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*A NARRATIVE REAL-LIFE  
PROJECT ILLUSTRATING HOW  
THE INFLUENCE OF SOFT  
FACTORS COULD SHAPE THE  
PROJECTS' SUCCESS.*

*SUCCESS OF IVAR AASEN  
PROJECT*

Trondheim 19.11.2019

## Preface

This report was written in Autumn 2019 semester, as a part of the course project for the course TPK5100 - Applied project management. This report discusses some characteristics of digitalization projects through a digital product developed by the members in the project. In addition, the report discusses the challenges faced during the development of the product, rationale behind critical decisions during the product development, products' critical-assessment in terms of the value it creates to its customers, factors that contribute to the success or failure of the project and the lessons learnt while the product was being developed.

We, the members of group 25, would like to thank the professor of the aforementioned course, Bassam Hussein, for providing us with a detailed report on the real-life project in question. In addition, we would also like to extend our gratitude to AkerBP AS and Sembcorp Marine Pte. Ltd., Singapore for the actual images and visuals of Ivar Aasen project utilized in this project. The image in the title page is credited to Aker BP.

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# 1 Digitalization projects

Digitalization is a term that is becoming more and more relevant in today's world as technology and computers keep evolving. It is a replacement process of converting or modifying traditional ways into digital ways. For example paper in the world is slowly losing its usability meaning due to the increase of digital devices. In order to complete any of these replacement processes, a digitalization project often comes into place.

Digitalization occurs in many different areas of our life. These areas range from digitalization in business, entertainment, transportation, education, etc.. In our project's case, we have created a digital project within the area of education, (Janetta, 2018). Even more specifically, our project consisted of converting a number of traditional text sources into a digital and visual format with the goal of illustrating these sources in a clear and easy-to-understand way.

## 1.1 Our product

Our product is a video about Ivan-Aasen oil drilling project illustrating how soft-factors can influence a project. It shows how a Norwegian oil drilling company managed to turn a failing megaproject into a definite success. Most projects fail or succeed considering only the hard factors like effective communication, considering risk assessment, clearer division of responsibilities, competence effective planning and execution of plans, team work and unity but rarely due to soft/ cultural factors. These soft factors may include trust, openness, commitment, respect, motivation, sense of ownership, and knowledge sharing.

## 1.2 Challenges

In today's world where technology has taken us over, digitalization seem to be the hour of need in almost every industry owing to its practical, efficient and reliable aspects compared to the traditional paper-based techniques. As defined in most of the search engines and studies carried out, digitalization is the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities, in other words, it is the process of moving to a digital business, (Glossary, 2019). From basic clerical works in health care to enormously scaled oil gas industry, digitalization has started making every work-day much easier and enjoyable to humans.

Having assigned a task to come up with a digital product that would be of some assistance to stakeholders of the course, TPK5100-Applied Project Management, the first challenge was to form a group consisting of fellow students, herein referred to as a "Project organization" or a "Project team". At first place, this was hard to come by as is the case with formation of any project team in any possible course at NTNU. Through necessary communications and self-introductions, the project organization was formed consisting of five members, hailing from various backgrounds.

The next big challenge was the "Time", wherein the project team hardly had two months as the project deadline. This race against time necessitated that the first of the efforts towards choosing the right kind of digital-product to develop had to be handled well. "Budget" was another constraint as the product had to be developed with zero costs. Yet another major constraint was the challenge to choose a project which could be well perceived and understood by all the members in the project organization, given the fact that they had different backgrounds. These aforementioned challenges made choosing the product type difficult than how the team members thought it would be.

Then came the biggest question to be answered which was "**What is the product we should develop?**". The team agreed to come up with one idea from each of the project member within a specific time schedule. There were no other boundaries attached to this first level of filtering

the project ideas. The criteria of search for ideas was that the product should fit into realistic time schedule of two months and that it shall not be too strenuous to achieve. One of the options that the team considered was to animate a case from the book utilized in the course, *The Road to Success*, (Hussein, 2018). However, since the project team members were from different backgrounds, only one of member was experienced with creating animations. Since creating an animation with the given deadline could prove to be too taxing and unfair to just one of the team members to work with, the project team decided to think of other alternatives.

