IMPLEMENTING PROJECT MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGIES INTO MUSTANG NEWS’ Social Media Team

Graphic Communication Senior Project
Prepared by Claire Han, Spring 2022
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About Claire

Claire Han is a Graphic Communication major concentrating in Graphic Communication Management graduating this Spring. She is passionate about being in a collaborative and productive environment and continuously seeking ways to improve her skills and expand her knowledge.

She will reside in Orange County, California post-graduation to continue her training in becoming a Business Systems Analyst, which involves communicating with people of all roles, specialties, and backgrounds.
Implementing Project Management Methodologies into Mustang News’ Social Media Team combines the practices of efficient project management with the design knowledge required to create a brochure containing essential material. This project includes an observation of on-going issues in the workspace along with a guide to aid current and future teams in developing streamlined processes.
Problem Statement

Mustang News is Cal Poly’s news source that delivers reliable information regarding current happenings to students, staff, parents, and community members. Although most roles within the company include gathering resources, writing, and editing, a large contributor to the distribution of news is the Social Media Team.

The current workflow and team dynamic lacks intentional management which results in duplicated efforts, confusions in scheduling, and inconsistent communication. Through the opportunity for workflow optimization by the elimination of unnecessary tasks and the defining of responsibilities, the Social Media Team can experience improvement in efficiency in social media production processes and in the maximization of utility of individual team member’s skills.
Project Objectives

Management

• I want to apply what I have learned from my courses and be confident in my abilities to enforce researched and proven management methods.

• In achieving proper management, it should be evident through the course of this project in which deadlines and objectives are successfully met through organization and proficiency in management topics.
Communication

• To ensure the steps that I construct are up to standard, they would be discussed with my mentor as I would gain more insight through constructive criticism and commentary before finalizing the guide.

Quality of Content

• My brochure should be the result of not only my own knowledge and advice from my mentor, but also from personal research from reputable sources.

• The entire project should be completed without any mistakes or flaws, grammatically and logically, and should be easily understood by all audiences.
Timeline

Week 1
• Background Research

Week 2
• Team Studies
  • Team Structures
  • Productive Communication
• Management Studies
  • Management Methodologies
  • Small Team Management

Week 3
• Pinning Pain Points
• Noting Occurences and Instances
• Needs for Improvement and Impact

Week 4
• Pros and Cons of Methodologies
• Further Research (If Needed)

Week 5
• Applicability of Practices to Defined Issues
Week 6
• Assessment of Current Team Dynamic
• Acquiring Tips and Advice Specific to Executing Successful Change

Week 7
• Define Steps to Incorporating Methodologies
• Structure Employee Training
• Create Design Guide

Week 8
• Review and Complete Deliverables
• Finalize and Assemble Material/Brochure

Week 9
• Record Presentation
• Begin Process Book

Week 10
• Complete Process Book
• Submit to Canvas
• Upload to Library Archive
The priority of this project is to improve the workflow of Mustang News’ social media team and develop a seamless environment in which responsibilities and communication reach improved efficiency. The plan that this project will provide will serve as guidance to the current and future teams.

As a long-term intention, this improvement will ease the adjustment to new members as the yearly turnover typically creates obstacles in productivity. However, within the 10-week period of this project, the results of implementing project management methodologies will be unseen.
Design Guide

Color Palette:

C: 31%    Y: 32%
M: 17%    K: 20%

C: 44%    Y: 42%
M: 41%    K: 4%

C: 28%    Y: 42%
M: 40%    K: 1%

C: 2%     Y: 10%
M: 11%    K: 0%

Typefaces:

Tan - Mon Cheri
Tenor Sans
Optimization, with a correlation to the methodologies of Lean and Six Sigma, is not limited to physical production and is very much applicable to digital media. Process maps can be created so that actions can be observed and unnecessary or non-value-adding tasks can be minimized.

The efficacy of organizational performance appears to be directly impacted by the connection of team members and the overall dynamic. Technology plays a large role in facilitating communication in team settings and can result in more conflict and miscommunication in comparison to traditional communication if not addressed successfully. It is studied that proficient leaders yield more competent teams as members are typically held accountable and are managed well.
Hierarchy within a structure is harmful in certain situations where a team is better at playing critical roles together. Most people on the social media team have roles or responsibilities that overlap. Some of the keys to achieving a team that is motivated to work individually and collaboratively is setting clear objectives and goals, being transparent, and consistently following through on commitments.

Approaching team productivity with methods used in Agile can help the overall success of projects and strategies. Although digital media is not physical, it can be measured and calculated — and, in turn, it is observed to improve on current efforts towards goals. With Agile, teams are able to monitor their progress better, manage their functions, and delegate tasks more effectively.
The end deliverable will feature a brochure with advice and methods that address certain management and communication flaws (as seen in the Pain Points list on p.17) within the Mustang News Social Media Team through the application of specific management theories learned in Cal Poly Graphic Communication courses 320 (Managing Quality in Graphic Communication) and 421 (Production Management for Print and Digital Media) and through individual research. It would benefit the current and future Social Media Teams in terms of productivity and efficiency in communication and management.
Pain Points

- Team uses text and Trello to communicate the same message
- Training is very casual and confusing if not explained or documented thoroughly
- Discussions are minimally productive and have little to no structure
- Team members report to more than one person at times
- No set goals; objective is better engagement/reach (invalid value)
- Weekly meetings often do not have full attendance
- Little to no opportunity to change structure and suggestions rarely produce results
- Disconnect from other sections - in collaboration and presence at company meetings
LEAN COFFEE TABLE

What describes Lean Coffee?

1. Has no set agenda
2. Increases engagement

So, How Does it Work?

