

Online Platform for Construction Management Internship Reviews

Erica Zetterquist

California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA

This paper discusses the process I went through to develop a website for Construction Management students to review their internships. The scope of the project was to create an online platform similar to “Polyratings” and “Rate My Professors” for Cal Poly Construction Management students to review internships. Reviews from peers would be accessible to students to help them through their job search process. Relative information such as salary, company culture, and other information collected in my survey allows peers better context of the internship experience. Part of the creating process of my website included research into web design sites like “Wix” and “Wordpress”. I also consulted with the Cal Poly Computer Science Department to determine the best way to create a website that would not require the basic knowledge of coding to create a website. “Google Sites” allowed me to create my envisioned site without having to uniquely code. This paper will reveal the process of creating a website, as well as the final deliverable.

Keywords: Internship, Review, Construction, Website, Rating

How the Project Came About:

Cal Poly’s Construction Management program is one of the highest regarded in the country. As the construction industry is currently booming, students are often able to choose between multiple companies regarding internships and employment. The 2019 Construction Management Career Fair this Fall had over one hundred and thirty companies participating and recruiting. Along with the career fair, over forty nightly information sessions are held on campus each quarter. Information sessions allow construction company recruiters to present information about their company to students. The sessions are often followed by next day interviews, allowing students easy access to job interviews. The department hosts companies from all sectors of construction, allowing students a variety of career paths in the industry. Recruiters range from heavy civil industry leaders such as Kiewit to residential project moguls such as KB Home. With the diversity of companies recruiting, students have the opportunity to find a company that best fits their interests. Having so many companies recruit specifically for students of Cal Poly Construction Management offers amazing opportunities; however, it can also be overwhelming for students to find the company best suited for them.

To assist students in the decision making process for potential employment, I wanted to create a platform to help fellow students learn more about their peers' experiences at different construction companies. I decided to develop a website that would allow Cal Poly students to review companies they had worked for and would allow other students access to reading these reviews. I used popular review websites as a guide and inspiration for what I wanted to create. Sites like "Polyratings" and "Rate My Professors" are used daily by students looking for their peer's reviews of teachers and professors at their university. "Rate My Professors" reports that their website has nineteen million reviews and two million professors on their site. Very similar to rate my professors, "Polyratings" is a website designed specifically for Cal Poly students to rate and review their teachers. It easily allows students to read reviews about a specific teacher and class. When filling out a review on "Polyratings", students must input the class title, quarter taken, final grade, and reason for taking the class. These details become useful knowledge for students reading the reviews as it provides better context about the student and class. Over my years at Cal Poly, I have seen how heavily students weigh comments on "Polyratings" and "Rate My Professors" to choose their schedule.

In my CM 460 Senior Project Methodology class, we were brainstorming possible ideas for students' senior projects. A fellow classmate suggested the idea of creating a platform for students to share their internship experiences. When I heard his suggestion, I agreed that it would have a lot of value for students. I decided a review style website would be the best platform for students to both share their own experiences and read others' experiences. I wanted the users of the site to have a similar experience users have on "Rate My Professors" or "Polyratings". These two sites are organized, clear, and provide sufficient detail for viewers to form an opinion based on reviews left on the page.

Project Process:

Since I have minimal knowledge of coding or web design, I started off by doing some research about different platforms I could use to aid my creation of my envisioned website. After consulting with peers and online forums, many suggested using "Wix" and "Wordpress" as platforms to create and design my website. I attempted to create my website on both these platforms, testing out features and designs. I created home pages and explored how customized I could make my site. On both sites, I ran into the same problem of not being able to create a website that allowed the users to interact and review, which was the main purpose of my site. These sites only allowed me to create a stagnant site that would only provide information I had previously inputted instead of an interactive interface with information continuously updating when reviews were submitted.

I decided to email the Cal Poly Computer Science department to see if any students or teachers would be willing to guide me through the web design process. Professor Fooad Khosmood, a Cal Poly Computer Science professor, kindly met with me to discuss ways to solve this issue. He graciously explained to me how websites like "Wix" and "Wordpress" operate. He suggested I use plugins on these sites to allow the site to be interactive. Unfortunately, when I tried using plugins, the site prompted me to pay for the domain. At this point in the process, I did not feel comfortable investing money into a site I was still trying to figure out.

Looking for routes around paying for the domain, I decided to try and link my review questionnaire to the basic webpage. I began by creating a "Google Forum" of the questions I wanted students to answer about their internships. I then linked the forum to my "Wordpress" site. The website was functional and allowed users to interact. However, I was unsatisfied that users had to navigate away from the home page to answer the forum.

Unsatisfied with my results, I made an appointment with Lynne Harrington, Computer Science Director of Data Management. With her previous experience in basic web design, she was able to provide me with helpful information about the process. I wanted my page to mimic “Polyratings” with its home page, menu and organized reviews. She was able to uncover that it has a unique code which I would not be able to easily recreate. Unfortunately, with my lack of coding knowledge, I would not be able to copy the format of “Polyratings”. Ideally, I was looking for a site that would be interactive without navigating from the main site as well as being free for me to create. Upon further research, we discovered “Google Sites” allows users to make websites and embed documents made through Google. With “Google Sites”, I was able to create a website that embedded my survey without navigating the user away from the home page.

