



# School of Computing

**CLIENT-FOCUSED BUSINESS SOLUTIONS**

**Critical Reflection Essay**

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## Working in Teams

One of the hardest parts of any project is choosing team members, usually from a larger number than is required, as evidenced in our situation as we have a pool of students available and willing to be a part of this team, this is relevant because in previous years on this course, As team leader have had success on more than one occasion, so it would be expected that potential team members flock to and would want to be a part of that team.

From the beginning Martin Kleis was to be included as he has the necessary skill sets that enable him to be Project Manager and as a pair have the core components of this team, including Project Manager and Lead Developer as the strong points to go forward with the team, but more importantly both can diversify and take control of many other core functions.

Charles Little showed interest in joining the team which came as a bit of a surprise as he has led a team in the past with some success and so after debating this matter, it was concluded he would be a great addition to this team, so he was quickly recruited into the new team which now meant there were remnants of two former teams not knowing where to go and in some cases feeling betrayed and left out.

It must be said that on bringing Charles on board it was understood that it would mean giving up any position as Lead Developer as it was acknowledged him being a superior PHP Developer, and that was a decision made on behalf of the team and something one really does not like to divulge, (admitting someone is better than you) but we as a team wanted to win this project and that is business.

So the new basis of the team pushed on, leaving five or six totally disgruntled former team members wanting in, with one question still remaining, who was to be the fourth member? Well that is where it started getting ugly.

A tough decision needed to be made by the three new team members on whom to "democratically" (that is meant to be sarcastic) choose as the last member, there

was a pool of five very anxious former team members all wanted to be a part of the new team, and it had caused a falling out amongst Chris (former team member of Charles) and Charles as Chris felt betrayed and hurt, also Martin and myself had tentatively offered both Ryan and Alex Opie positions on the team.

So in the absence of all the former team members except Mike, all three team members democratically decided that Mike would be the last member, based on the votes of Charles and Martin against the remaining vote. In fact Alex Opie had been deceived in believing that this vote was cast in his and Mike's presence at a scheduled meeting a day later.

The fact that the position of Lead Developer had been ceded on two occasions did not sit well with the author, as having ceded the position as "Developer" to Charles and had allowed an undemocratic way of selecting the team as the author's vote was to elect Alex Opie to the team as he has skills that this team needed.

As team leader, it was thought it was his duty to remind the team on the client's needs as they stated that they wanted a brand new cool looking, bleeding edge website that they could be proud of, and one that would be comparable to what is out there right now, so after some research on competing businesses it was decided that it would be in the team's interest to purchase a new "E-commerce word press theme" complete with a payment gateway and all the dummy data included, dummy data being generic text and generic images to be replaced when necessary. After bringing up this idea during a meeting it was decided that we would go that route, as it is a win win situation as we can all keep a copy of the template at a cost of 60\$ US divided by 5 equates to 12\$ each.

The team then researched further and chose two WordPress template themes each, which at the next team meeting gathered around a computer in room 134 at the University and demonstrated to the rest of the team, the chosen themes. In turn the themes were viewed and a winner was chosen.

As part of the team leader's, (the author) roles was the responsibility of "team morale" a position that was taken very seriously as it was essential to gel and to be able to communicate without feeling any anxiety or pressure, so it was decided that team meetings would commence in a relaxed and informative atmosphere and the location being "The Star" which is an on campus public house. The idea was to congregate at the pool table where each member participated in playing each other (The winner stays on the table) it was an ideal setting as it created an atmosphere where all members were at ease and spoke freely on all matters concerning the project as well as the meaning of life. It seemed to bring out even the shyest of us and you could see people "coming out of their shells", it gave us confidence, although Charles seemed to win most games, we were very competitive and he did allow us to win on occasion.

## **Project Management**

Who was to become Project Manager? And who is best suited for this role, well the question was answered with the team member's previous results on this the BA Web and Multimedia (Hons) course and also experience in the world outside the University.

Logic dictated that Martin was the obvious person for the role of project Manager because the fact that he understood and had previous experience with the prince2 (Hinde, 2012) framework, which is a tool for documenting team work.

Martin commenced the project by adopting the use of the (PID) within Prince2, the purpose of the Product Initiation Document is to capture and record basic information needed to correctly define and plan the project at hand. The PID states what the project is aiming and planning to achieve and the reason for the importance of meeting these aims as evidenced in Martins thorough and concise workmanship within these documents.

