Learning Journal 1

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Course: SOEN 6841 – Software Project Management

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Dates Rage of activities: 16/01/2025 – 28/01/2025

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Key Concepts Learned:

This week's sessions provided a deep dive into the foundational elements of project management, emphasizing the distinctive features of software projects and their structured lifecycle—spanning initiation, planning, execution, and closure. We explored various key roles such as Scrum Master, Project Manager, and Team Leader, each contributing uniquely to the success of a project.

The concept of SMART objectives stood out as an effective method to establish specific and measurable goals. We also delved into effort estimation techniques, including function point analysis, wide-band Delphi, and analogy-based methods. These approaches, while insightful, highlighted the challenges inherent in predicting intangible outcomes. Additionally, we covered risk management, which emphasized identifying, assessing, and addressing risks through strategies like mitigation, transference, and contingency planning.

Application in Real Projects:

The lessons from this week have a direct bearing on real-world applications. For example, the SMART framework offers a clear structure for defining project objectives, ensuring they are actionable and measurable. Similarly, analogy-based estimation provides a practical way to forecast project timelines and effort by referencing past experiences.

The segment on risk management resonated deeply with a previous app development project I was part of, where inadequate risk analysis led to missed deadlines. Learning about methods like adding buffer time and conducting regular risk reviews has equipped me with actionable insights to prevent similar pitfalls in future endeavors.

Peer Interactions:

Engaging with classmates brought fresh perspectives to the table. A lively debate on iterative versus waterfall models stood out, where the flexibility of iterative models was counterbalanced by the predictability of waterfall for rigid projects. Additionally, a peer shared their internship experience using COCOMO for effort estimation, which brought theoretical concepts to life and showcased their practical relevance.

Challenges Faced:

Effort estimation emerged as a challenging area this week, especially when working with abstract deliverables like software. Techniques like function point analysis and wide-band Delphi required thoughtful application, and their complexity highlighted the need for experience in these methods.

Distinguishing between the overlapping roles of Scrum Master, Project Manager, and Team Leader was another area that required extra focus. Additionally, prioritizing risks proved difficult, as it involved weighing the likelihood and potential impact of each risk, which required methodical analysis and judgment

Personal Development Activities:

To reinforce my understanding, I went beyond the lecture material by exploring additional resources. Watching online tutorials on risk management provided actionable examples, while drafting a project charter for a personal project helped solidify the concepts in a practical context. Furthermore, I began reading a book on Agile project management, aiming to deepen my understanding of Scrum and its application in real-world scenarios.

Goals for the Next Week:

Looking ahead, my goals include:

- Gaining mastery over risk management strategies and understanding their practical application.
- Refining my skills in effort estimation, focusing on function point analysis and analogy-based methods.
- Investigating the pros and cons of iterative and waterfall models to enhance my perspective.
- Experimenting with tools like Jira to simulate project management in a more hands-on manner.