



Constant and quick feedback is more important than I thought

I have been working on a brand new Big Data project that spanned from the end of last year to this January, and it's one of the several times I work fully on myself - no collaboration, no workload distribution, no consultation. I do need to ask some people about the APIs they own, but that's it. This project is to compute derivative data from multiple upstream datasets and bring the derivative data to live for users. Though I managed to deliver it in time, I found it a lesson - that I should embrace more constant and quick feedback.

I spent the first month building scaffolders, trying to make sure everything already in their designated place. I then spent one month implementing each blocks of the entire workflow, and that's when I felt de-energized.

The entire code to write is around 2000 lines, and I tried to wrap them up all in once - this was a wrong idea. I could, and I did manage to do so, but during doing so I had been too isolated - and I didn't even know if my code would work (thankfully it does work)!

This decision to try to wrap them up all in once is rooted in 2 aspects:

1. My confidence in my ability of implementing complex features
2. My estimate that it wouldn't take too long

Looking back, neither of the aspects is wrong. However, I falsely neglected the nature of being a human - that lacking feedback would do harm to the productivity. I felt de-energized because without feedback, subconsciously I was chasing something very vague. I didn't know if I was on the correct direction. I didn't know if I could complete everything on time. I didn't know if my work was considered important to others.

The feedback consists of two aspects, too:

1. Technical feedback: unit tests, end-to-end tests, and all the tests to make sure the code is correct and has expected behavior
2. Interpersonal feedback: code review; quick zoom meeting on the directions; or even casual chat with teammates to understand what they are doing, and let them know what I have been working on.

It's really important to have such feedback, especially when they are constant and quick, because it's some recognition of your progress, and your direction. They are like the landmarks in your hike, to let you know that you are on the right track or not, and they also serve as emotional support - this is something I never realized before, that you feel you are not alone, and you are doing great.

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