

LEARNING JOURNAL

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Course: SOEN 6841 - Software Project Management

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1. Key Concepts Learned

During the first class, we had a thorough discussion on the difference between project charter and project scope. I have commonly seen these two terms used interchangeably but the class helped me clarify my understanding. Project charter helps in identifying the objectives, resources and the scope of the project whereas project scope is used to set a clear definition of the exact tasks to be covered in the project and define the boundaries of these tasks.

The second lecture deep dived into estimation techniques in two categories namely: Experience Based and Algorithm Based. Although I had an idea about estimation methods used, the deep dive explanation in this lecture helped me understand the importance of these techniques and how a technique can be selected based on the characteristics of the project. The algorithm-based technique brought up an interesting point of reflection for me, that the effort increases exponentially with the size of the project. This lecture also introduced COCOMO and Delphi estimation techniques. COCOMO being dependent on the formula as a function of lines of code and Delphi is based on team experiences using voting. Both these techniques were newly introduced to me and helped me understand about real-life use-cases for using these techniques to build a successful and profitable project.

2. Application in Real Projects

Development of project charter and defining a project scope is essential for even small stories or sprints. I believe looking at each task as a project and creating an individual note on the timeline, risks, features in scope and setting clear boundaries will enable a developer to deliver his/her tasks successfully.

Also, when working on any new tasks, looking at the existing repositories and the code authors of similar features can help a developer leverage estimation technique and deliver features to the stakeholders in a timely manner. These concepts also highlight that where applicable a thorough discussion (voting) of the best design or effort can result in good estimates.

3. Peer Interactions:

I came across one of my peers working on their thesis to develop a project in the healthcare industry. They were at the initial stages of their project which involved loads of research. But they mentioned how they were planning to use information from this course to manage their colleagues and the create a plan for their project as they envisioned. It was insightful to interact with a student that will be using these concepts from day one into their thesis project. They emphasized the need to have clear documentations in terms of a project charter and project scope to be able to gain resources and budget.

4. Challenges Faced:

Effort estimation techniques was a new topic and the one I believe can have a huge impact on any project's progress. Especially function point analysis technique brought in a lot of new concepts like Counting Boundary, unadjusted function point. It took me some time and repeated readings to get a grasp on them. Also, as I mentioned, coming up with a full-fledged project charter was a task in the beginning as it needed to cover a wide variety of areas. I struggled initially in thinking of the bigger picture and defining the scope in detail but through reading various examples, I think I have made some progress.

5. Personal development activities:

I went through one my current projects that I am working on in my organization. I analysed the project all over again to identify the different points I had missed and that came up during the development phase. It also helped me create an estimate of the next tasks of the project and helped me to visualize the project from my manager's perspective along with mine. I feel this has made me much more confident as I have a clear idea of all the tasks in hand and can strongly point any risk factors. I think dedicating some time before every new feature development to create a mini-project charter and scope of my tasks will help me deliver better results at my organization.

6. Goals for the Next Week:

Having access to a golden resource of many projects at my organization, I would like to spend the next week focusing on scrutinizing the pasts projects in terms of the risks identified, the timeline and the objectives achieved. As I struggle in looking at every possible scenario for a project, I will be trying to apply the concepts learned until now and in the next lecture to build my skills for identifying risks and estimating the efforts in various projects and comparing my analysis with the actual outcome.