Project Retrospective: Human-Agent Team Simulator *UCLA Epicenter x Ferrazzi Greenlight*

Spring 2026 Innovation Challenge

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What Went Well (As a Team):

- **Pivoting effectively.** One of our strongest collective skills this quarter was our ability to pivot when needed, whether that meant reshaping the simulation into a more gamified experience (after that Week 6 Meeting), or redirecting the pitch deck to better reflect the business-oriented framing that Wendy and Raffi advised.
- **Diversity of thought.** Our general team meetings were consistently productive. Having members from different academic backgrounds and areas of expertise meant that discussions rarely stayed surface-level. Different perspectives pushed us to pressure-test our ideas and iterate more thoughtfully. And from a design perspective, I think that it is so important to consistently iterate through ideas, and not always be so fixated on your first solution.
- **Receptiveness to extra effort.** As the quarter progressed and it became clear that more working sessions would be necessary, I genuinely appreciated how willing everyone was to show up to extra meetings. We are all students busy balancing a lot, and the fact that the team made space for additional collaboration made a real difference in our progress and tasks.
- **Delivering an end-to-end product.** We did not just submit a prototype. We delivered a built, functional simulation with supporting research documentation, scenario design, test cases, and a handoff-ready deliverable package. In reference to last quarters prototype for the DGSOM I was already proud of just a prototype, but with this project, to build a full handoff ready product is something that I am really proud of!

What went decently well, but has room to improve:

- **Incorporating stakeholder feedback.** For the most part, I believe we did a good job integrating Wendy's weekly feedback and feature requests into our work. The more stressful moment came post-submission, when minor bugs and LLM inconsistencies surfaced during the handoff period. That was a tense situation, but I was able to investigate quickly, communicate directly with our engineering lead Hana, and later assign the right team members to debug and investigate. It was a good reminder that testing is not a step to compress or skip, especially near the finish line. If I could do it again, I would carve out dedicated testing cycles once the full simulation was finalized, rather than letting development timelines crowd that out.
- **Initial role delegation.** Dividing the team into research, product, and engineering tracks made sense in theory for a team of eight. In practice, as the quarter progressed, the research team naturally absorbed more product responsibilities, and the engineering side could have used more technical bandwidth. The structure was a reasonable starting point, but it needed more flexibility built in from the beginning.

Pain Points (As a Team):

- **Engineering capacity.** The project revealed a key dependency risk: a significant portion of technical knowledge rested with only a few contributors. While Hana delivered exceptional work, future projects would benefit from distributing technical ownership more broadly to improve resilience, collaboration, and testing capacity.
- **Contribution consistency.** Engagement levels fluctuated across the team, particularly in the final week. This is not unusual for a project of this intensity at the end of a quarter, but it did create pressure at a critical time. As the quarter progressed, visibility into task ownership and progress became more difficult. It was challenging to identify blockers early and redistribute work when necessary. Introducing check-ins and task tracking later in the project improved transparency, but these systems would have been more effective if established at the beginning.
- **Time constraints.** The bulk of active development happened in the final three to four weeks of the quarter. This left limited runway for thorough testing and meant that several features we had envisioned (admin dashboards, company-specific configuration, and broader deployment considerations) remained out of scope. Some of these were also brought up by the Ferrazzi representatives during our presentation. Given more time, those additions would have meaningfully strengthened the final product (especially features pertaining to organizational level impact and metrics).

Key Leadership Lessons

1. Establish accountability systems early.
2. Create visibility into task ownership and progress from the beginning. Have constant communication and check ins, and not just updates coming from the weekly progress report slides.
3. Protect dedicated testing time near project completion.
4. Trust delegation earlier to avoid bottlenecks in the final stages.

What Went Well (As a Lead):

- **Personal growth in technical tools.** This was my first real experience using GitHub and AI-assisted development tools. Learning those on the fly, in a live project context, was one of the more unexpected and valuable takeaways from the quarter. As I lead I have also learned to be flexible, and if it means learning new skills on the spot to support other team members, then I will always be open to that. Excited to see where I can further develop and use these skills!
- **Growing confidence in leadership.** I became noticeably more comfortable directing meetings, delegating clearly, and making judgment calls under time pressure. Leadership is a skill, and this quarter gave me real practice, and especially expanded on how I was leading in last quarter's Career Fellowship challenge. My learning and leadership development from last quarter to this quarter has jumped immensely.

- **Tailoring work to people's strengths.** One team member told me they appreciated that I assigned tasks in a way that aligned with each person's skill set. That kind of feedback means a lot, and it reflects intentionality in how I was thinking about the team and our dynamic, not just the work.
- **Holding the line when it mattered.** In the final stretch, I recognized that my role had shifted. Keeping morale up, maintaining communication cadence, and pushing progress forward at a pivotal moment required me to be more direct and consistent than I had been earlier in the quarter. Consistent communication, clear recaps, and timely reminders were the tools that held things together. I had set the communication expectation, because if I was not fulfilling them myself, I could not expect the rest of the team to do so as well.

Pain & Improvement Points (As a Lead)

- **Absorbing extra load.** There were moments where I was managing my own deliverables, leading the team, and stepping in to cover tasks that were not moving fast enough, all at the same time. I made a deliberate choice to always make myself available and to step in when needed, but I want to be more proactive next time about flagging those gaps earlier rather than quietly absorbing them. I have to learn how to better rely and trust on the rest of my team members and their capabilities as well.
- **The temptation to just do it myself.** There were situations (the final deliverables compilation being the clearest example) where I made the call to handle something myself rather than distribute it, because I felt we were too far into the quarter for a handoff to go smoothly. That was the right call at the moment, but it points to a broader pattern I want to work on: trusting delegation earlier, so it is not a question of time by the end.
- **Implementing accountability systems too late.** One of the clearest lessons from this project was the importance of establishing accountability systems early. There had to be more than just our weekly progress reports. Clear ownership of deliverables, updates in the Slack channel, and visible task tracking ultimately improved transparency and execution, but these systems were implemented reactively rather than proactively. In future projects, I would have establish them earlier.

Academic Takeaways and Looking Forward

- Leading a project like this is rare. As someone with genuine interest in product and project management, having the opportunity not just to contribute but to lead, to own the outcomes, the team dynamics, the pivots, and the final delivery, was invaluable. As I have mentioned so many times before, no classroom setting or lecture hall will ever provide that!
- The subject matter of this project is so relevant to me. Again as a Cognitive Science major, I am drawn to the human-centered lens and the idea that technology only works when it is designed around how people actually think, decide, and behave. In an era of rapid AI expansion, proper human oversight is not optional. The way humans and machines evolve together is not a new

conversation, but it is accelerating, and I think our project sat right at the center of something important. On a side note, it was validating to hear even from my own mom (who works in QA in the mortgage industry) describe how her own company has AI tools deployed across teams, but the only thing they are measuring is usage and activity. This is exactly the problem and gap we spent a quarter trying to solve!

- Finally, I remember coming to you after our first meeting, Raffi, and telling you I was not sure I was confident enough to lead a team of graduate students. Students I assumed were more qualified, more experienced, more prepared than I was, especially as someone in their first year at UCLA, coming in as a transfer student still figuring out if I belonged here and could achieve success. The answer has been yes, it has always been from the moment I was accepted into this school. Opportunities like this one continue to challenge that belief, but then help me prove it to myself all over again. I am grateful for you, for the Epicenter, for my team and the people around me, and for the chance to keep showing up.