



## Flight Plan Guidebook

*A detailed guide to take your project from idea to successful launch.*

Thanks for downloading this sample Flight Plan Document. What follows is a detailed explanation and a sample of what a Flight Plan Document looks like and what it might contain.

The purpose of a Flight Plan Document is to surface and document every conceivable aspect of your project so that the actual construction and execution of your project can happen as quickly and smoothly as possible.

This Flight Plan is to your project like a blueprint is to a homebuilder. The blueprint lays out measurements and eliminates all guesswork so that the home can be built on schedule and without costly mistakes.

Similarly this Flight Plan Document lays out the business goals, technical requirements, user interactions, and the visual construction (via wireframes) of your project so that your project can be built on schedule and without costly waste.

Our goal, through this Flight Plan, is to provide a detailed explanation of your project that any competent developer could follow to execute the project. We hope you'll work with us, but you don't have to. This Flight Plan will serve as a guide to you as you make decisions about the best way to proceed with your company to accomplish your goals.

## What Does Success Look Like?

Our goal is not *just* to write code for you, or create a website, or make a web app. Our goal is not to deliver a completed project and get paid. Certainly we'll do those things, but they're not our end goal. Instead, our goal is to help you achieve business success for your project. What if you could launch your project early and get your first paying customers right away? What would that mean to you? What would it mean if you could double the number of incoming qualified leads? What if you could quickly iterate through versions 1, 2, and 3 and beat your competition to market?

You see, we could write code for anybody, but we choose to work with people like you who have a clear idea of what success means to you. Then we help formulate a recipe—a roadmap—to help you get there. Then we help you do it.

In order to achieve business success, we'll need to know what success means for this project. Is the goal for this project to get your first paying users? Then what are the minimum features that we need to build in order to do that? Is the goal to increase revenue per user? To sell more items? To decrease turnover and increase the number of repeat customers? Those are all reasonable goals that will inform our decisions about what to build and how to approach this project to minimize waste and risk and maximize the financial upside for you.

## How Your Project Will Work

The Flight Plan Document will outline a schedule and milestones for the project. The schedule depends greatly on the particular project; most projects are organized into two-week **Project Sprints**. A Sprint is a short, intensive period of work with a particular goal (or set of goals) in mind and a deliverable at the end.

We work on your project in a series of discrete sprints. Sprints are usually two-weeks in length. We kick off each sprint with a planning meeting, followed by a period of intense work. We then pause for review the following Wednesday, process any necessary revisions, and follow up with a mini-launch on Friday. The review period is used to test what was built during the sprint, to put it in front of users, to learn as much as we can, and then to apply that learning to the next sprint.

You can push hard and fast, one sprint after another, or you can take time between sprints to test, learn, and iterate on your business idea. The pace is completely up to you.

## The Project Management Triangle

The Project Management Triangle is a way of visualizing the tension between the constraints of every project. Every successful project achieves a balance between the three constraints: Time (schedule), Scope (what is to be done), and Cost (financial and human resources).