The second option was that of a re-enactment of a case study found in the aforementioned book. This idea was a result of being inspired by the students from previous semesters who had taken the same course. The products that they had come up with were posted on a YouTube channel owned by the professor of the course, (Hussein, 2012). Although it sounded great, the project team was not convinced on the terms on how to do it and on which topic we should select since most of the cases were already performed by the previous students.

The final product idea that the team had in hand was that of a narrative video of the Ivar Aasen case study, which was put forward by one of the members during the lecture. That team member was fascinated about the project since he happened to work with a company that build the oil platform in the Ivar Aasen project. The project member explained the important lessons learnt from that mega project and he was also confident enough that we could succeed as a project team by taking up this case to create a narrative video. The case factors also intrigued the other members of the team on choosing the topic. Considering that the case was about a growing company tackling a huge project for the first time, going against the odds and emerging as successful gives an interesting appeal. Finally, the project team agreed on creating a narrative video of Ivar Aasen case project. This could also prove to be the best bet for the team since task allocations for script writing, narration and video editing could be easier as many team members had some basic experience prior to this.

With this project, the objective of the project team was to communicate the influence of soft factors such as commitment, trust, loyalty, freedom to innovate, freedom to express ideas etc., in creating significant differences to the attitude of the project organization as a whole and contribute to project's success.

## 2 Self-evaluation of the project management effort in the project

In this section of our report, we are presenting our feedback on the result of this digitalization project. But because one may not be able to judge themselves completely accurate, our opinion about the end success may result in being inaccurate. Nonetheless, we are stating our opinion on the matter in the spirit of helping others to judge our work and achievements more easily.

### 2.1 Overall evaluation

From the beginning to the end, we have planned this project carefully and tried our best to make it as good as possible within the constraints of our knowledge and time frame. Although it may seem at first glance that the product we have produced might not look very professional, or extremely entertaining. Nonetheless, we feel that we have achieved our main goal. Therefore, our general feeling about this project is a positive one. We believe that we have successfully managed to visualise most of the important facts about the Ivar Aasen oil drilling project management case.

In our project plan we have defined a selection of deliverables that would have to be considered. To illustrate our general opinion of our project management success, we can present a table showing a comparison of the planned and the actual deliverables.

Planned deliverables	Self evaluation scale of our actual end deliverables from score 1-5				
	1 (project sabotage)	2 (major faults)	3 (minor faults)	4 (as planned)	5 (better than planned)
Digitalization of a project management success case				x	
Educational nature of the video				x	
Communicate all of the most important points of the case				x	
Length up till 5 min			x		
Carefull crafted script				x	
Quality narration				x	
Quality visuals					x
Quality audio			x		
Media would be available online to everyone.				x	

**Table 1:** Self-evaluation of the actual end deliverables

To additionally clarify the reasoning behind our self evaluation we can list some more details behind our planned and achieved deliverables:

#### Positive deliverables:

- We knew that we faced a challenge with the narration side. But, the narration has been done unexpectedly good by one of the project team member, due to this being his first ever narration.
- When assembling the visual material for the video, we have stumbled across an abundance of very high quality footage of the project that has been produced by the project managing

company. This has made easy for us to produce a visually impressive video. Perhaps even more than planned.

- We are very satisfied with the script and the information it provides. We feel that all the data that we prioritized has been communicated accordingly.

#### **Negative deliverables:**

- Due to lack of audio recording resources we have not managed to achieve the desired quality of the narration sound.
- The length of the video ended up 6 minutes, which is one minute more than planned. We knew that the focus of the average audience starts dropping after that five-minute mark, so we wanted to make it short. But our main script goal has not allowed further shortening. The reason being: we had so much critical data about the Ivar Aasen project which we found too difficult to remove. Hence the narration speed ended up being a bit fast and the video longer than five minutes.

