

# Post Project Review



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**1. *How close to the scheduled completion date was the project actually completed?***

The project was completed almost on time. We experienced a one-week delay because of the scope and complexity of the project.

**2. *What did we learn about scheduling that will help us on our next project?***

Scheduling was hard simply because no one in our group had the experience to know how much time to allot for certain tasks (for example, writing the ColdFusion code). We lacked a level of expertise that would have allowed us to more accurately schedule the project. In the future, in the absence of experience, we realized we must rely on a SME to provide an accurate estimate of the timeframe.

Also, it is essential to plan for more time at the end of the project to allow for delays and revisions. In a real world scenario, it would be important to factor in "ramp up" time with a SME for the applications being used (in this case, Cold Fusion). It would be beneficial for the team and quality of the tool to finish the work early and allow more time for reviews.

Another important factor is to keep the client and team to the schedule and to the agreed upon work.

**3. *Upon completion, did the project output meet customer specifications without additional work?***

We incorporated most features and functions requested by the client. The project evolved and had several suggested revisions by the client and team. Considering the timeframe and working conditions (students on our team have full-time jobs), we provided our client with an excellent tool. Also, we are willing to provide additional support for the client in running reports and changing the database in Access if it is necessary.

**4. *If additional work was required, please describe.***

Additional work included:

- More challenging coding than originally discussed
- Modifications to the way the database would work, including creating additional database tables
- Creating job aids to help the client modify the database as needed.

**5. *What did we learn about writing learning objectives that will help us on our next project?***

Learning objectives in addition to project definition and project analysis helped to identify the instructional design needs for the project. Without these milestone ID strategies the project would not contain the present quality and effectiveness.

**6. *What did we learn about staffing that will help us on our next project?***

We began this project by working as a team, meaning that everyone gave his/her input on all aspects of the project. We soon discovered that this was not a very efficient way of working on this kind of project. It is important to have a role-based approach. We found that it was better if each team member worked on a specific aspect of the project and focused his/her attention solely on that role. Something new and unpredictable would come up every day and we had to react, make decisions, and move forward.

It is important to understand that every person on a team has a great potential in completing tasks that have to be completed. We need to trust in each other's abilities and understand that there is no 'one correct method' to complete a task. There are a variety of potential winning solutions for every possible problem.

We learned that although we had a wonderful coder, it would have been beneficial to have at least one back up to Dianne. We would prefer to have had the option of learning ColdFusion instead of writing a lot of documentation for the class.

**7. *What did we learn about monitoring performance that will help us on our next project?***

Monitoring performance helps to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of team members in the process of project development and to improve the team members' performance as we go.

Not only should there be deadlines or milestones for the project, but also there should be deadlines for each team member as well. Weekly reports from team members should be required on their progress, so that if someone gets behind, other resources could be allocated to keep the project on schedule.

Also, it is important to follow the guidelines outlined in the Team Agreement. It was easy to stray from the agreement and that affected the dynamics of the team.

**8. *What did we learn about constraints that will help us on our next project?***

This project was unique, and we knew each project would have different set of constraints.

In this particular case, some team members thought that the client - team agreement was a missing element of the project. It would be very helpful for the project team in the school setting to develop not only a team agreement at the beginning of the project but to develop a team - client agreement that will ensure business equality in the team - client relationship. Although we had developed an in-depth Design Document and Project Definition, the difficulty was keeping the client within the confines of the agreement.

Other team members thought that these documents were the agreement with the client. There was quite a bit of scope creep by the client and in fact, last week she was still requesting additional functionality.

The comments above are concerned with constraining the *client*, but we also want to approach this question in terms of the project. The constraints that we had on the project were obviously time and expertise. Since we all work at other jobs, we did not have a great deal of time to commit to the project on a daily basis. We knew this would be a constraint, but there was not much we could do about it. The other primary constraint was our level of knowledge about doing this kind of project. Only one member of the team was familiar with ColdFusion. This put an incredible burden on this one team member. The lesson learned here is to make sure the team has the people with the knowledge to complete the project.

