Writing for Success: Creating Software Specifications

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1 Overview

Software documentation is an important component of development. The steps needing to new software (or changes) are often open-ended, sometimes nebulous, and almost always based on needs outside of those of technologists. Documentation is an area that is oft-recommended by professionals but takes a backseat in pedagogy, when its presence offers benefits of at least partial order to the chaotic process of developing software. In this course, we will be focusing on how to write software specifications–documents that outline the design, purpose, and approach to building software prior to development. We will write sample "specs" that help us see the often unknown difficulty in development and give more structure to our work.

2 Duration

This is a 6-hour course.

3 Objectives

- Learn about functional and technical requirements

- Understand the function of user stories

- Understand project scope

- Learn the various roles of software specifications

4 Key Takeaways

After this course, you will be able to:

- Write a software specification

- Better understand the effort involved in a project

- Create software mockups/diagrams

- Write user stories

- Define and understand "scope"

5 Prerequisites

- Advanced level of the English language

- Some technical understanding

6 Required Materials

For this, you will need the following:

- Workbook (provided)

- A laptop with a word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word, LyX, LaTeX, LibreOffice Write)

7 Schedule/Topics Discussed

- What is a software spec? Why does it matter?

- Requirements gathering

- Mock-ups

- Writing a simple spec