Once I created my “Google Sites” webpage, I consulted other students about my forum. In the notes section of this binder are corrections and suggestions students made to my first draft of questions on my forum. With the help from other Construction Management students, I decided to take out a few questions that they thought were repetitive or unnecessary. My peers also helped me adjust the wording of some questions and informed me which areas were still unclear.

Deliverables:

I created a final website using “Google Sites” and embedding my “Google Forum”. The final webpage can be found at <https://sites.google.com/view/calpolycminternshipreviews/home>. The home page has a photo I found on the internet of two crossed hammers with the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo logo directly under it. I thought this image provided a clean home page because it had a white background so it was integrated seamlessly into the site. As the user scrolls down the page, they are able to fill out the embedded forum. The first question asks students to list the company they worked for. I used a drop down menu to list 55 different companies that have presented at info sessions or attended the career fair. I also used a fill in question to allow students to write in a company that was not listed. I preferred to use the list method so when answers were submitted, results could be grouped by company name but I also wanted to allow students the opportunity to report on a company not listed. I then used a Likert scale to ask students about company culture, pay, learning and development opportunities, company mentors, and personal interest. Stacy Kolegraff, a Construction Management professor and my subject matter expert, suggested I add a more specific question regarding pay as this could be of benefit to teachers and students to get a better grasp of what is fair pay for an internship in the industry. With her suggestion, a range of hourly pay from unpaid to thirty dollars and above is listed for students to pick which best represents their pay. I asked yes or no questions about reimbursements for car, phone, and living expenses. I also included a text box for students to write their overall experience at the company and ended the forum with the simple question of whether they would recommend other students to intern at their company. These questions give students a variety of aspects to consider about a company.

Originally, my plan was to make the responses public so students could quickly gain access to other students’ reviews. With further conversation with the Construction Management department, it was decided that the best process would be for the department to filter the reviews before releasing them to students. This was decided upon because we did not want any inappropriate reviews to be published that might negatively reflect on our program or effect a relationship the department has with a company.

In the photos, I have included sample results from Construction Management students. These results do not link the company name to the review but give an example as to what data can be extracted from the site.

Lessons Learned:

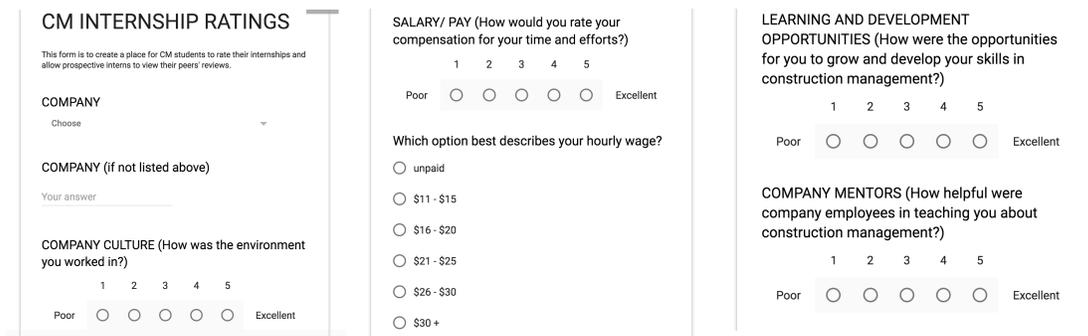
This project allowed me to grow and develop new skill sets. It also pushed me outside of my comfort zone because I do not prefer using technology, especially when I am unfamiliar with it. I had very little knowledge about web design and was naive to the complexities of computer systems. Although my final website was not my initial vision, I used multiple resources to aid me through the web design process. I learned about how important it is to reach out when I need help and knowing where to find appropriate help. The Cal Poly Computer Science department specifically was very kind and helpful to me. Using resources that were available to me, in this instance, campus staff, allowed me to find the best solution to the problems I was incurring. In my future construction career, knowing when to ask for help is vital. Knowing who and what my resources are and using them will allow me to grow and become a better manager. The feeling of being pushed out of my comfort zone is a feeling I want to become more comfortable with. Starting my full time job this January, I know I will be pushed to perform tasks I might not be fully confident in completing. This project helped me learn that I have many resources around me to help me grow and I possess great problem solving skills.

Photos:

Home Page:



Forum Questions:



PERSONAL INTEREST (How would you rate your interest in the tasks you were given?)

1 2 3 4 5

Poor Excellent

Living Stipend Provided?

Yes

No

Company Car Provided?

Yes

No

Reimbursement For Miles Put On Personal Vehicle?

Yes

No

Company Cell Phone Provided?

Yes

No

Reimbursement For Personal Phone Expenses?

Yes

No

Computer Provided?

Yes

No

Did you use any document control programs or BIM software (Bluebeam, PlanGrid, Excel, etc.)? Please list programs you used.

Your answer _____

Overall Experience and Additional Comments?

Your answer _____

Would you recommend interning at this company to other CM students?

Yes

No

Maybe

SUBMIT

Sample Results:

