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## **PROJECT ASSIGNMENT: ANIMATION OF CASE**

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## **Preface**

The paper is written by six students at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. It is written as the term paper in Applied Project Management (TPK5100) for Bassam Hussein. The group has worked on a product to aid learning by digital tools. As humans we are powerful tools with vast amount of processing power. Limiting our learning to only the ability of recognizing words is limiting the student. As students who has worked on the project not only for the sole purpose of the subject but also because of the potential for future students.

We would like to thank Bassam for our meetings, they helped us to clarify his needs so we could act respectively. Without his involvement the product would not have the same quality and ease of use for the end-users as it has today.

Group number: 8

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## 1 Digitalization project

The digitalization of learning processes provides several benefits as ease of learning, accessibility and ease of use. While the benefits are many there are also some issues tied to the process of digitalization. The challenges the team encountered where the use of digital tools, the compatibility between digital files and the extensive availability of the project. The common factor of these challenges is that they require a certain degree of knowledge and experience to master. Making smaller digitalization projects a bigger issue than large ones, because of the relatively time consuming process of learning the program instead of producing with it.

The use of digital tools is one of the most obvious challenges within digitalization. Whether it is to use audio, video, formatting, animation, writing or other tools. Since the group decided to animate a case, we used audio, formatting and animation tools, and the final report is written using latex writing tool. The group found that a large extent of the time schedule of the project went into learning the digital tools, but still deemed it necessary to complete the project within the pre-specifications of the project. It has proven challenging and instructive to use multiple unfamiliar programs for the group. The relatively small scope and time frame of the project have on the other hand made it hard to develop the necessary skills for such a project.

While having to learn new tools which evidently was a major challenge, there were more subtle challenges arising throughout the project. Communication between the programs did not prove easy, as the format of the audio and photos we used had to be compatible with the animation software. At the same time even the availability of a digitalized project provides issues. In the lack of a local popular academic forum at NTNU, the best solution was to publish the product on YouTube. YouTube provides the product with a whole different audience than initially planned. The public online users are with only a few exceptions spread across vast geographic areas, cultures and religions. This audience cannot be expected to have the same values and thereby not the same view on the product. This problem got addressed by being a geographically diverse group from Norway, Germany, Iran and Pakistan. This provided more diverse opinions and lowering the chance of misinterpretations.

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

### *Overall evaluation of the project*

The group is made up of six members with diverse nationality and age difference. The amount of members have made the workload doable. At the same time the diversity has provided the group with a invulnerable insight of cultures and age differences. Furthermore, the group were divided into two groups, one group of two members for writing and formatting, and another one for the animation consisting of three members. The last member, Håvard Linnerud, have been the group leader. Thereby contributing to the group in need and at the same time managing the groups to get a viable product.

Risks can be harmful both to the project and the team handling it, and it is therefore crucial to address this matter sufficiently. The process of handling risk can be divided into four processes: risk identification, risk assessment, risk response planning, and risk monitoring and control [Hus18]. The risk identification and assessment can be found in the project plan. The downsides of having a relatively large group is averted largely by having a formal group structure, pre-defining risks, good timing and a free flow of communication within the whole group. This gave us the opportunity to deal with the pre-defined measures once the issues surfaced. In the mid of October there were a dispute in the group related to work conditions and methods. The dispute harmed the group's working ability and dynamics short term, but was resolved the following week by the team leader. There was also irregular time delays but these were mainly not a problem due to a generous time schedule. The project were in the end not without issues, but with a moderate amount handled to a large extent.

The project has multiple factors to increase its likelihood of success, and these are called success factors [Tur09]. The success factors can in term be divided into three categories, project management, project and organizational success [Coo02]. The success factors are explained in the project plan, and mainly focus on the project's success factors because of the project's short duration and scope. All factors from the project plan haven't been

fulfilled but the majority has, like shown in table 1. The group would also in retrospective insist that the initial success factors should be adjusted.

Table 1: Fulfillment of success factors

Number form project plan	Success factor	Amount of fulfilment
	<i>Project</i>	
1	Complete tasks within deadlines.	Medium
2	Involve project owner.	Medium
6	Focus on adding superior value to product.	High
7	Focus on how the product will benefit the users	High
8	Project scope is covered.	Medium
9	Keep product as consistent and comprehensive as possible.	High
10	Reduce time to understand the case.	High
11	Make learning fun and interesting.	High
	<i>Project management</i>	
3	Involve all members and divide work evenly.	High
4	Encourage communication and discussion among team members.	Medium
5	Ensure opinions are evenly weighted.	High
	<i>Projec organization</i>	

### *Evaluation of group management process*

We evaluate our project management effort as successful:

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

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

In order to have a clear understanding of what we are about to do and to prepare the group for cooperation, it was important to identify what we are doing and who we are doing this for. An important part of this task is defining your target audience. This provides a clear idea of the people you're working for and provides the necessary information for a good start to the project. The purpose of this project was to target our fellow students in the upcoming years to take a part of the curriculum and make it easier to understand and quicker for task completion. we wanted to make a product that was comprehensible and would provide a more efficient solution than to read the case from the book of Bassam Hussein.

