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Most Meaningful Learning Objective

November 29, 2020

Senior Project & Portfolio

WBIT 4030

**Most Meaningful Learning Objective**

**Part 1 – Learning Objective from Project Proposal**

This project will allow me to demonstrate my mastery of many of the technologies acquired during my pursuit of a bachelor’s degree in Information Technology, as part of Georgia Southern’s participation is the USG WeBSIT program. Although I have been involved in the technology industry for over 20-years, many of the skills that I will be utilizing for this project are outside of the scope of my role and position with my current employer and will challenge me to go outside of my normal work role and into a role that I’ve not previously served in.

**Part 2 – Activities Performed Related to the Learning Objective**

Virtually all of the activities performed over the course of this project would fit into my primary and most meaningful learning objective.

First and foremost, project management was a critical component of this project. With weekly deliverables and a requirement to spread activities across the entire semester, as well as managing time spent and ensuring a total investment of a minimum of 180-hours, it was very important that I adhere to the project timeline that I created for the effort. As with many projects, there were variances from the original schedule that were brought about by unforeseen challenges and scheduling conflicts, however I managed these variances well and stayed true to the overall project schedule. Towards the end of the project, with the bulk of work performed and a deficit for the 180-hour requirement, I looked for opportunities to add functionality and change the scope to meet the 180-hour requirement and to provide my customer with a better product.

As expected, communication with my customer was an important aspect of the project. When creating a website from scratch, customers rarely have a full expectation of what they want, but rather start with a “big picture” vision that gets refined and focused over the course of the project. This project very much fit that scenario. Tracking this input and incorporating it into the WBS and timeline was important and helped me keep the effort on track and within scope.

The original setup of the website, including the domain registration, cPanel setup, database setup and installation of the WordPress content management system, image formatting and the creation and development of the actual content were all activities that I learned or enhanced as part of my Web Applications Development, Introduction to Digital Media, Database Design, Development and Deployment and Systems Analysis and Design courses.

As the project continued, a lot of the work shifted to the Digital Media and Web Applications functions as we looked for ways to optimize the site, improve navigation and make the site functional for visitors, As part of this process, the customer made a difficult decision to not leverage the true ecommerce ordering capabilities that had been integrated into the site, as it presented too many challenges for a site visitor due to the many options that are available as someone is designing a custom cake from scratch. Although ecommerce is everywhere, for this particular use case, it did not lend itself to the function that the customer desired for the site and they ultimately elected to steer customers to an in-person virtual consultation and quoting process to ensure that the customer gets what they’re looking for and the costing for the order is appropriate for the complexity of the work performed.

**Para 3 – describe what you learned as a result of these activities**

Throughout this project, I learned how important time keeping and planning is to the success of a project. Although I was well ahead of the timeline throughout the course of the project, timekeeping was still critically important to ensure that I was meeting the commitment on the minimum number of hours. If I were a web designer performing this work for a customer, it would be important that the same process be followed to ensure that the customer is receiving the appropriate time allotment on their project consistent with the business arrangement or contract. As mentioned above, but worth repeating, I learned how important it is to stay in touch with key stakeholders over the course of a project – in this instance my niece and sister-in-law. Although the scope of the project did not shift substantially, there were many tweaks and minor changes as the project took on an iterative flow of incorporating a requested change and allowing them time to test and provide feedback. While this worked to my advantage in this instance, with the need to commit additional hours to the effort, this could be a dangerous situation to find yourself in with a paying customer that way paying for the final project versus an allotment of hours.

**Para 4 – Reflection on the Effectiveness of the Learning Experience**

As might be imagined, creating a website for my niece to encourage your aspirations as a custom bakery chef was a lot of fun. Throughout the project, I learned many things as I followed the process of generating a concept for the website and carrying it forward towards a final project. While one of my prior courses had me create a functional ecommerce website, the experience of creating a website that is going to be utilized for an actual business was very worthwhile. I learned how small changes can impact an overall design and theme and may add to or remove from the experience for an end user/visitor. I enjoyed the time spent on brainstorming ideas, visiting sites for inspiration and identifying the function and content to be included in the site and the process of converting those into deliverables and believe that some of this can be missed when you’re creating a site for a grade versus creating a site for a customer – and in this instance, for a family member. In either instance I would plan to do my best work, but the additional attention to detail and focus on the final product results in additional time spent in thinking through the logistics of incorporating a function, the sustainability of the function when the site is transferred into the customer’s hands and the effectiveness that the function might offer for visitors and potential customers. I believe this is good way to close out my degree program and provides for a final culmination of the many skills learned and enhanced over my 5-years of study and an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge gained through each of the courses that made up the program.