Although there were some minor disappointments, we believe that none were so significant that would compromise our project. Furthermore, we believe that positive deliverables have outweighed the negative ones. That is why we are generally satisfied with our end result.

## **2.2 Evaluation of project management effort**

Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your response				X	

Upon subjecting our project management effort to a critical assessment of positives, negatives and potential areas where we could have fared better, we evaluate our project management effort as successful in a reasonably practical order of magnitude.

### 3 Self-evaluation of the value to the learners

Over the years, the world of project management has been bombarded with cliched understanding such as “project management is all about good project planning, meeting schedules, completing milestones, accommodating variations etc.”. Although one cannot deny them, there has been no great deal of emphasis given to the soft factors in project management and that is what makes the “**Ivar Aasen**” case one of a kind. This was the primary motive for us to choose this case to make a video, thereby communicating the importance of “soft-factors” in project management, which we felt has been under valued over the years.

#### 3.1 Target audience

The core target audience of our product are the students undertaking the course TPK5100- Applied Project Management or any similar courses demanding an understanding of project management. That being said, our product developed shall also be extended to customers seeking an understanding about the success factors or the enablers to facilitate a projects success. In that way, the target audience category is extended beyond just the students taking TPK5100 or similar courses at NTNU.

#### 3.2 Method used to evaluate the final product

The method chosen to evaluate the developed product is through survey. Upon several discussions within the project team, in order to have opinions about how well a person could understand the message that the video tries to convey, we decided to survey not only some random students in the course, but also some randomly chosen friends of the team members who has no connection to the course TPK5100. In this way, we tried to capture the products’ level of understanding to someone who has no real idea about what project management is all about.

Once that decision had been agreed by everyone in the team, the next question to be answered was “How are we going to survey? Is it just by verbal enquiry? or a questionnaire?”. Herein again, upon discussions, we ended up choosing a questionnaire as the medium to survey. The rationale is that the questionnaire could give the surveyee a few extra minutes to think about what he/she perceived from the video and answer accordingly and also that it could be easier to document the survey, if it were through a survey form. This decision was agreed and eventually finalized by the project team.

The above decisions necessitated preparation of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was the prepared based on the project concept, product construction, product quality, viewer engagement, quality of visuals, quality of narration and perception of information, which the surveyee could either strongly disagree or strongly agree based on their opinion. The survey questionnaire utilized has been attached to Appendix B.