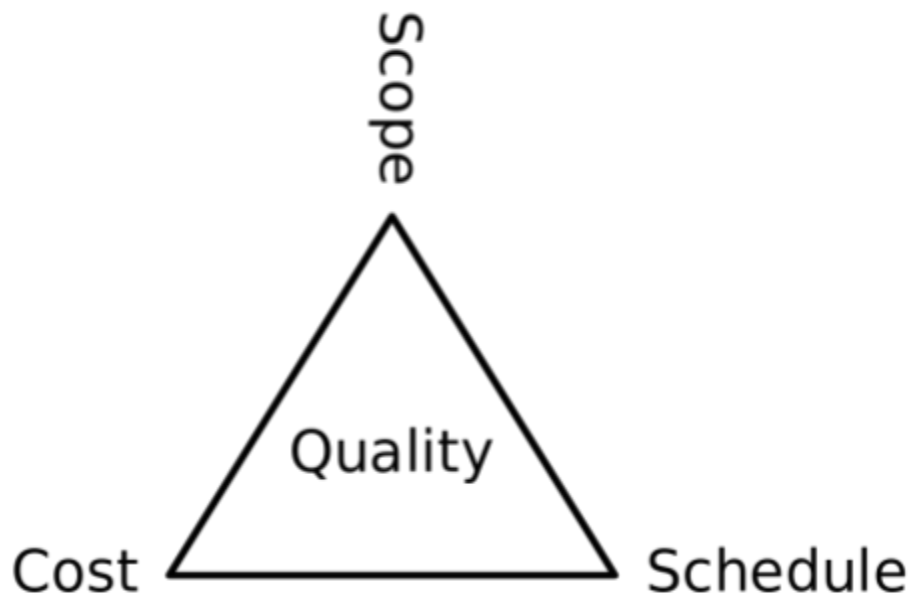


Image credit: Wikipedia

Each of these constraints can also be thought of as “levers” that can be used to manipulate the project. For example, if you can throw a lot of money into a project you may be able to achieve a very big project in a very short amount of time. Or if you’re short on money you may be able to do a project on a shoestring by allowing a large amount of time for the project.

We’ve found that the best lever for success tends to be scope. By this we mean that we have a very clear picture of what we will be building. If we have such a clear picture—a roadmap—of our project, it becomes much easier to accurately estimate time and cost.

## Project Scope

The “scope” of the project is a list of everything that needs to be done in order for this project to be considered a success. Scope includes things like detailed feature explanations, user personas (who will be using the app), technical requirements, outside data or API resources, screen wireframes, and any other details that this project is required to have.

Note the use of the word “required”. One of the most influential factors in a project’s success can be what is *not* built at this stage. It’s tempting to imagine a long list of all the ideal features and attributes of this project. But remember, every additional item added to the project scope will increase the project’s schedule, and consequently its cost.

One of the biggest hurdles for a successful project (by successful, we mean finishing on time and within budget) is “scope creep”. Scope creep happens when small changes to the project scope add up to larger and larger changes. Like pebbles rolling down a mountainside to start an avalanche, scope creep can affect the ability to deliver on time and within budget.

That’s why it is so important to stay focused on our answers to the question “what does success look like for this project”. Staying focused on the business goal for this project will help us strip away everything that doesn’t directly advance that goal, and create only those things that do.

Remember, scope is one of the three project management levers. We’re not trying to keep things small because we don’t want to write a lot of code. Rather, we’re tightly defining the scope in order to achieve laser-like focus to accomplish your project goal with minimal waste.

## Project Schedule

As part of this Flight Plan we will estimate the amount of time that will be required for us to accomplish everything in the project scope. We use milestones and features outlined in the project scope combined with our experience to estimate as closely as possible how many weeks the project will take for us to build.

The project schedule is another tool that we can use to manage risk. As anyone who has worked on a software project knows, there is always a risk that a project will go wildly over time, and consequently over budget. We know that the project schedule is influenced largely by the project scope. That is why it’s so important to tightly define the project scope.

There may be some factors that will be beyond our ability to control. Such things might include third-party vendor delays, or problems with external APIs. We’ll try to identify any areas of potential ambiguity during the Flight Planning stage so that we can plan for it.

## **Project Cost**

The final section of the Flight Plan will state a project cost estimate. Your project cost estimate will include a low and a high range, based on the number of sprints that we plan for the project.

We'll do our best to stay within the timeframe that we estimate. If we estimate a six-sprint project (twelve weeks), we will move heaven and earth to finish within that time frame.

It does sometimes happen that changes must be made to the scope during the project. These changes can affect the duration of the project, and consequently, the cost. If this happens, we'll let you know before any scope changes are approved so that we can adjust the project parameters accordingly.

## What Your Flight Plan Document Will Contain

### Business goals of the project

The first thing we'll talk about at our Flight Plan Meeting is the business goals for this project. We want to know very specific things about your business, how you're doing (or proposing to do) business, and how this project fits in with your overall business goals. Then we'll write down a specific business goal for this project. That goal will guide the rest of our discussions and achieving that goal will be the "north star" that will guide everything else in this Flight Plan.

### User personas

A user persona is a short narrative that describes a user of your app. The purpose of user personas is to try to understand the person who is using your app, why they're using it, and what their goals are. Just like the goal of this document is to help you achieve success, the goal of your app is to help your users achieve success. The user persona helps us understand what success looks like for your users.

We may end up with several user personas. Each functional type of person who uses your app will have a persona. For example, there may be one or two personas to describe each type of your ideal client—the end user. Then there might also be a user persona for an administrator, who will see different data from the end users.

The more we know about your ideal users, the more detailed we can make their user personas. And consequently, the greater chance we'll have of helping them to achieve success using your product.

### Technical requirements

This section will list out all the technical requirements of your project. Technical requirements include things like:

- Platform (web, iOS, Android)
- User login requirements (username & password, social media credentials, etc.)
- External API resources
- Administrative features

This is also where we'll list out each feature and talk in detail about what each feature will do. A few examples of features might include:

- Posting messages
- Uploading files
- Recurring payments

- User-generated content
- Calendaring & scheduling
- GPS/location data
- Product catalogs
- Shopping cart

Each feature in that list would be a heading and include a detailed description of how that feature is expected to work and who will use it.

### **First-person user walkthroughs from the perspective of each user persona**

In this section we'll imagine that we're sitting down with each fictitious user persona that we created above, and we'll "watch" them performing certain key functions with your app. We'll talk about what the user sees on the screen, what data they enter or click on, and what happens after they click. We'll include a walk through for each of the major features.

### **Wireframes of key screens**

One of the most useful tools for speedy development is having visual images to illustrate key screens that will be built. This eliminates guesswork on the part of the developer and makes it easier to lay out elements on the screen.

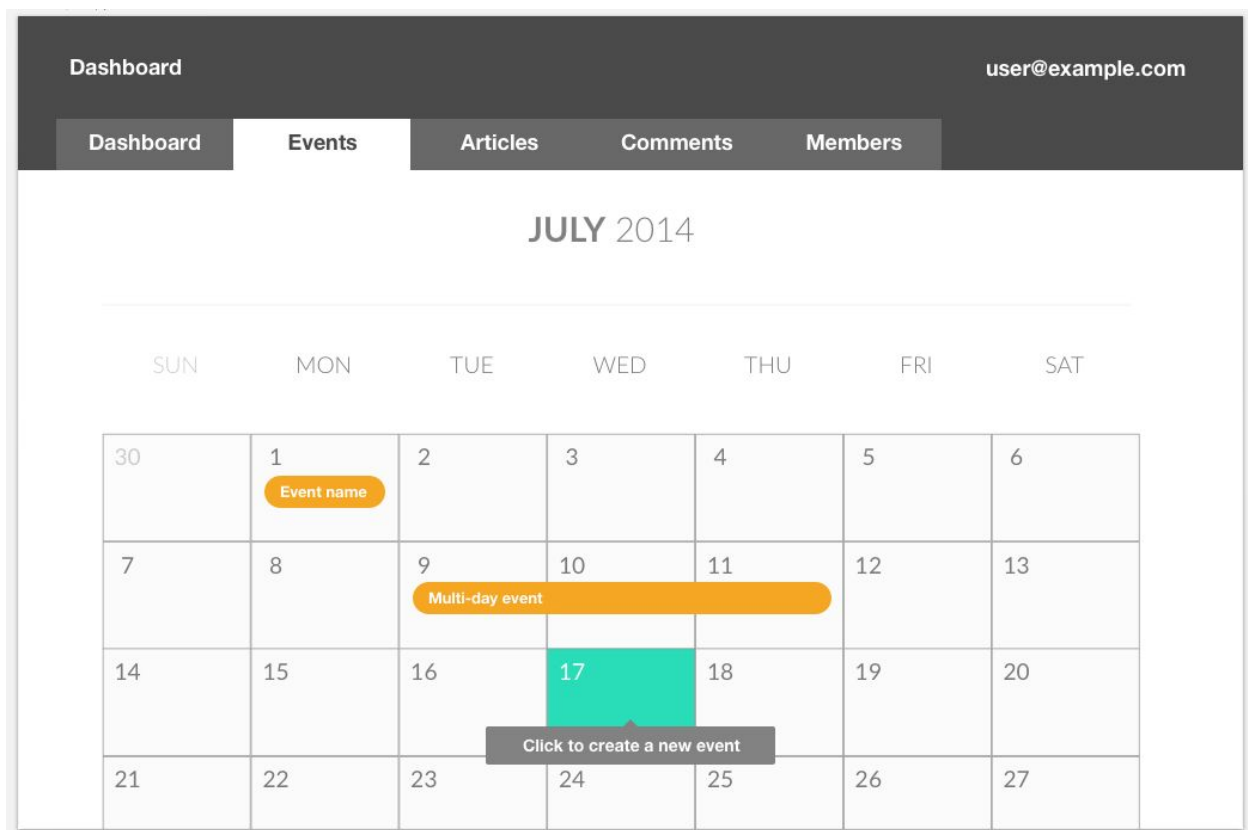
Wireframes are not intended to be an illustration of the finished product. Quite the contrary - they're usually rough-drawn on purpose: the minimum required elements of the screen are shown but the visual look and feel is left to the discretion of the designers.

