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PM102 Final Reflection

It is hard to believe that PM102 is already done - seemingly once again in the blink of an eye! While I don't believe that the core [+energy] strategy has changed much since we set out in January with our budget in hand to bring our concept to life, I do believe that we have been forced to crystalize our value proposition, refine our business model, and be honest with ourselves on what exactly the hero path and 'aha moment' is that we are delivering for our soon-to-be customers.

One significant strategic shift we made this semester related to the business model was to position ourselves as a source of high-quality curated content. What this meant for us was that we spent much of our time this semester testing countless online workouts to see if they were up to our quality standards, and reaching out to content creators for permission to share and promote their content on our app. For our business model, this brings in a new side to our platform, and has forced us to think hard about a future world in which we monetize this partnership with content creators, whether that be by charging the end consumer or the content creators.

This semester we were fortunate enough to work with a UX designer as part of our dev team who helped us take our original wireframes to the next level with her style and expertise. One of the biggest learnings for me personally was in this UX design process. When we brought our wireframes to the team in January, I felt as though although they maybe weren't necessarily professional looking, they definitely were complete. But oh boy, was I wrong! Throughout the build process there were many seemingly small changes we made related to the UX design - such as including a toggle to turn on or off your recovery time buffer, and having placeholder cards between imported events on your calendar to maintain proper scale for easy visualization of your free time. Although these could be seen as purely "design" decisions, the impact that these choices have on the broader strategy of the app is enormous.

Which brings me to the next major learning point in managing the product development process. As product founders, we relentlessly have to reiterate and refocus the engineering team on the product vision and the core product functionality. At multiple points along the development path, we faced minor, pretty normal engineering roadblocks. When faced with these challenges, the engineers were great problem solvers, but they always tried to solve the problem in an engineering-savvy way. We found ourselves as product founders feeling a bit like a broken record trying to stress the importance of certain features and underlying strategy to help the engineers understand why we wanted what we wanted. For example, at one point we believed we had discovered a way to develop calendar integration, perhaps the most core functionality of our app, only to find out two weeks later that this wasn't possible. We spent many days trying to hack together different ways to show the calendar integration the way we wanted. However, the engineers multiple times recommended fixes that they knew were typical or well-regarded ways

for showing a calendar in an app, but none of which helped the consumer visualize the free space they had in their calendar, which was a core tenet of the app that we did not want to lose.

One other major learning that I had this semester related to the product development process was truly how specific you have to be in scoping out the work from the start. We were very much forewarned about this and were constantly reminded to specify as much as we could in the contract, but even so, what we thought was an extremely in-depth and thorough contract fell short at times. An example of where it fell short is in our negotiation of the login process. Our contract included development of the login and registration process in the first sprint, but in our review of this first sprint, we realized there was no way for an existing user to recover a forgotten password. When we asked the team if they could add this in, they came back to us saying that password recovery wasn't part of our contract, even though we as a team felt strongly that this feature is indirectly included as part of the login and registration. This experience shed light on just how specific one must be in striking a contract. However, I don't think we could have fixed this in our first experience going through this process, but rather I believe that this is something that you can truly only learn by doing, and for this, I'm forever grateful to PM102 for giving me this experience!

While my career plans still haven't changed since last semester and I still have no immediate plans to go into a product role, I still am walking away from the PM101/102 experience feeling so much more equipped to tackle my first job out of school. It has taught me so much about product evolution and so much about understanding the true intent and need of the consumer. Even beyond that, having the opportunity to go through the product development process and work with a team of engineers has taught me the importance of clear, regular communication and being willing to take a stand and form an opinion, even when you could very easily still be proven wrong down the line. The only way to develop great products is to test often, test fast, and learn as much from the wrong decisions you make as you do from the correct decisions you make!