

DIRK
STAHLECKER: So I thought that this class would allow me an opportunity to, first off, create some sort of application or product that would be interesting and enjoyable to make and, more importantly, have an actual impact. It would be working with someone and doing something that would directly benefit them and allow them to improve their daily lives in some way. That gives it a lot more meaning and a lot more power, and makes it a lot more enjoyable of an experience to create.

So, I really wasn't entirely sure what it all would entail initially. I knew we'd be working with the clients, and I knew we'd be creating a product, but I didn't realize all of the focus that would be put on looking at the client, the contextual analysis, figuring out what it is that the clients can do, wants to do, is able to do.

And there was a lot of focus on features other than directly creating the piece of assistive technology. And I didn't expect that that would be the case. But I realized it was critical that that was there. Because to really make something successful, you have to understand all of the context surrounding it. And to do something that is really useful, you have to know what it is that the client needs. That's applicable both in an assistive technology and just in working toward it for any client.

ARTHI
VEZHAVENDAN: So I came into this class hoping that I would be able to work on a project that actually had an impact, because most of the courses I had taken at MIT, they were theoretical. And you just work on problem sets, and you hope to apply the things that you learned after college. And so the last semester and this semester, I've been trying to find courses where I can actually use those skills immediately. And I feel like practicing those skills is actually what's going to help me learn them better, so learning through experience. And that's exactly what I got out of this class. I was able to apply the web design skills that I learned, and also just the whole design process that we were told about, but actually apply it into [INAUDIBLE].

DIRK
STAHLECKER: I learned that there is always a lot more than meets the eye. I realized that there's a lot of-- I was surprised working with both our client and hearing about the other clients in the class, how much they were able to do, even given their disabilities. They were very well able to do quite a lot of things that I wouldn't have expected them to be able to. You have to really focus on what their abilities are and what their needs are. And I think having a client there in the first place

gave us this level of focus that is normally not found in creating, in our case, a software application. We're looking at a particular user and focusing on what one particular person wants. And that made it a lot easier to know what direction to take it, rather than having some nebulous group of our supposed users out there that we didn't actually know or interact with.

I put in a lot of time at the beginning to understanding the context and the client and the situation. And it's really tempting to jump right in and start coding, and we didn't do that. And I'm glad we didn't do that, because we were able to understand what it was we were supposed to be doing and what direction we needed to take. So I think that's the biggest piece of advice there, is to not start coding right away, but make sure you really understand what you're doing.

ARTHI

So we went through a bunch of iterations. First, we started off with-- Originally, we just

VEZHAVENDAN:

discussed with our client what he wanted, what his needs were. So we had four people in our group, and we each separated and came up with our own ideas of what the client might want. And so we came up with paper prototypes. And then we brought these four versions into the next meeting and discussed what-- Our client told us what he liked about them and what he didn't like about them.

And so from that we've collaborated and put those four together into a final paper prototype. And then just kept iterating from there, going back to our client, asking what he liked about it, what he didn't like about it. And then once we had a pretty finalized version of what we were hoping to get out of this project, we went into actually starting to code it and separating the tasks and everything.

The most challenging aspect was probably while going through all these iterations and coding, I kind of want to say it was the actual implementation. So coming up with the ideas and everything it was great. It was like a lot of creativity and trying to fix these problems. But then actually going into the coding portion was when we came into the bugs of how do we actually implement what we want out of our project. We know that we want a certain type of screen there. We know how we want the user to interact with it. But how do we actually do this technically? And that was one of the challenging parts of the class.

DIRK

I think the blogs were really a time for reflection and thinking about what it was we were doing.

STAHLECKER:

I used the blogs, at least, as sort of a way to catalyze my analysis of the subjects and the material presented in class and the things we've been working on. So I took it and really looked to analyze some thought I had been having, trying to figure out how to [INAUDIBLE]

one on, how to make computers more accessible, and ways in which that is sort of fundamental in a lot of the architecture and how it makes it difficult to do that. Or just analyzing different ways in which we are able to allow people with disabilities to be more integrated into society, and how society has to potentially change their viewpoint a little bit to allow that to happen to a greater degree.

ARTHI The most engaging aspect was definitely working with all of the people in the course, So my
VEZHAVENDAN: three other team members and our client, which, like I said, you don't entirely get in other courses. And in this one, you're sitting down with the person who is going to be using the product. And that was the most engaging, because I knew it was going to be fruitful, and I knew something was going to come out of it at the end.

DIRK I mean, as far as an education perspective, at least, on this, I found this is a course where I
STAHLECKER: was motivated to do the best I could, not by getting a good grade or even as much about learning something as it was about I really wanted to help the client. And I think it's the client-centered focus of the course that really drives it. And that is I feel the most important aspect, because when you're working with someone one on one, they're relying on you to create something that you know is going to help them. You are really well motivated to do the best you can on that product. And I think that making sure that that emphasis is retained is the most important thing to keep everyone really engaged in it and to get the best quality of products that it's possible from a class like this. And that's really the best way to make it happen, in my perspective.

ARTHI You're creating a product for your client, but you're also learning more about a certain
VEZHAVENDAN: person's lifestyle. And so make sure to go beyond what you're making as a product, but get to know your client as a person. And that's definitely going to be even more fruitful, because then you're not just focused on this one product, product, product, but you're learning more of how does this one person have to live with their disabilities, and how can you integrate so many other things in your environment to help them and these types of people outside of the semester.