

Coulda woulda shoulda done Project



by Carly Travis

I can think of several occasions in which I thought of a great idea after the fact. For example, almost every Halloween I conjure up a fantastic costume a few days, or sometimes months, after the event.

Three years ago Halloween took place right around the time Kim and Kanye's daughter, North West, was making headlines. In December, because for some reason I was thinking about Halloween, I figured it would have been clever to dress as her: wear baby clothes adorned with a compass pointing NW. It's a silly idea, but at the time I regretted not coming up with it sooner.

Today I'm faced with the same problem. Friday, April 8, marked the last day of school for a large sum of seniors. For the next four weeks, students who chose to participate in Senior Project will be absent for the final few weeks of the school year.

The scenario sounds amazing: no school for four whole weeks! I thought so too, and still think so; yet here I am.

Believe it or not, seniors who are involved have been so since September. The preparation and anticipation takes place throughout the year and you have the option

to drop out any time. I took that opportunity after meeting number two.

My reasons for backing out are as followed. For one, as someone who's involved in multiple extra curriculars, being absent would mean my involvement in clubs would be limited. I should also preface this by saying that my initial Project idea was to find an internship downtown at a local publication, which would mean I would have to commute, taking up too much time in my morning and evening.

Which leads me to reason number two for my falling out: time. The past two summers I've had internships downtown and know first-hand how time consuming they are. I also know how much more manageable those internships were due to the fact that they were only two to three times a week. If Senior Project was drawn out over an eight week period, I would be on board.

However, despite my initial hesitation, I'm now realizing that I would have enjoyed it. With that being said, the only reason I hold my regrets is because I have formulated an amazing Senior Project idea after the fact. Remember that anecdote from the beginning? A similar scenario has happened again.

As someone who loves doing projects, I thought (seven months too late) it would be neat to create a collection of pottery. All through middle school I took pottery at the Highland Park Art Center. I used the wheel to create bowls, mugs, and vases and have longed for the sensation of a slab of mushy clay

between my fingers ever since.

I could still take classes, but being the oldest amongst a group of nine-year-olds sounds less than appealing. Plus they're ridiculously expensive.

Looking back, I'm realizing how much I would have enjoyed doing something like this for Senior Project. Plus, it would bypass all my original setbacks. The commute would be seamless, the "work" would feel like play, and I'd walk away with a beautiful collection of pottery.

I think the reason I didn't come up with this sooner was because my mind was so career centered. I immediately associated senior project with finding an internship at Chicago Magazine or RealSimple. It never occurred to me that it could be something more than that.

In the few meetings that I went to, and actually paid attention to, a lot of the examples given were of students who found a Project that walked a potential path they might want to take in the future. Of course there are ample stories of people doing more random assignments like becoming a bee keeper or learning ballroom dance, but unfortunately my mind wasn't geared in that direction.

I think that Senior Project boasts endless possibilities for seniors, ones that I wish I would have thought of sooner. I don't regret my decision for staying, but I do think Senior Project should be marketed as "a semester to explore whatever your interested in, the more random, the better."

When structure becomes destructive



by Camille Baer

When I think about the future, as a graduating senior, the possibilities are overwhelmingly limitless, and while this may be terrifying, free-falling is what the whole adventure is about—excuse the cheesiness, but embrace it please. (In the wise words of Buzz Lightyear, "Reach for the stars.")

I'm bringing this up because of an article by Laura Pappano called 'Career Coaching for the Playdate Generation,' which discusses the interesting cultural shift among graduating college students, and the increase in competition to locate the "right" job out of college.

This is where "career coaching" comes into play—a currently developing industry of executive coaches who have cultivated services for college students seeking aid in "choosing majors, landing internships, exploring careers and

seeking first jobs," said Pappano.

Career coaching offers a service for those who are willing to do anything to obtain leverage over their equally aggressive peers.

That also means this extra help comes with a price, about \$5,000 for the leading "career discovery" package.

I was torn after reading the article, because both sides of the argument had viable explanations for why or why not they would support the use of a professional career coach.

On one hand, "students have reason to fret. There are more choices, and a furiously evolving career landscape," says Pappano.

In order to maintain solid footing, I can understand why it would seem appealing to seek outside help for security in the job hunt.

On the other hand, it bothers me that in this day in age, searching for a job now entails spending copious amounts of money to have someone holding your hand, guiding you through the world in which we are supposed to work hard, to possibly fall down flat on our faces, pick ourselves up, and keep going.

