

## **Thesis Project Portfolio**

**Designing a Workspace Reservation System Using ServiceNow**

(Technical Report)

**‘Fake it Till You Make it’ Culture in Silicon Valley Startups**

(STS Research Paper)

An Undergraduate Thesis

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## **Sociotechnical Synthesis**

The portfolio comprises a technical project report of an internship experience designing and implementing a workplace reservation system as well as an STS research paper covering the prevalence of overambitious attitudes in Silicon Valley and their potential detrimental impact. The technical project and the STS project focus on different areas, but both involve software development. The technical report details a practical project while, in contrast, the STS research paper examines the need for a balance between ambitious visions and practical expectations in Silicon Valley startups.

The technical project portion of the portfolio is focused on a capstone project completed in a team at a summer software development internship with a business and IT consulting firm. The main aim of the project was to provide a manner for employees to reserve a temporary workspace or conference room in an office building. We sought to demonstrate a tool that could ease a transition from completely remote work to encouraging employees to return to the office in an easy, safe and efficient manner. The project was designed as a web-based application using cloud-based software platform ServiceNow which employees could access by visiting the website on a mobile phone or desktop. The application aimed to support employees working in a hybrid environment – allowing employees to work from home some days and be able to reserve space to work days in the office on an ad-hoc basis. The project primarily consisted of implementing search functionality so employees could find available spaces based on selected criteria like the type of space they were looking for or the date and time for the reservations. Additional filters allowed users to find spaces with accessibility features or functional features like a desktop or monitor. There was also an interactive map view where employees could see a floorplan of a selected building with room and seat availability. Employees were also able to

view their upcoming reservations and edit or cancel them if needed. Much of the project was focused on designing an intuitive interface for employees to be able to easily adapt to and use without unnecessary difficulty or frustration. The technical portion of the portfolio summarizes the key requirements of the project as well as the technical components and functional solutions that the application fulfilled. Additionally, the report covers challenges faced in the project like balancing form and function. We wanted to maintain a clean user interface while still implementing many features and functions so that the tool would meet many different needs. Finally, the report discusses the end-result of the project and its effectiveness as well as the potential for future work or improvements to the system.

The STS research portion of the portfolio examines the culture of “Fake It Till You Make It” amongst Silicon Valley startups. The motivation for this piece was to explore how an overambitious and growth focused mindset could be damaging when startups inevitably fail to live up to these ambitions or to outside expectations. It explores how many startups in Silicon Valley embody a culture focused on disruptive innovation and hyperfast growth no matter the collateral damage. The paper primarily looks at a case study of the once promising and now defunct blood-testing startup, Theranos. The company at one point seemed poised to disrupt the lab-testing industry before it was unearthed that its technology was far from functioning as well as what was represented in investors, the media and the public. The paper details the rise and subsequent downfall of the company as well as its fallout and damage inflicted by its misrepresentations. The piece discusses the prevalent growth-focused mindset of startups as well as the often unseen or unnoticed costs of hyperfast growth and disruptive innovation. Then, the paper considers whether this scandal was an anomaly in Silicon Valley by looking at some other successful and unsuccessful startups. Finally, the piece argues that Theranos was representative

of a larger problem in the industry and analyzes whether “Fake it Till You Make It” culture will continue to prevail amongst Silicon Valley’s startups. The paper concludes that serious changes need to be made in Silicon Valley culture to better balance optimism and honesty among startups.