

Anika Kok

Integration of Expertise Areas (EA's)

During this project, Rooske and I have worked hard to cover a wide variety of topics and activities while covering the expertise areas of Industrial Design. We started off by sketching and conducting literature research to dive into relevant topics and to generate ideas to proceed with. Rooske is very good at visualising her ideas by sketching and making diagrams. This made me realise that I can improve my skills in that area, because it helps communicating ideas from early stages onwards.

Careful consideration of user testing with children was needed within this project. To do this as efficient as possible, I read information on how to design for and work with children. I also asked for feedback on our plans and consent forms to experts in the field. Besides the fact that testing with children is different than with adults, the COVID-19 situation was also contributing to having to rethink user testing in such a way that it would still provide useful insights for the project. I believe that one would need to work with children way more often to get a feeling of how to speak their language and design for them, although I do think it went really well in this case.

The majority of my time for this project has been spent on creating the final prototype. I first started testing both the Alexa developer environment and Google Dialogflow after which the client advised us to work with the Alexa. During this project, I have worked really hard on getting to know the way Alexa skills work. The structures, systems and code can be very complex and intimidating, which is why I decided to use Skill Flow Builder. This has been a huge game changer in our project, as it allowed us to create solid prototypes that actually worked and felt like a real skill.

What I really liked about this project is working within a specific scope, for a client. I feel like it gives more direction from the start which allows you to spend more time on the actual concept and development. The communication with the client went well and it provided us with valuable input and feedback that we could use to improve our concept. However, next time, I would take more time to carefully research the client and consider their values and vision to create a fitting solution.

Professional skills and further learning

I am personally very happy with the process and result of this project. I enjoyed working with Rooske as I feel like we push each other to aim for the best. We have some of the same interests and are able to ask each other critical questions to make sure we are not making unjustified assumptions or conclusions. Despite the adapted situation due to COVID-19, we communicated regularly via Slack and video calls. I think that working individually makes you less prone to learn new skills from each other and makes you work on things you already have experience with. I nevertheless feel like I have levelled up in many ways. I am starting to find my way around the academic way of working and writing, which includes doing proper literature research. Because both Rooske and I are very interested in theory, we spent a lot of time reading and researching papers, books, articles and other available information from experts in the field. This kick-off to the project made all the difference for me, as I was way more informed on the topic from the start than with most projects I worked on previously. By sketching a ton of different ideas and by combining these with the knowledge we gained in parallel, we were able to make conscious decisions from day one.

Besides diving deeper into the theoretical side of things, I set a goal of iterating more often at the beginning of the semester. I am a true perfectionist that wants to leave user testing to the last minute when everything feels finished and good to go, even though I know this isn't the best for the product. My goal was 'to make at least two iterations of the product I am designing to be able to deliver an advice for a third version at the end of the semester.' I almost fell into the same pitfall again during this project, meaning I wanted to perfect everything and felt user testing as a major threshold to get over. Due to the coaching within the squad, and the input from my team member, I realised that user testing was the best step to take at that point within the project. We made a low key prototype that was easy to make but would already provide us with lots of interesting insights that we were able to use over the further course of our project.

The second time we needed to user test, I still didn't feel like our prototype was ready to test with users, but I didn't hesitate to do so anyway because of time pressure and the need for input. I realise this is only a one time encounter with not feeling the urge to

postpone user testing in order to perfect elements, but I will keep working on pushing myself to talk to the target group and get feedback on my ideas and products.

During this semester, I have defined my professional identity and vision better and more concrete. I found my passion for 'calm design' and am very eager to learn more about this topic. My plan was to do so during this semester but I unfortunately didn't put as much energy into this as I would have liked to. I didn't manage to complete the personal goal of mine as defined in my PDP. I am still looking for my personal, clear and concrete definition of calm design which is something to work on. However: I have obtained the book 'Calm Technology' as a starting point of my literature research on this topic. Besides that, I have found a coach and a project that fit the topic well, which means I will get to fully focus on calm design from next semester.