**9. *What techniques were developed that will be useful on our next project?***

- Gained an additional understanding on how to work in a team setting and be a productive team player.
- Learned more about how to apply and use Instructional Design strategies in real world environment.
- Reminders from our Project Manager as to delivery dates helped keep us on track. Things seemed to fall apart when this was not done. Additional reminders would be helpful.
- Communication and follow up are crucial to the projects success.
- Communication. It was nice to have. As a group we had our rifts, we were able to communicate and work through our issues.

**10. *What recommendations do we have for future research prior to a project?***

Provide the team with more flexibility and professional support from the client in order to do thorough research and analysis of a problem at the beginning of the project. Let a team prioritize tasks since the team is the primary executor of the project.

We struggled with the team dynamics. It would be imperative to know more about each person on the team and identify strengths and weaknesses up front (This includes how they work as a team player.) Another suggestion is to identify deadlines with the client far enough in advance to not cause any unnecessary problems for the client.

We spent a lot of time analyzing the project in terms of the learners, the environment, and the tasks involved, but we did not spend much time researching the knowledge and skill sets required to get the work done. As a team, we should spend some time learning exactly what skills are required for the tasks, and then making sure that the right people for the job are available.

***11. What lessons did we learn from our dealings with outside contractors?***

The present setting of the team - client relationship limits the teams' influential power. As graduate student of the Instructional Learning Technology Graduate program and people who are pursuing their careers in Instructional Design field, we have a lot to offer to our clients.

It is important to identify the clients schedule and take that into account in our project plan. This caused delays. Clients will change their minds and want to add to the scope of the project. It is up to the team to allow the changes as scope creep ultimately affects whether you are able to complete the project as scheduled.

When time and resources are limited, as in our situation, we must nail down the functional requirements of the project early in the process and stick with them. The many scope changes that occurred on this project were a severe risk to its success.

Being that this was a "free" project, Anita had nothing "invested." In other words, she had no incentive to cooperate. Luckily, she was flexible with us, but I can see why people try to get \$ up front from a client.

***12. If we had the opportunity to do the project over, what would we do differently? (We are not using names, but these are individual opinions)***

- Define team players by skills and what they like to do
- Assign a first and second lead to every main task
- Officially rotate team members through different roles
- Give everybody the same "power" and task responsibility
- Emphasize the advantages of being a mentor - because when you educate somebody in what you know best, you learn even more about a subject or a skill that you possess
- Let students be involved in performing a variety of different tasks through the course
- Work as a team (don't be offended or on the defense when suggestions for improvement are made)
- Act as a team all the time
- Use a more effective means of communication (often there were email messages not received.)
- Privately discuss individual issues with the other person (do not send a message to the entire team).
- Work as one (one voice)
- Recommend that we had less work up front so that we could spend more time on the development
- Take a ColdFusion course (or learn the application that is being used for the development).
- Allow more time for getting the final project out to allow user testing earlier.
- Allow team members to follow their strengths

- Allow team members to utilize their expertise to complete the project.
- Assign team member roles according to their strengths
- Research the skill sets necessary to complete the work
- Nail down the functional requirements early on
- Limit the amount of scope changes made by the client, or at least make the client more aware of how scope creep is a risk to the project
- Enlist the help of a ColdFusion expert sooner
- Allow more time for usability, functional, and load testing
- Assign project roles from the beginning and make them relatively static

### ***13. What would we do the same?***

- Conduct weekly meetings
- Provide each other with updates as soon as they are available
- Listen to each other's complaints and react immediately
- Communicate, communicate and communicate
- Work with the same people who made this project happen. (It could be a powerful team if the team dynamics were resolved. We all have such varied experiences and skill sets that we all brought to the project. The level of commitment and dedication of this team was admirable. We did an amazing job for working together for the first time.)

### ***14. What did you learn about project management?***

We learned that project management is a very important component of a project this size. Without the project management tools, we would have been lost at the beginning of this journey.

Because of our earlier decision to operate "by committee," we were very resistant to accept a strong leadership role, wanting consensus on all decisions. We realize now that every project needs a strong leader, someone to make decisions (based on group input of course, but not necessarily on group consensus), resolve conflicts among team members, communicate closely with the client, and adhere to an informed and carefully crafted schedule. Having no experience or exposure to project management, we did not have the skill set of a good project manager at the onset of this project.

Communication is the key to a well-operating team. Let everyone know where the rest of the team is, what he/she is doing, where the project is in the process flow, and what still needs to be completed.