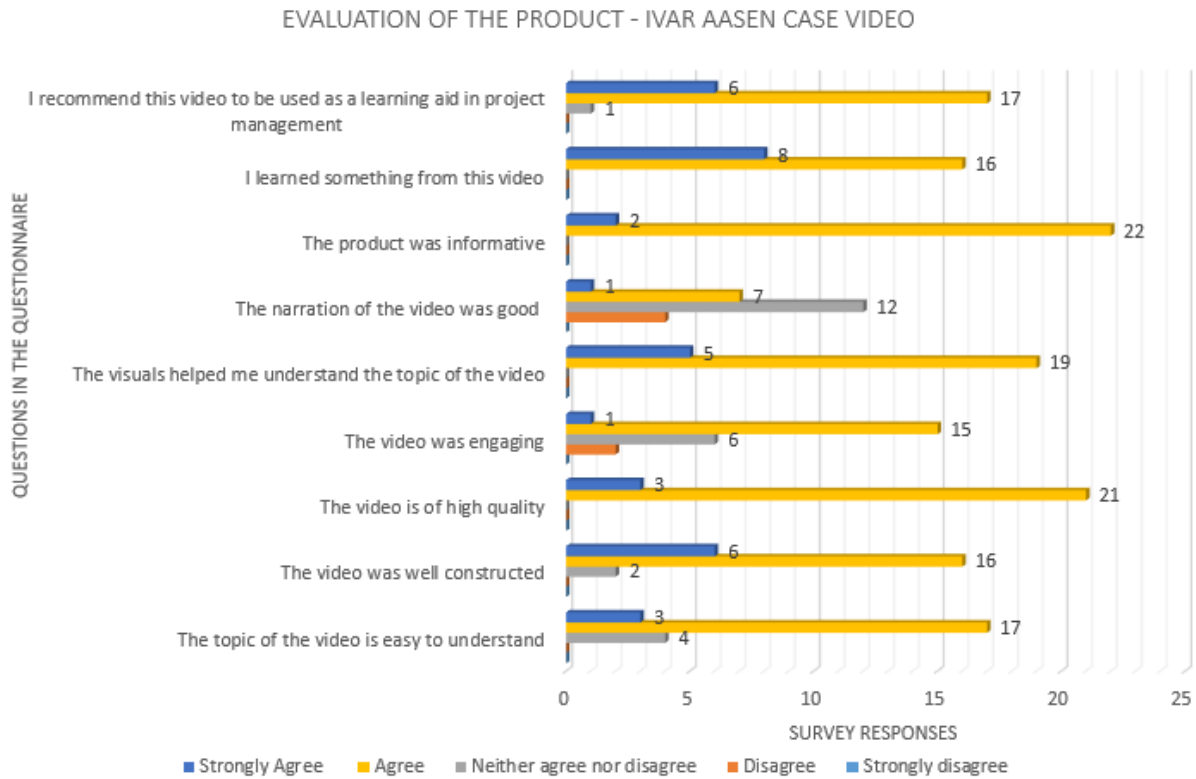
#### 3.3 The number of informants who have contributed to the evaluation, and how these informants have been selected

We approached a total of 32 persons for our survey. The surveyees include students in the course TKP5100, house mates of the project team members and some random friends of the project team members. The platform used for survey approach was through direct conversation, sending the link of the product and the feedback form over email or via social networking platforms. We managed to receive 24 responses out of the 32 who were approached. As explained before, the informants were chosen to be a generic mixture of persons. The rationale was that we shall also get opinions from personnel who had no idea about what the video was all about and this would eventually give a holistic result picture.



### 3.4 Results of the survey of the final product

To give better insight about the responses received, the survey responses have been summarized and presented in a visual format in the figure below.



**Figure 1:** Results of the survey for product evaluation.

From Figure 1, it is observed that the narration in the video was not satisfying. This is something we did expect. It could be attributed to unavailability of professional recording devices and indeed, the lack of experience with narration. An additional reason is that the case project, Ivar Aasen, had heaps of valuable information to be conveyed through narration and the video wouldn't look complete if such information had been deleted. Hence, the narrator had ample amount of text to narrate within his quota of time agreed upon. These are the contributing factors for the narration to end up slightly faster than it ideally should have been.

Most voters have either strongly agreed or agreed that the “video was well constructed” and that “the product was informative”. This conveys a message that the content was simple and understandable even to outsiders who were not a part of TPK5100 course. This was one of our primary objective, to reach as many audience as possible in a clear and concise manner. Secondly, the project team's decision to use actual visuals from the case project for the video seemed to have reached wider range of audience as they could visually see the scale of the project that we are talking about. So here again, the product seem to have reasonably succeeded.

The questions regarding “understandability of the project video” and “how engaging was the video” is interlinked to each other in a way. It is understandable that for some people who are totally from different background could have found the case-project as a whole not easy to understand. The reasons for “disagreement” and “neutral” responses for the question related to engagement could also be related to people from different background, who would have naturally felt that there was no entertainment value in the video, which again is understandable. In a case-project as humongous as Ivar Aasen, the information to convey was so much that the project

team hadn't figured out a way to squeeze in some entertainment value targeting neutral audience.

On the positive side, the responses to the questions regarding the "quality of the video", "informativeness of the video" and "learning element in the video" has been significantly high. This suggest that the product, one general note, has some sort of a new learning element in it, irrespective of the backgrounds of the viewers. The quality and information aspect could have possibly emerged from using the actual visuals from Ivar Aasen case project, which the project team believes, could have left some of the viewers impressed about how the project team managed to gather actual visuals from the case-project.