The wireframe shown below is a composite example based on projects that we've done in the past. The idea here is to convey the key components on the screen without getting overly detailed. The wireframe gives us an idea of:

- What data needs to be displayed
- What key functions need to be performed on this screen
- What should happen when a user clicks or data is entered

For example, this particular screen allows the user to view and edit an event calendar:

- User can click on a day to create a new event.
- User can see existing events on the calendar.
- User can click on an event to see more detail about the event.





## How Flight Planning Works

**Day 1:** Flight Planning kicks off with a full day meeting with you. If practical, we'll meet in person, either at your office or mine. Otherwise, we'll meet online via Zoom. We'll break out the sharpies and write down everything we can think of about your app. The goal of this meeting is to discover:

- The unique value that your app provides
- The various users who will be using your app
- Any particular technical requirements (API access, etc.)
- What success looks like for this project

**Days 2-5:** I'll spend the next four days creating the Flight Plan Document. The Flight Plan will include wireframes, visual mockups, and a scope document that will clearly outline everything about the product.

The scope document will contain:

- Technical requirements
- Business goals of the product
- User personas
- First-person user walkthroughs from the perspective of each user persona
- Wireframes of key screens
- Proposal and cost estimate

**Day 6:** We'll meet in person if possible, otherwise via video conference. We'll need to set aside at least two uninterrupted hours for this meeting, and we'll need all the stakeholders to be present. The purpose of this meeting will be to go over the Flight Plan Document. You'll have an opportunity to ask any questions or clarifications, and to submit revisions at this time.

**Day 7:** Final delivery of Flight Plan Document.

At this point you'll have a complete Flight Plan Document. This document will serve as the foundation, the blueprint to guide the development of Version 1.0.

## About Booster Stage

Hi there, I'm Ryan Crispin Heneise, the founder and owner of Booster Stage. I've been developing software for the web since 2001. In 2004 I started my first consultancy, and in 2008 I created my own SaaS (Software as a Service) business called Donor Tools, which I sold in 2015. I'm passionate about using my skills and experience to help other startup founders achieve success.

### Where you can more about Booster Stage:

- [@boosterstage](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [GitHub](#)
- [Booster Stage Blog](#)
- [Medium](#)
- [AngelList](#)

"Booster Stage has been a great investment for BeOnAlert, helping us get a working product ready for initial release and testing with Beta customers in just a few short weeks."

—Diane Strutner, BeOnAlert

You're so creative! I've worked with a lot of programmers over the years, and you don't always find the combination of creativity and the ability to get things done. I love what you've made for us!

—Jax Carroll, CareGrove

"Ryan is the right kind of person to have on your side in the early stage of your business. In the early-stage you have extreme uncertainty and you need someone to help you build the thing that will move you forward and guide your success."

—Ada Ryland from Ada Ryland Consulting

## Ready to get started?

Wonderful! Here's what we need to do:

1. If you haven't already, please go ahead and schedule your free 30-minute discovery call. You can find a time on my calendar that is convenient for you:  
<https://calendly.com/boosterstage/strategy>
2. When you're ready to set up your Flight Planning session, just email me at [ryan@boosterstage.net](mailto:ryan@boosterstage.net) and we'll get it on the schedule. We'll need at least 2-weeks of lead time, so plan accordingly.