It was also essential to be able to adopt the Belbin team roles philosophy within the team as each team member had to be clear on their responsibilities. Belbin suggests that, MindTools, (2016) "*by understanding your role within a particular team, you can*

*develop your strengths and manage your weaknesses as a team member, and so improve how you contribute to the team.”*

After the fundamentals of the team roles were completed and roles were assigned, it was necessary to discuss the needs of the client, as stated in our first client meeting with Trevor, and that being two websites were to be made available, one which was an Ecommerce site to display and sell his wares to the public, also a catalogue site to display the companies wares.

At the next team meeting, the issue of what Content Management System (CMS) to use was discussed, the reasoning behind using a CMS is because the client needed to be able to edit his website without any outside help. During these initial discussions it was democratically decided that the team would purchase a “Premiere” WordPress theme, and the thinking behind this was the belief that it would give the team a distinct advantage over the rest of the teams involved.

A record of all team minutes were kept within the team’s private area on blackboard for members to view and to keep track of any ongoing issues, this became very important as not all members were present in some meetings and therefor were able to browse the meetings minutes to see what was discussed.

Gantt Charts were made available and kept up to date which enabled team members to check on the progress of their particular role, this was an excellent tool as it enabled the team to keep track of any deadlines we needed to keep.

## **Consultancy**

The initial meeting with the clients was set at the University where the teams had a chance to meet both Trevor and his partner. They brought with them a selection of the wares they were producing and needed to promote.

The client clearly spelled out to the teams in attendance as to what was to be expected from them, this has been be discussed in the previous section.

The clothing was handed around the room for teams to view and check for the quality which was to be a big selling point and very important to the client, it was very impressive to see and feel such quality in their clothing line.

As the project progressed, further client meetings were arranged and as set out by the Prince2 (Hinde, 2012) methodology, certain steps were to be taken concerning the progression of the project as one cannot jump ahead too quickly, for example during our next meeting the team produced to the client a set of moodboards designed by Mike, the teams designer as well as some rough sketches of the layout and feel for the website, this being a very important step in the procedure as it gives the client an early view of the look and feel of the website. The initial confrontations with the client were pretty nerve racking for most of the team, as indicated by one member, Alex seeming to babble on for a long period of time and saying almost nothing.

Of the client's decision to place this team second overall was quite disappointing as the team seemed to think they were clear leaders and took that assumption from an early stage, although it would have been wiser to not assume such things, which the team leader tried to stress that fact.

After the results were in and Trevor, the company owner announced the results and after the teams were able to assess each other's work, it became clear as to why this team finished second. It's the view of the team leader that communication was rather lacking, even though attempts were made to communicate, where on one particular occasion the project manager and team leader actually set off from the University to visit the Company warehouse, but alas got lost and were not able to find the place.

It was pointed out by the owner during his speech given to the winner, that the winning team were constantly engaging him either by email, phone and on one occasion had a meeting at his office, this is believed to be why the team were successful, showing so much passion and the need for more information from him and his company. As for the website, it was not that impressive and to be honest, this team's product was superior, as during the assessment of other teams work the site did not respond as it should have, where the main logo on the home page was

pixelated and scrolled off the side of the page, this was caused by the image not responding to its CSS class within the style sheet. The site was also very confusing for a first time user, as well as the fact the client did ask for an Ecommerce site and also a catalogue site, the latter of which was not completed or in fact, even started by the winning team.

It should be noted that this team scored a total of 90% given by the client, a score that this team should be very proud of and reflects the hard work and time given by each team member whilst showcasing their individual talents.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude this reflection, the overall team performance was extremely satisfying simply because of the talent on display and the way the team members behaved, which was very professional, as seen in the end result, hardworking, on time for meetings, in fact no one missed a meeting that was scheduled, punctual and showed a willingness to achieve their goals.

Congratulations to our new found team leader Martin whom I thought performed very professional throughout and did a fantastic job as Project Manager, also Mike was an inspiration because of his talents as a designer and willingness to endure and learn and be a part of a team. Charles, who was a great addition, was an asset in every aspect and Alex was irreplaceable because of his natural talent and young professionalism. It has been a pleasure working alongside such talented and enthusiastic students.



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