An Overview of the Waterfall SDLC for Interface Designers
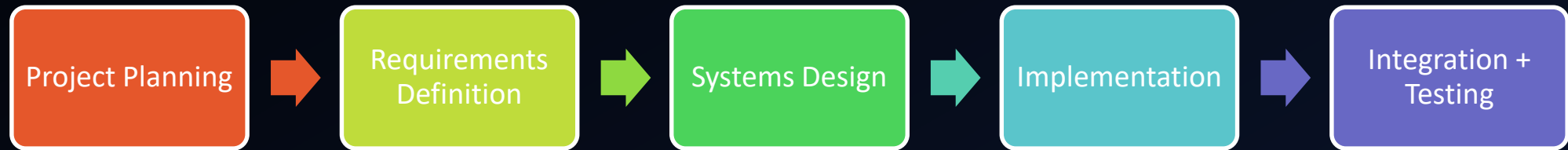
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DEC 10. 2017
ASSIGNMENT 2.1

The Stages of the Waterfall SDLC

Project Planning → Requirements Definition → Systems Design → Implementation → Integration + Testing

Stage 1 – Project Planning

Goal – Gather information from the client and get a better understanding of client needs and wants. Then create a document with all of the information for later reference.

Deliverables – Project Goals Document, Existing System Information Document, Example and Competition Documents, Sample User Interface.

Your role as Interface Designer – Collect information from the client, especially around his or her ideas on GUI designs. Collect examples they have found, as well as examples of any possible competitors. If they have an existing site, note any changes they want or approach them for recommended changes and get their input. Compile this information so you can go back to it later in the project.

Stage 2 – Requirements Definition

Goal – Finalize a list of product features and figure out what kind of hardware or software is needed in order to build out those features.

Deliverables – Product Features List, Hardware/Software Requirements, Audience Analysis Report, Technical Analysis Report.

Your role as Interface Designer – After documenting the project goals you should create a list of features that need to be implemented in the user interface. You should also do research into the intended audience of this application so that you can tailor the UI for them specifically or at least consider them when designing. You should also look at what will be needed when it comes to the software/hardware used for the production, hosting, or maintenance of the UI over the course of the project.

Stage 3 – Systems Design

Goal – Begin to design the UI and create mockups, models, concept artwork, etc.

Deliverables – Wireframes, Style Guide, Concept Work.

Your role as Interface Designer – In this stage, you begin to work on the actual design of the project. You should start with simple wireframes that detail the layout and functionality of the site. Share these with the technical team and client in order to get their approval. From there begin to create more detailed sketches and renderings of the design and workout the little details. Also be sure to create a style guide which ensures a consistent use of palette, font, graphics, etc. This is especially important if you work with other designers.

A Note On Stage 3

IMPORTANCE – Stage 3 is the most important for you as a designer. Not only is this where most of your creativity and past experience comes into play, it will be the foundation for all of the following work you do on the project. The more effort and time you put into this stage, the less time it will take for the rest of the project. Ensuring that your designs are of the best quality and are extremely detailed will avoid confusion later on which can eat up time. The style guide is also extremely important as this will ensure that the site has a consistent design. If it doesn't, the site can easily be unappealing and confusing to many users. This stage can make or break a project.

Stage 4 – Implementation

Goal – Work on implementing the UI as well as creating or collecting any necessary media like photos, videos, graphics.

Deliverables – Early Versions of: The Site or Software and Any Media.

Your role as Interface Designer – In this stage, you begin to actually code the UI and create the media needed for the site or software. You may be leading a team of programmers, designers, or other people in which case it is your job to ensure that everyone follows the style guide, and keeps their work consistent with what was outlined in the wireframes and renderings.

Stage 5 – Integration + Testing

Goal – Deploy your project (either as Final Product/Alpha/Beta/Interim) and test it to ensure it meets all design specifications and is bug free. Also create documentation and installation routines.

Deliverables –Final/Interim/Alpha/Beta Releases, Support Documentation, Help Files, Installation Routines.

Your role as Interface Designer – In this stage, you test your software to make sure it works and is designed as intended. Once all the tests are completed, you can deploy your work. If you aren't deploying your own work, you need to write up a routine that will describe to those who will be deploying your application how to install your software. You will also need to create documentation on how to use your software so that users have something to look to if needed.

Stage 6 – Celebrate!

You have completed the project!

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Another Thing to Keep in Mind:

Be sure to keep detailed documentation throughout this entire process so that if you need to update the UI, you have "past you" to help you out.