide useful knowledge on keeping a dog to help new and potential dog owners. In the game, players will foster a pet until he/she gets adopted into a loving home. They will learn responsible pet ownership through real life scenarios and educational content such as how much food to give a dog based on his/her weight and how to address common dog behaviourial issues (e.g. excessive barking) using force-free training techniques.

Motivation

As a former staff of Singapore's oldest and largest animal welfare organisation, I learnt that pet care and training methods were difficult issues to address. Many pet owners resort to archaic, aversive training methods to discipline their dogs, which may cause long-term harm. Hence, SPCA Singapore launched a #TeachWithKindness campaign to promote humane training methods and to petition for a ban on electric shock dog collars. I believe creating an interactive pet care game will help to raise awareness for responsible pet ownership, adoptions, and humane training methods in a fun and personal way.

Description

In Pawgram, players will first get to choose a dog to foster from an animal shelter. Tailored to Singaporean players, the list of dogs will be based on real life breeds including Singapore Specials — mixed-breed dogs in Singapore — to promote adoption of street dogs. There will be snippets of fun facts and tips included in the dog's description box, such as their breed personality and what they like and dislike. Players can then customise their pet's look by buying animal welfare-friendly accessories such as flat collars (no aversive tools such as prong or electric shock collars will be shown) with slight embellishments that do not obstruct their pet's movement. As the weather in Singapore is hot, pets would not be encouraged to wear clothes unless for medical reasons e.g. a skin allergy.

Once done, players will then shop for basic items required to get their home ready for their new foster pet e.g. a crate for crate training before exposing their pet to the rest of the house, a pet bed, food, bowls, toys, supplements, and accessories for grooming and training. The food menu will include information about what dogs can or cannot eat and the amount of food to feed based on the dog's breed and weight.

As the main target audience would be teenagers and young adults, the visuals should appear calming to make the game therapeutic and friendly for new players. The environment of the home and surroundings will mimic a typical housing estate in Singapore and the design style would be like a mix between Tamagotchi, Pokemon and Neko Atsume. I visualise the game to be educational but also feel-good and teaches players how to care for animals in a forgiving manner.

As players clicks on different tasks, an explanation will pop up to explain the purpose of each task. Tasks included in the game could be socialising puppies at an early age and watching for behavioural cues e.g. not hugging a dog as most dogs dislike hugs. Players may also need to send their pet to the vet for treatment or top up fresh water in the bowl when it is empty. When bringing their dogs for a walk, pet owners must pick up their dogs' poo too as it is a common offence in Singapore to not do so. If their dog starts barking and lunging at another dog, players must calmly bring their dog away. The game will continue until the player rakes in enough points by completing all tasks to get their foster pet adopted into forever homes. Once completed, a picture of their adopted pet will be added to their gallery for keepsake and players can then select another animal to foster. A donation link to real life animal shelters could be included.

Tools and Technologies

As this game is virtual and runs as a phone application, I would need a computer, iPhone, and several game development software. The key skills needed would be front- and back-end developing, programming, designing and marketing. Also, pet care information would have to be fact-checked by veterinarians and dog trainers. As the game concept is quite simple and hosted on the mobile store, it should be feasible to create in a small team. More features can be added or removed along the way, to ensure it remains user-friendly and fun.

The native programming language for iOS apps is Swift. To build my game assets, I would need to include all the individual pieces such as 2D graphics, animated sprites, background images, music, and sound clips. For 2D raster-based graphics, I can use Photoshop or GIMP. For 2D vector graphics, I can use Adobe Illustrator or Inkscape.

Outcome

If the project is successful, it would be a valuable resource for animal shelters to promote during educational talks in schools or companies. It may prevent dog owners from adopting a dog on impulse if they are not ready for a lifelong commitment or to adopt a dog if they are ready for one. However, the game's current limitation is that it only involves dogs and not a full list of species— it could be developed further to include cats, hamsters, and more.