

1. Team dynamics: What was your role in the group and how did you contribute to the project? What group dynamics were important to the process?

I did a bit of everything, though ultimately I would call myself the techie of the group. I wrote portions of the indexing rules, the SOP, did proofreading and editing, and I also worked in Caspio on the database. Our group was successfully able to work together on everything that was required in nearly equal measure, and each person was able to pick up the slack when another member was feeling behind or overwhelmed. I think that having a good team, for that reason, is more about literal teamwork and overall supportiveness than it is about having defined roles or sticking to a specific plan. That being said, certain members proved to be more savvy at particular aspects of the project than others. (Redacted) was excellent, for example, at leading the team, and (Redacted) was often an important challenger of ideas, as well as proofreader and group reminder of deadlines.

2. Design elements: How successful was your group's design? Did you meet the stated objectives in your statement of purpose? Were the decisions made about fields, data types, and values good decisions?

Our design was fairly successful, however there were a few confusing aspects which Group 5 had kindly pointed out. I spent a long night during this project panicking and over-doing things, and had implemented a much more complicated version of the database, and had re-written some of the SOP. This version of the database actually addressed nearly all of the issues that Group 5 brought up. However, the indexing and other additional collateral was not complete

for this extended version, and we had to dial things back a bit in order to turn it in on time. I would say that we made good decisions and did extensive research, but Group 5 is right that we didn't have a great idea of who our target audience really was. One of the things that I had done in an expanded version of the SOP that we have not yet used was an attempt to break the target users into three subgroups, including gastrophiles (otherwise known as "foodies,") who I believe would have been a much better primary user group for snack chip searching, as they can be deli enthusiasts, deli owners, and food aficionados overall as well. The snack chip database can expand into international and niche markets as well this way, without having to justify the existence of a deli shop owner as the primary audience.

3. Implementation: Were your group's rules successful? Why or why not (use specific examples)? What further improvements would you make?

I think that our existing rules were fine, we just needed more rules regarding flavor and dietary restrictions, and the other features that Group 5 mentioned. Many of these features are already saved and ready to implement in Caspio, we just don't have predefined rules written for them or an SOP that reflects an improved target user group. I'm certain that these missing aspects will be very easy to correct. One of the things that I agree with the most when it comes to Group 5 is that we need to differentiate between Brand Name and Manufacturer Name, as these are two completely different names much of the time.

4. The Big Picture: How does what you learned relate to the broad context of designing and evaluating information retrieval systems?

I think that I had a preconceived notion when I began the project that I could easily do it all myself, and that a group setting and collaborative effort was not necessary. While it may be true that I could eventually complete the project alone, having a team that could pass tasks around and provide alternative opinions on different aspects of the project proved invaluable to our process. We were also able to understand key terminology and database design theory, such as the meaning of terms like “field,” and “value,” as well as indexing rules. We learned firsthand how important user experience is to even something like Caspio, where the experience of building a database that is user friendly is equally as important as the content itself. If a user is unable to create a database as intended, the project cannot continue easily.