In line with the views of the project team members, the surveyees also feel that the product in question has some value to contribute to appropriate lectures in project management and hence also recommended to be used as a learning aid for the same. On the whole, despite some negative feedback received, the product shall be a quick-fix to those craving to understand that not only hard factors assist to a project's success but also some soft factors, provided they are used appropriately.

### 3.5 Degree of our support (group-based evaluation):

	Our product is of high quality and we recommend it to be used as a learning aid in project management				
Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your response				X	

We, Group 25 believe that this product has the potential to give the future students of TPK5100, a clear understanding about the influence of soft factors in project of any scale. This belief of ours has also been strongly supported by over 90% of the reviewers of the product who also believe that the product was "very informative".

## 4 Factors that contributed to the project’s success.

Instead of diving directly into the success factors that the project organization adhered to, it would be interesting to understand how the project organization was formed. As inevitable as it could get, the formation of the project organization, which is also a project team did involve going through different stages of team development. According to the theory put forward by Bruce Tuckman, the project team went through the phases of Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning, before being successful, (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977). This section attempts to capture the journey of how the project organization transited from just a newly-formed team to working its way up to the projects’ success in terms of various stages of team developments involving some unique success factors.

The term “Success factor” refers to a set of factors that the project must comply with in order to enhance its probability of success, (Hussein, 2018) (Turner, 2009). By the time the project team reached a phase where they had to draw some ground rules to undergo the process of product development, the team had already gone through the phases of forming and storming in team development frontier. Hence, by this stage, the team was very much aware of what was expected of them by the project owner. As the project transited through various stages, there were some new success factors emerged and sustained. In order to demonstrate how this took shape, it would be desirable to understand the various phases in the product development that was adopted by the project organization, as presented in Table 2.

Ivar Aasen case video - Product development phases		
Planning	Execution	Completion
Coming up with different product ideas	An individual detailed reading of different sections and writing up a script	Compiling the video track
Discussing all the project ideas and agreeing upon one	Editing and developing a final version of the script	Group assessments and feedbacks
Reading up on the case project and understanding its key-elements	Recording the script	Obtaining external reviews and addressing the comments received for the product
Coming up with a report for the project plan	Finding and filtering the actual images and visuals of the case-project for product development	Completion and submission

**Table 2:** Stages involved in Ivar Aasen case video development

### 4.1 The planning phase

During the first week of the planning phase of the project, there was no special interest shown by the team members. It was quite understandable as the team hadn’t figured out anything regarding the project. During this stage, it was “effective communication” that steered the team into a certain way of approaching the project goal. At this stage, the team members came up with various product ideas. But there were two ideas that sustained through various filtering processes and reached decision-making point. One product was to develop a instructional video regarding some etiquette’s to be adhered by students in the class room and the other was to develop a case video of “Ivar Aasen” oil field project’s success. The project team spent almost an hour discussing on the pros and cons of both the suggested projects. Since one of the team member had been a part of “Ivar Aasen” project, the team was convinced by a detailed briefing given by that member. The very reason that Ivar Aasen project is one of a kind project wherein

the project successful hugely due to the “soft factors” namely trust, sense of ownership, freedom to innovate etc., convinced the team to decide upon making a video of Ivar Aasen project’s success as the project goal.

Having crossed this phase, it was “support from project team”, “sufficient client consultation” and “adequate project planning” that got the project team to realize that they are involved in developing something meaningful. By this phase, when the project team had to come up with a project plan, we came up with a very “realistic project schedule”, when then served to be a guiding torch to the team, helping us to monitor and control the time aspect of the project.

At the end of this stage, it is fair to say that the team was narrowing down from the storming phase and entering the norming phase of team development wherein the group starts to settle into a groove. This was when the team decided to define some ground rules, in other words, success factors before dwelling deeper into the execution phase. For convenience, the Table 3 summarizes the success factors that proved to be beneficial to the team at various stages of product development.