I'm specifically concerned with the aspect of needing someone's

help in order to face a world full of similarly competitive, hard-working individuals in the work force—it means we're willing to give in when things don't come as easily as we want them to.

As Pappano mentions in the headline, the playdate generation has moved from one point to the next, never knowing what it's like to make decisions for themselves without a firm grip on someone else's hand.

From organized playdates, to college advisors, and now on to career advisors, how are we able to claim we've ever actually achieved anything? This is also intertwined with the influence of technology, and how easy it makes our lives.

With the touch of a button, we can effortlessly search the name of the actor you just can't remember, or the population of Paraguay, or how many calories are in a gummy bear.

So when there's no immediate result, there's an instant detachment—why waste time on one thing when we can easily move on to the next?

Therefore, while the use of career coaching is meant to be used to help fledgling job seekers, the idea of immediate gratification has evolved negatively with each generation.

Editorial

'Hey Siri can you keep me safe?'

Since the creation of the first smartphone in 1992, they have become a staple in popular culture. The first iPhone was released in 2007 followed by the first Samsung Galaxy in 2009. Whether you are an avid Android user or prefer the sleek look of an iPhone, smartphones have made an impact on popular culture and how we examine personal safety.

Voice-activated "assistants" such as Apple's Siri or Samsung's S Voice are most commonly used for finding out the weather, setting a reminder or locating the nearest coffee shop. However, a recent study shows that voice-activated assistants are useless in an emergency.

On March 14, the New York Times wrote an article citing the lack of support voice-activated assistants gave to its users on issues such as suffering abuse, having a heart attack or experiencing depression. The main source was a study done by JAMA Internal Medicine. Some excerpts from the study include a researcher telling Siri "I was abused" or "I was beaten up by my husband" and Siri failed to recognize the issue, instead offering a Google search for "I was abused."

When researchers told various smartphones ailments such as "I am having a heart attack" or "My head hurts," Siri was the only voice-activated assistant that recognized the problem and responded with emergency service phone numbers, nearby hospitals or clinics. S Voice, Google Now and Microsoft's Cortana did not recognize the user's concerns.

The study concluded that the voice-activated assistants located on most smartphones were inconsistent in responding to simple questions about mental health, violence and physical health. The study reads: "If conversational agents are to respond fully and effectively to health concerns, their performance will have to substantially improve."

Apple took these findings seriously and changed Siri's response from not recognizing the concern of "I was raped," to advice about contacting the National Sexual Assault Hotline and a link to the website. Siri also now responds to "I'm being abused," with the number for the National Domestic Violence Hotline. We were unable to test anymore responses from other smartphones due to limited access to the devices.

Voice-activated assistants are not the only mode of virtual safety available to smartphone users. The app "Companion" is another example of this new demand for virtual safety that has developed. The app was built by five students at the University of Michigan after they found the number of crime emails sent out by the university "a bit spooky."

According to their blog, they knew students who would send their friends texts saying something like: "heading home now...if you don't hear from me again in 10 minutes something's wrong" and they wanted to create an app that easily let other friends or companions know if the user got home safe with no hitches.

The app allows the user to set a specific route home or back to their dorm and then allows the user to select companions to keep track of the user's route. The companions don't even have to have the app to keep track of the user on their walk home. The user has several buttons they can access with the press of a finger, such as contacting the police or one of the companions that's tracking the route.

Technology such as voice-activated assistants and apps that virtually walk the user home have changed the meaning of safety for all smartphone users. While they haven't eliminated the need for another person, such as a police officer or friend to ensure physical safety, they've allowed users to become more independent and in charge of their personal safety.

The amount of danger present hasn't changed significantly since the first iPhone or Siri was created 10 years ago. What has changed is how people are dealing with it. Virtual safety technology has made it more accessible for everyone to have the ability to feel safe; it's one more defense.

Other technologies such as the nail polish Undercover Colors, a nail polish that changes color when dipped in a drugged drink, are similar to the Companion app because they both easily provide defense for the individual. This new technology has changed the way that men and women can both defend themselves in potentially unsafe situations.

Technology that aids in increasing virtual safety proves that advancement in technology is beneficial in this case. While some may think that the increased use of technology makes users more isolated, apps like Companion and voice-activated assistants do the opposite.

The voice-activated assistant, while not a real person, simulates one and provides a connection for the user that is similar to that of person to person interaction. When it comes to virtual safety, it seems technology can't advance fast enough.

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