#### *Description of the method used to evaluate the final product*

Getting feedback from the users is vital. This is something we were taught in the class and real life cases depicted that getting feedback from the end users is very important. This makes the difference between the success and failure of the product or service. An idea might sound very promising in theory but there is no surety that it will fit the target audience until you test it on the audience. Hence we made sure that this gap is properly filled out as the basic purpose of our project is to create value for the users. One of the main goals was to compare our product with other alternatives and see if they yield a better or worse result. We did this to see if there really is a need for the product we are building. Also it is a better way to check the practicality of a project rather than just rushing into it. As surroundings and external factors change they have a profound affect on the project. Furthermore, we had a meeting with our lecturer, Bassam Hussein. As he is the project owner, his opinion holds great importance for us. After making the first video, we met him, showed him the video and asked for his opinion. Some of his comments on the video were as follows:

1. The background music in the video was distracting so that should be removed.
2. There were way too many animations in the video which shifted the focus from the content of the video.
3. There was way too much detail than required in the video, should be simplified to make it more effective.
4. The audio was not clear enough, it would be better if the audio was recorded in a controlled environment using AV equipment.

All these comments were subsequently incorporated in the video. It was also one of things that we were taught in class that it is better to ask the owner who has high influence what their needs are in the middle of the project. That way we won't end up with something the owner does not want. And it is a good way to keep check on the project. We wanted to have a simplistic and straightforward approach throughout the project. Hence the simplest method we could think of was to ask a group of friends in our program who are taking, and who have taken this course and ask them for their opinion on the product we created. We did not choose a complicated or verbose method because of the following reasons.

1. Often people don't have enough time to respond to surveys and forms. Even if we managed to force someone to respond to a survey they would do so thinking of it as a burden hence the essence of the survey is lost.
2. Talking to someone face to face is much more effective than a survey. Also we could vary our questions about the product constantly according to the person reviewing the video making the process flexible and easy.
3. It is an easy and simple method to get feedback that anyone can do or understand, it does not require any special knowledge.

#### *Our informants*

To better our understanding and to widen our minds we, as previously mentioned we asked



some fellow students if they could take a look at our product and give us feedback. During this process we asked six students with different academic backgrounds to comment and give feedback on our product. These informants were selected during our off time and by asking if they could read the case from the book and then watch our video. We quickly figured out a way to increase the reliability of our testing and asked one person only to either read or watch, not both. This way we could ask direct questions about the case and find out who understood more, those who read, or those watching our video.

***Results of tests, surveys or interviews with students or persons who have reviewed the final product***

After conducting the feedback from our target audience it was important to list it down properly. The result of feedback from the target audience is listed in the table 2, this is gathered from conversations with our informants.

Table 2: Feedback and Response

Informants Specializations	Feedback	Response
Chemistry	This is somewhat relevant for me since i am usually in a hurry, but maybe the video could have something in general, alongside the case	This would be our priority if we were making a follow-up video, including reflections and some proposed solutions
Economics	Great work, could improve the detailing, otherwise nice and simple	By your answers in our discussions we could see that you got the important part of the case, by watching our video
Mechanical	Unclear what the project actually was supposed to fix	We will make adjustments to current video and clear up these things at the start

Construction	How is this better than reading the case?	By watching our video which should provide same the necessary insight as the read, you get the information in just over 3 minutes
Mechanical	I like the information given in the video, but some of the animations could be improved	We agree, but this is the downside of having to use free and or limited programs to create our product
Construction	Is this needed? have you asked stakeholders if this is something that will be used?	We have had continuous conversations with the project owner to fit the product to his needs

Before feedback was given and responded to, we asked our informants about certain aspects of the case both for those who read and those who watched the video. After the conversations we could conclude that those watching the video could answer the same questions as those reading the case, which proves that our product is at least to some extent useful for in the time saving aspect.

## 4 Factors that have contributed to failure / success.

### *Primary factor*

The a vital success factor of our project was the project owner's, Bassam Hussain, involvement and his full commitment to the project. The owner was involved in our project twice.

First, during the front-end phase of the project, to fulfill the needs of our project owner and to increase our motivation we contacted the owner at an early stage to get him involved. The owner; however, did not really like the idea implying that it was irrelevant to the main purpose of the project and that it would not create the significant impact on learning that he was looking for and also that it would not be practical. We therefore changed the concept showing our capability for being flexible to address problems as they arise. Our flexibility during the initial phase of the project also contributed to success.

The second time we asked for the project owner's reflection was during the implementation phase when we showed the animation. This time the feedback we received was vital in our project's success because the main message of the case became more clear. For example, in our case, plain language in the Norwegian public roads authority, it was critical for the owner that the end users of our project, the students, would get the essence of the case. If a change is implemented, the project culture must adjust itself accordingly before the execution phase.

The owners feedback also concerned the technical aspects of the animation including the poor quality of the voice and its speed. We used this to change our product to ensure success and improvements to grant end users a viable product. At first we thought that recording the narration with a mobile phone could be sufficient, but after learning about the owner's dissatisfaction, we adjusted and recorded the video with a high-quality microphone and made changes regarding the talking speed of the narrator. We found this method of feedback as a success since this led to a product more suitable for the end users and successful for the project owner.

