JOLT Method – From Casey and Veronica

The JOLT Method is a method of work/time management for group projects, especially ongoing team-based assignments like technology development. The JOLT Method uses timed phases to encourage rapid resolution of tasks, by minimizing the time spent “planning” and maximizing the time spent “doing”. This allows teams with a variety of work styles to come together around a single issue, and get results.

# Before you begin

* Define a facilitator for the JOLT: one who is familiar with the process, can manage the time, and can ensure the information is displayed and relayed to all participants.
* The facilitator will want to bring some items:
  + A whiteboard or projector (to allow the entire group to visualize the progression of the task).
  + A timer.
  + Any equipment needed to get the tasks done, such as a computer.
  + A to-do list to evaluate, or an initial task to be worked on.
* Make sure everyone is comfortable (knows where restrooms are, water, etc.).
* Provide/draw a “Sidebar” on your group visual aid (partition part of the board), where worthy ideas which may be out-of-scope or otherwise unrelated can be captured for future discussions.

# The JOLT phases

## J: Judge the task (5 minute default)

During this time, participants identify the issue/concern/problem and make sure everyone is on the same page by:

* Work using a group visual aid – all ideas and thoughts should be written/drawn out for all participants to see.
* For to-do lists, choose an issue to address, considering the time limitations that are a part of this method.
* Anything that arises in discussion that is NOT a part of this issue should be logged to the Sidebar (see above).
* Decide on an owner for the task. This is the person who will make decisions as needed while the group delegates tasks. This owner may or may not be the leader. Ownership can also happen as a collective or in consensus.

## O: Outline the task (10 minute default)

Here the entire group should discuss the details of the task to complete. This phase should end with a solid plan to accomplish something and everyone should have a task at the end of this time.

* Finalize what should be produced at the end of the JOLT. This requires discussion from all participants.
* Delegate tasks together. **Every team member takes an item**.

## L: Let’s get to work (20 minute default)

This is the individual work time. Each participant should focus on the task assigned throughout the entire time of this phase, without further discussion or distractions (such as email and messaging).

## T: Talk it over (5 minute default)

Once the individual work time is completed, bring all the tasks/work back together and talk about it. In a group coding environment, this would be a good time to submit pull requests to the lead.

# Post JOLT polish

Tasks completed using this method will likely require additional “polish” from the task owner, and that’s great! Also, if the task is not complete... repeat! Sometimes, a second JOLT can help clear up concerns that may arise during the process. Repeating the process can lead to clarity and a superior end product.