Planning	Execution	Completion
Effective communication	Clarity in project purpose	Experience of project team members
Support from project team	Designation of clear roles and responsibilities	Creativity
Sufficient client consultation	Transparent communications	Trust
Adequate project planning	Honesty	Involvement
Realistic schedules	Regular project meetings	Feedbacks

**Table 3:** Success factors at various stages of product development

## 4.2 The execution phase

The project team ventured into the execution phase of the project with high clarity in the project purpose. Credits goes to some transparent communications within the project team on how to proceed from there on. It was in this stage that a skill-check among the team members were desirable to take a call on further proceedings. Transparent communications played a major role there as well as the team pitched out honestly about who is capable of what. It was this discussion that played a vital role in how the product shaped up at the end. Some of the questions that were answered during this discussion are

- Does anyone have any experience with creating animation videos/ video editing?
- Has anyone done a professional voice recording before?
- What are the software and hard ware tools required? Do we have them?
- Who among the project team members has a voice that is suitable for narration?
- If one person works on recording and another works on video editing, what could other members contribute with?
- Which comes first? Audio or Video?

Answering all the above questions demanded honest and transparency among the project organization. This discussion at the beginning of the project execution phase helped to assign

very clear roles and responsibilities to every person in the team. This ensured that every member worked simultaneously on the assigned tasks and stuck to the schedules which enabled a smooth flow of events during the project execution phase. It was this phase where the team transited into the “performing” stage of team development wherein everyone were on the same page and driving full-speed ahead towards the final goal. Another major debate during this stage was weather to animate the video or to use actual pictures and visuals from the project. Since the actual visuals of the project was available to the project team and since the use of actual visuals would impart a real-feel of the extent and complexity of the project, the team agreed to stick to actual images and visuals for the video.

### 4.3 The completion phase

Upon entering the completion phase, the factors experience and the creative skills of a project team member played a vital role. Since one of the project team members volunteered to compile the case video citing his experience of working with professional software editing tools, an ambience of complete trust and involvement from other project members kicked in. The rest of the team volunteered to help with the video compilation but since the experienced person was very confident that he could do it himself and for a reason that video editing is a task that gets tougher if many people involve, the team agreed that the experienced team member shall do that and believed in his abilities.

Once the first version of the product was done with, it was first shared to the team members and then to some external individuals who had no idea about what the video was all about. Upon receiving some constructive feedback from both aforementioned parties, they were re-assessed by the project team before incorporating them into the product. In this way, the product was finished well within the realistic deadlines set aside by the project team for themselves.

If we were to pick few success factors that the team felt they contributed to the project management success, it would be **"Effective communication"**, **"Designation of clear roles and responsibilities"** between the members of the project organization and finally, the creation of a **"Trust"** embedded environment which propelled the team forward with confidence. Comparing the mentioned factors with that proposed in (Hussein, 2018), many common factors has served as an enabler from start to the completion of this project, as discussed in the sections above.

Finally, reflecting back on the team composition and the experience of being a part of a digital product development, the group felt that the diversity in skills within the project team also more played significant role in making the project management efficient, which otherwise would have been much more stressful.

*"Diversity has the potential to either disrupt group functioning or, conversely, be the source of collective creativity and insight"*

*-Catarina R. Fernandes and Jeffery T. Polzer*

## 5 Most important lessons from the project

Despite the fact that there couldn't be any hard and fast rules to manage projects, it is definitely beneficial to apply some methods, strategies, theories or calculations which could serve as an enabler to minimize the critical factors such as time, effort, money or a combination of all. In this section, some of the most important lessons learnt by the project team through their project management effort in producing the "Ivar Aasen case video" are summarized.

