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Graduate Progress Report: Analysis Tools to Craft the Problem Statement

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January 10, 2022

This paper aims to paint a larger context for the problem domain that this project hopes to solve while also adding to last week’s contextual analysis report with more analysis from the SWOT and barrier analysis analytical tools. But first, this project will explore agile and waterfall software development processes that will be important to the project proposal because it will affect the delivery timeline and funding necessary to reach a minimum viable product. In short, using the agile methodology, this project could reach clients as quickly as six months once approved given the iterative workflow process that will be used to build this project. Next, a study from the United States Government Accountability Office from 2019 about Tranisitioning Service Members military employment assistance will be reviewed with a critical lens. And finally, more data and insights from the barrier analysis and SWOT analysis analytical tools will be explored further with a particular view into the external threats and opportunities that affect the organization. With this information to complement the focus groups data and key insights, the problem domain can be formulated and the project set up well to address the problem from both micro and macro perspectives. To conclude, this paper will define the problem domain that will be used in the project proposal now that a solid foundation of the internal and external factors surrounding the organization has been explored and identified.

To begin, the reason why understanding the differences between the agile and waterfall software development methodologies is because each approach impacts how the project is developed which directly impacts project success (Santos, 2021). How a project is developed is just as important as what the project is. Now, both approaches to project management have their pros and cons, but this project will argue that an agile development process is better given the data. But first, what are these approaches? Waterfall refers to a sequential approach that divides the software development process into phases that flow linearly. So information gathering proceeds requirements definition, which follows analysis and design, and so on and so forth to the deployment and maintenance phases. The benefits of waterfall include, but are not limited to, an easier way to calculate cost when every part of the process is explicitly defined in time and scope. Furthermore, waterfall allows for the deliverable to be defined before any software development process commences, which simplifies expectations for everyone involved. However, some of the reasons why waterfall isn’t used is that it’s rigid and lacks customer engagement throughout the development process. This is where the agile approach shines. The agile methodology requires customer interaction and engagement throughout the software development process. As a cost to this interaction is that the requirements may change over time when customers provide feedback about their experience. However, through an iterative, team-based approach to rapid deployments, agile offers mechanisms to allow for that feedback to be integrated into the workflow and prioritized among the other requirements. This flexibility empowers every member of the software development lifecycle team including testers, developers, as well as customers, to be a part in the development process throughout the development process. This empowerment provides the best chance of success because daily and constant communication means barriers are removed quicker, problems are resolved faster, updates are given more rapidly, and, ultimately, the product is provided to the customer faster and better than before. And given the context of the problem domain that this project aims to solve, constant communication throughout the development process is integral to project success, which will be discussed later.

In 2019, the U.S. Accountability Office published a report about Transitioning Servicemembers. The report provided information on military employment assistance centers, which are mandated by federal law. These centers provide various services through the Transitioning Assistance Program (TAP) such as supporting resume writing, offering tips on interviewing, providing advice on conducting a job search, as well as assisting in understanding personal skills during career exploration, just to name a few (Government Accountability Office, 2019). Altogether, approximately 200,000 servicemembers transition from military to civilian life each year so these services should be extremely helpful this period in a servicemembers’ career. However, although there are nearly 300 employment assistance centers on military installations to support transitioning service members, there is far less information and data about the reliability of these programs to deliver quality context, the efficacy of each program to meet their desired objectives, and whether the mandated program is given sufficient resources to provide the programs it provides. While there is participation data for members who enroll in the TAP program and data about the thousands of services provided, that data is certainly not a reliable metric to determine whether a service member is now prepared, or evenly a little more closely prepared, for their transition. So how do service members know that the TAP program works or meets the goals they intend to meet? If these programs are so important, then why are statistics about the success of these programs, like the TAP program, nowhere to be found? Next, this paper will explore with more depth the organization leveraging the SWOT analysis tool.

The SWOT analysis technique is leveraged for gathering information about the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities of an organization. Last week’s paper emphasized a couple strengths and weaknesses within the organization that the project will be applied to. A few of those takeaways were that the TAP program does exist to offer many necessary services that help transitioning service members navigate civilian life. These services include information sessions that lead to a deep dive into education benefits, health care services, veteran assistance entitlements, and so much more. Career development, however, was seen as a weakness because it’s usage in the program is more like a lecture than actually helping service members translate their skills to civilian jobs, showing service members what a good resume looks like, and how to craft a LinkedIn profile that stands out from the crowd. Moving on to threats and opportunities, the final two pillars of SWOT, there is great potential for opportunities by first acknowledging the threat to this program's quality when ranked against others. The threat, to be clear, is that TAP is seen as a joke and more of an introduction into career development rather than career development itself. With an emphasis on so many services and opportunities outside career development, TAP simply cannot offer the kind of service members within the organization needs to transition into civilian life successfully. This argument is captured with the barrier analysis focus groups that helps clarify the problem domain. And finally, what opportunities are available that can help the organization? There are many organizations external to this organization that show a path forward that can provide a better career development experience for members within this organization.

However, why have external opportunities and other organizations been so successful capturing the audience of service members with regards to career development? To begin, a key takeaway from last week’s barrier analysis was that one participant’s mentors recommended reaching out to different external organizations for resume support and LinkedIn profile. These organizations include but are not limited to Veterati, 50strong, and Shift. Other organizations specialize in job placement and internship support, such as Hiring Our Heroes and Breakline. These other organizations provide career development and placement support that the TAP program fails at (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022). And for that reason, there is an opportunity for TAP to out-source several of their goals to professionals rather than pretending to be a jack of all trades. Or at minimum, the TAP program should have a career development component that is a continuation of career development processes that have been integral to each member’s career since they joined the organization. Writing and updating a resume, remaining active online and networking opportunities, and pursuing education, training, and professional development are all aspects of a member’s career that can be beneficial not only to the individual, but also the organization. By supportuning a member’s career development within the organization, perhaps the member will decide to stay within the organization. This is a better alternative than what another participant in the focus group said, which was that several members have left the organization in the past without any plans. The organization should take responsibility and provide the proper resources to support their members throughout their career with the organization.

In conclusion, members within this organization should engage in consistent career development activities including, but not limited to, resume building, LinkedIn profile development, and networking in order to best prepare for future opportunities within and outside the organization. Unfortunately, the only program that focuses primarily on career development related to members who are within is the Transitioning Assistance Program where members explore various healthcare plans, career opportunities, and benefits from within and outside the organization. However, there’s a lack of career development that prepares members to make smart, informed decisions about their careers and their future. But many organizations do offer these services for free and can be leveraged to support members within the organization as they navigate their careers. But these organizations are not just mentorship services, but a place where members can discover educational opportunities, job opportunities, and build their online profile. A software application that bringSantoss together the best of external organizations that can complement organizational programs like TAP can add tremendous value to the members who participate in this program, which is over 200,000 thousands service members per year.

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