### ***Second factor***

The second factor contributing to project success was adequate collaboration and communication between the project organization members. In order to facilitate transparent and inclusive information sharing between all team members, we created a group chat enabling us to keep in touch with each other and to inform each other about the meeting dates and times. In addition to this free flow communication we established a Latex report that is always up to date and easily reviewed by all members. These tools were used to cope with the group members different time schedules and provided us with a platform that mitigated the problems surfacing due to scheduling and timing issues.

### ***Third success factor***

The third success factor was the presence of an encouraging and positive working atmosphere. The project team members were friends even before the project initiation, therefore cultural elements such as trust, openness, loyalty and commitment contributed to increased unity among project team members. In conclusion, instead of power struggles or even indifference, the sense of ownership and knowledge sharing and cooperation was visible.

### ***Forth success factor***

The forth success factor that contributed towards project success was done at the very start, as we assembled the team. We created a a shared culture to reduce uncertainties and include every member of the team. A contract was written and signed to provide clear roles and understanding of different outcomes. This escalated motivation to finish tasks on time and with the right quality, since it was rewarded with positive feedback from the remaining members.

### ***Undesirable factors that hindered success***

Lack of sufficient competence on how to make animations was the biggest obstacle regarding project completion. Since none of the project team members had any prior experience with making animations, the whole concept was ambiguous and unfamiliar for the members and

this contributed to partial disappointment and partial loss of motivation. However, through researching similar projects that have been implemented in the past, valuable information was collected.

The second problem could be mentioned as lack of the necessary resource for the project implementation. After evaluating the different softwares for animation making, the Powtoon software was chosen; however, it had many shortcomings. The budget for using the premium version of the software which was \$50 was not allocated so we had to use the free version. The free version had many limitations for instance, the timing of the video was restricted to three minutes which was not the proper amount of time that was needed to cover all the main points in the animation.

## 5 Most important lessons from this project

This project has given the team a lot of challenges. Challenges that will make us more prepared for even bigger projects we partake in the future. We assumed this project's main goal was to build our cooperation skills and have therefore focused on teamwork. Before the project started we discussed a lot of different approaches, but since this project is to be completed by six members we found out that everybody should be understanding about the depth of our project choice. Hence, all uncertainties regarding scope and rationale were mitigated before project execution. Our advice is therefor to invest time in the planning phase of the project, to clarify the project itself, possible issues and divide work among team members.

During the beginning of this project we met up to discuss how to go about, and to map out our skills so that task delegations were done as optimal as possible. We quickly found out that none of us had the required skills to make an animation, but some of the team members were ready to face that challenge, and were able to deliver as promised. In retrospective we realized that we should of looked for someone with some skills or background in animation or coding. We would therefore advice another project to contact technical expertise, as we felt that the lack of animation knowledge amputated our project to some extent.

Delegation of tasks is not always as simple as one might think. We have learned that even though tasks are given to someone in particular, we are still a team, and team members are there to help each other out when aspects gets unclear. Most noticeably, we learned the importance of being able to inform the other team members in a direct and understandable manner, when the project tasks or structure change.

As a final summary we would advice to communicate in a professional manner and to make the overview of the project as simple as possible. This way even though team members sometimes do their parts separately, they always have a group to lean on. It would also be recommended that any given project would ask the stakeholders what benefits they are looking for, to secure that they produce a desirable product.

## References

- [Coo02] Terry Cooke-Davies. “The “real” success factors on projects”. In: *International Journal of Project Management* 20 (2002), pp. 185–190. DOI: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0263786301000679>.
- [Tur09] J. Rodney Turner. *The Handbook of project-based management*. The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2009.
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## 6 Peer review of group 4

### Projcetsnatch: The new form of hand-in assignments

Group 4 has made a product that introduces a new form for hand-in assignments. They have acted out a case from Bassams book in what seems to be SIMS. Furthermore, they included options for the participants to get involved as a project manager and make decisions of his/her behalf.

Initially we found the idea to be compelling and quite creative, and that this could be used in conjunction with the lectures and could provide a deeper understanding impact for the student. The product involves the user since its interactive which keeps it interesting and focus must be kept. The visualization of the case is solved in a creative way and shows different aspects in the case. The websites layout was quite easy to follow and everything seemed to be working as intended. The idea creates opportunities for the student to test their own understanding and knowledge of the subject which is quite helpful during the exam preparations.

The limited options of program software seems to be a issue for this group, even though they solved it in a adequate way its evident that other programs could do a better job visualizing the case, since it was a little bit laggy and sounds were at times a bit off. We missed some kind of audio aid, maybe someone could of read the text as audio and added it to the videos. The obvious limitations granted shortage of movie animation, but the product was still fun to use, and to somewhat extent useful. We feel that the method used for solving this project could be switched, since their idea is very good and handy, but the limitations created by the method kind of put out the initial sparks.

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

On a scale from 0 to 10. We grade this product as a 6.