

Takeaways from Working in an Online Collaborate Team

I learned a great deal about setting clear expectations from working in an online collaborative team for the Usability Test. This was my first collaborative project in a class setting. The need for clear expectations in classroom collaboration will carry into the workplace and is consistent with the idea of a Savvy Start in the Successive Approximation Model. Allen (2018) indicated that “[p]eople often come to projects with ideas of what should be done” p. 45. Allen (2018) went on to stress that “[i]t’s important to make sure these ideas, which may actually be expectations and even strong preferences, are shared and evaluated, lest they disrupt work by coming to fore later on after other approaches are pursued” (p. 45). Our group met in breakout rooms during class initially and communicated primarily by email in between class sessions. In each of the class meetings, we made small strides in the planning of our project--determining which tools to consider, selecting the tool to test, and discussing an approach to developing a task list for the test itself. We left the bulk of the work to be performed between our meetings with each of us working independently on agreed upon tasks. We quickly discovered that email communication in between meetings could be less than effective in a situation in which each of us worked within a flexible, self-paced schedule. The three of us replied with varying speed, depending upon our other time commitments. Feedback could not be elicited from all parties until each of us had time to complete our tasks, read the email, and evaluate the ideas of the others. Our first step toward working as a cohesive team was setting meeting times between class sessions in which we could communicate in real time via Zoom, allowing for better exchange of ideas and thus setting additional smaller deadlines during the course of the project. Making sure we had shared and evaluated expectations empowered us to proceed with more consistency in participation and timeliness.

I also gained knowledge and experience with collaborative communication, especially with regard to listening and negotiating. Reiser (2018) emphasized the need for well-honed communication skills for instructional technology professionals. He stated that “[t]o be an effective instructional designer or manager, you need to be able to clearly communicate with others, both in your written work and in your oral communication” (p. 209). Tracey argued that “collaborative designers must possess behaviors that include expressing ideas, listening, and negotiating” (as cited in Tracey & Morrison, 2018, p. 153). During this project, I made a concerted effort to listen and negotiate aspects of the work product instead of automatically assuming the leadership role as required by my current job. I focused on listening as opposed to expressing myself at the outset. I learned that part of listening though involved offering suggestions and then giving others time to process the input and offer alternatives. With active listening and encouragement to others to express ideas, the project benefits because each member is able to contribute according to their strengths and expertise. Only when each member had expressed their ideas could we begin to negotiate the plan for testing, the roles we would assume, and the deadlines to be set. As discussed above, negotiation of our expectations for the project and for each other yielded positive results.

The collaborative project revealed a need for me to improve in expressing myself and in exercising patience to listen effectively. I need to be sure to express my expectations of timeline and communication among group members. I also need to be patient and to listen to the expectations of others in order to understand their time constraints. I must keep in mind that we are busy individuals with multiple obligations, some of which may take priority over the group

project at periods during the course of our work. Each individual must have sufficient time to carry out their portion of the work and to evaluate the work of others. Only after expressing myself and listening to others who have had time to carry out their tasks, can I begin to negotiate different aspects of the work product.

References

- Allen, M. W. & Merrill, M. D. (2018). The successive approximation model (SAM): A closer look. In R. A. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology* (4th ed.) (pp. 31-41). New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Reiser, R. A. (2018). Getting an instructional design position: Lessons from a personal history. In R. A. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology* (4th ed.) (pp. 207-212). New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Tracey, M. W. & Morrison, G. R. (2018). Instructional design in business and industry. In R. A. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology* (4th ed.) (pp. 152-158). New York, NY: Pearson Education, Inc.