- You should first identify the learning objectives of your final product before deciding on the type of product you wish to create.
- You should make sure everyone in the team agrees on the importance of deadlines.
- You should make sure everyone in the team agrees on the importance of allocated meeting times.
- You should make sure everyone in the team agrees on the work distribution .
- You should make sure everyone in the team knows what they are expected to do.
- You should make sure no tasks are left unallocated, or are not clearly allocated.
- You should make sure you have the equipment and skills required to create your product.
- If you are making a video, make sure you have enough content to fill the video.
- You should make sure your product is not too long, as it can make the end users lose interest.
- You should make sure your product has a clear focus, or topic of discussion.
- You should make sure you know your target audience.
- You should make sure you get feedback about your project from your target audience during the creation of the product, as well as after the product has been finished.
- You should try to get feedback which can be used to further improve the project, or similar projects at a later time.
- During the initial phases, all the team members should come to an agreement about which of the suggested projects should be followed through.
- The team should set up a fast, efficient, and reliable form of communication.
- The roles to be distributed should be done so early and in a clear and agreed upon fashion.
- It is vital to establish trust between the team members, along with other soft factors.
- If applicable, a team with a diverse skill set and background should be formed.

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## A Peer-review evaluation report

The group that had been assigned to us for evaluation: **Group 22**. The product developed by Group 22 is an app which is currently supported by Apple Inc. products operating with “ios” platform. This app is a platform that links all the lectures from the course TPK5100 for the students taking the course. In addition, there is a platform for a quiz which enables the users to test their understanding about any lecture that they read.

### a) Strengths and weaknesses of the final product

#### Strengths

- **Quality** - In general, the quality of the product is good and has a pleasing look.
- **Functionality** - The app is fairly interactive to an extent that the user will not be frustrated by using it. In that respect, the app is quite balanced.
- **Concept** - Undoubtedly, the concept grabs much of the credits. It would be very useful for the current as well as future stakeholders of the course, if utilized fully.
- **Interface** - The app has a good interface for now and navigation is quick as well.
- **Quiz** - In terms of the small element of entertainment, the quiz sections contributed to it.

Since the app has presented only a platform and not the complete product with all data, it is difficult to understand all the strengths that this product could bring about upon completion. Yet, the potential outcome of the finished product would be better than what it is now and provide high value to the stakeholders.

#### Weaknesses

- **Redundant** - As there are other similar and completed products presented, we felt that this product could be partially redundant. Additionally, as customers, we would prefer a fairly completed product over a product with just the platform.
- **Basic features** - Notification features for assignment deadlines, lecture plans etc., if present, could have been a better unique selling point for the product in question.
- **Additional features** - In addition to the quiz section, the app could provide links to Kahoots and video lectures of that particular lecture or topic from the Youtube channel of the professor.
- **Completeness** - The product being not fully developed, it is difficult to accurately judge how useful it would be for its customers, especially students.

Finally, the product could reach more customers if the product could be extended to be supported by other operating systems. At the moment, it would be fair to say that the product is a very good attempt by the developers with enormous positive potentials to students and the professor but the extent of positives is difficult to be predicted as the product is not 100% developed.



**b) Evaluation of the degree of your support**

	The product we reviewed is of high quality and we recommend it to be used as a learning aid in project management				
Scale	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Your response				X	

**c) On a scale from 0 to 10. What grade would you recommend for this product?**

We would recommend a grade of 8 for this product. The reason is that the product is incomplete and has no real data of the lectures or books yet. But nevertheless, it has a very high potential to be used as a learning aid for the course TPK5100, upon completion.

## B Feedback questionnaire

### **GROUP 25 PRODUCT FEEDBACK**

#### **(IVAN AASEN VIDEO)**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The topic of the video is easy to understand					
The video was well constructed					
The video is of high quality					
The video was engaging					
The visuals helped me understand the topic of the video					
The narration of the video was good					
The product was informative					
I learned something from this video					
I recommend this video to be used as a learning aid in project management					

If you have any suggestions for improvement, please comment below

Figure 2: Feedback questionnaire for product evaluation.