Learning Journal

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Course: Software Project Management (SOEN 6841)

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Week 1: 18th Jan 2024 - 24th Jan 2024

Key Concepts Learned: This week, we explored key project management concepts, emphasizing project definition, software project specifics, and the crucial initiation phase.

Chapter 1:

- **Project Definition**: A project is any activity with a defined start and end time aimed at achieving predefined goals. It requires resources (people, money, etc.) for a specific duration.
- **Differentiating Job and Project**: Understanding the distinction between a job and a project, emphasizing the temporal and goal-oriented nature of projects.
- **Software Project Specifics:** Recognizing the *intangibility* of software projects and how they differ from other types of projects.
- **Characteristics of Projects**: Identifying key attributes such as having phases (*initiation, planning, monitoring and control, closure*) and requiring different processes in each phase.
- **Software Project Management**: Introduction to managing software projects, highlighting the importance of controlled and consistent execution. The dynamic relationship between processes, individuals and technology for successful project outcomes.
- **Software Project Initiation Tasks**: Exploring tasks like market analysis, product development cost estimation, defining product features, marketing channels, delivery methods, and services.
- **Management Metrics:** Learning about relevant, meaningful, practical, and calibratable metrics, as well as the importance of managing activities consistently.

Chapter 2:

- **Project Initiation Summary**: Understanding that project initiation involves a kickoff meeting with the *project manager, stakeholders, and key team members*. Defining the project charter, scope, and objectives. Preliminary efforts and cost estimates are outlined, and a tentative project schedule is created.
- **Project Charter**: Capturing key project info and maintaining consistency with business goals.
- **Project Scope:** Defining and managing project scope, addressing issues like *scope creep*.
- **Project Objectives:** Establishing and aligning project objectives with initial *budget estimates.*
- **Schedule and Subtasks:** Learning about the preparation of an initial schedule, project division for cost estimation, and effort estimates. The involvement of experts and inviting bids for project planning and execution.
- **Feasibility Study**: Recognizing the importance of conducting a feasibility study to determine project viability before significant investment.

Case studies:

In the case study; the retailer's supply chain involves a sophisticated system of *outbound and inbound logistics*, where the warehouse replenishes retail outlets and orders goods from manufacturers. The software system, up to release 5, streamlines transportation cost

calculations, schedules loading appointments, and tracks goods, ensuring an efficient and cost-effective flow of products through the supply chain. Now, *new functionality 6 is to be released.*

Application in Real Projects:
Any project must have a clear definition and scope. For instance, in software development projects, treating each feature development as a project with well-defined goals and timelines is essential.
Clearly defining goals brings clarity to teams, preventing confusion about the purpose and duration of activities in ongoing operational tasks. However, Distinguishing between a job and a project in ongoing tasks can lead to ambiguity, making it difficult to define clear goals.

Peer Interactions:
During the week, I discussed with my classmate Rachit, with whom I had also created a few projects in my undergraduate program. Our discussion centred around the application of project management concepts, particularly project scope, charter, and objectives, reflecting on how incorporating these principles could have significantly improved the outcomes of our undergraduate projects, especially the group ones. We realized how a structured approach to project management could have led to greater success and efficiency in our past projects. Moreover, I also discussed our project's course of action with one of my current SPM project teammates.

Challenges Faced:
Initially, I found the chapters easy to grasp, but confusion arose when distinguishing between software project initiation and software product initiation tasks. The similarity between project charter and project scope also posed a challenge, requiring extra attention during reading. The abundance of crucial terms and points in the first two chapters makes it challenging to remember everything, necessitating a thorough review to avoid overlooking important details. I read the case studies at the end of the chapter, but I didn't fully get them. I need to put in more effort and go through them again to understand better.

Personal development activities:
After my first class, I got curious about project management. I read about the different tasks a project manager does in the real world and found it intriguing. To understand more, I talked to a friend who's a product manager. After this, I applied for two summer internships as a project manager to grow professionally.
While doing exercises, I learned about recent government IT projects and discovered some great open-source projects. These projects excite me and working on them will help me become a better software developer.

Goals for the Next Week:
1. Review class material by reading and solving exercises in chapters 3 and 4.
2. Expand knowledge of software project management, network with project managers, and apply for more internships.
3. Familiarize yourself with team members for the Automated Code Review System project and conduct in-depth research.
4. Focus on project initiation and market analysis tasks.
5. If time allows, revisit challenging sections in chapters 1 and 2 for reinforcement.