There are Six Main Steps in Making it a Successful and Engaging Session:
1. Create a Kanban with the sections of “To Discuss,” “Discussing,” and “Discussed” to track progress. You can use Trello.
2. Brainstorm topics and write them on individual sticky notes or cards on Trello.
3. Pitch your ideas.
4. Decide and prioritize the topics that would help the most by voting.
5. Give each discussion a topic a time limit, e.g. 5 minutes.
6. And.. discuss!

These meetings can be held in-person or virtually and can be initiated when desired.

How Do We Apply the Agile Approach to Our Strategies?

There are Four Main Steps to Apply the Agile Methodology to Our Workflow:
1. Set clear goals for categories such as engagement, reach, and following.
2. Break down tasks and delegate them to team members.
3. Monitor success by using tools for measuring and analyzing results.
4. Adjust and repeat based on outcomes.

The key to practicing Agile is reflecting and focusing on what is your need at that moment. Don’t look too far ahead. Work towards achievable goals (these are called sprints) that will help the team reach the outcome.

Agile challenges the team to be more flexible and adaptable in the circumstance that the outcomes are not reached in the set timeframe. It also makes it easier to observe individual performance.

IMPLEMENTING PROJECT MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGIES INTO

MUSTANG NEWS’ SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM

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INTRODUCTION...

Mustang News, the student-run news source of Cal Poly, provides numerous opportunities to “team by doing.” The Social Media Team keeps the public updated on current events; in order to do so, the members have to be in constant communication and collaboration with each other. The practices in place can be improved on to increase team engagement and productivity. This brochure will serve as an aid to guide the implementation of effective project management for the current and future teams, so that they can develop a more organized system to avoid inefficient or confusing efforts and communication.

What We Will Go Over:
- Team Structure
- Trello
- Lean Coffee Table
- The Agile Approach

TEAM STRUCTURE

What Works for Our Small Team?

Designated Sections Alternating Bi-Quarterly
- Members are still trained in all tasks at the start of the job.
- Instead of changing roles every 1-2 weeks, members switch every 3-5 weeks to gain comfortability in carrying out the tasks at hand.

Maintaining a Flatten Structure
- Less hierarchy suggests minimal management roles.
- It encourages more effective communication, frequent collaboration, and motivates the team to solve problems together.

TRELLO

The current team uses Trello, but in case the future teams are not familiar with it...

What is Trello?

Trello is a user-friendly platform that allows for efficient project management.

The boards have basic features that help with organization of scheduling, sections, progress, task delegation, etc. Users can upload links and files, including videos, pdfs, photographs, making it easy for others to access important files in one location.

You can access Trello on your browser or download the app! With the app, make sure you have your push notifications on!
Reflection

With conducting a project that analyzes processes that I am currently involved in, it helped me gain a better understanding of small team management, team dynamics, and priorities of Generation Z in the workplace.

I came into this project thinking that there were only a few targets to tackle, but the more I dived in, the more I was able to truly immerse myself into the learning about people and of management practices beyond what I could have imagined. I was able to practice managing my own time and efforts as the project structure required us to begin and complete our work within a fast-paced eight weeks, and, from this, I will carry the skills I have gained and apply them to other projects and work.
Tips and Techniques That Helped:

Success Monitoring: In creating success monitors, it provides a structure to aim for and make the task of defining deliverables simpler. It helped me understand where I was going and what I was moving towards. In general, I am a chaotic worker and do things as they come up, but actually having objectives to monitor my progress, I was able to keep up and not stray from where I wanted to be.

Gantt Chart: The Gantt Chart that we had to complete was a self-created resource that helped me stay on top of my work and visualize the timeline that I had to follow. With a lot of my projects, I am a procrastinator, so being able to see that each step was dependent on the one before, it saved me from being overwhelmed as the project unfolded.

Canva: In a graphics related major, there is always the fear of presenting something you did not fully create. However, sometimes, we need inspiration to design and tools to achieve what is needed. I used Canva to help layout components and choose colors, and from there used InDesign to replicate with personalized adjustments to create the exact design I wanted. I am always experiencing designer’s block so having this tool helped me.
Problems or Challenges I Faced:

Brochure Designing: Not considering myself a strong designer, I felt lost in creating the brochure from scratch. I had an idea of what I wanted the text to be but getting to my end result took countless hours of being unsure in the layout, colors, and sizing matters. Taking into account the printing process, as well, adjusting my design after receiving a poorly sized proof (my own fault) was difficult as I knew I wanted it to be able to print on an 11x8.5 for convenience in trimming.

Time Management: Having a lot on my plate this quarter impacted the quality of work that I put in. At times, I wanted to rest and postponed what I had originally planned on completing. I ended up following my Gantt Chart, but even the smaller tasks were more difficult than I had planned it to be.

Application Proficiency (or the lack of): The classes in which I learned how to use certain Adobe applications gave me the basic understanding of how to use them, but I still struggled in knowing what tools to use and how to use them as my knowledge was limited to what I learned in those classes. This required me to watch YouTube videos and learn on my own time, and created a hiccup in the timeline as I did not account for this task in my planning.
What Would I Do Differently Next Time:

Account time for unforeseen obstacles: In any project, obstacles can come up that need to be addressed and solved. This could be outside factors or factors within the project internally. I scheduled my tasks without considering this, so I became overwhelmed when I had more tasks to complete in the same amount of time.

Ask for guidance sooner rather than later: Talking to mentors and people who witness similar experiences makes a difference especially when gathering information. It is easy to want to do it all on my own, but it is better to seek help and words from those who can offer it. I eventually did reach out to individuals, but it would have eased my worry when it came down to pulling my resources and writing my content.

Familiarize myself with the applications I would use: I came into this project knowing I would have to create my own designs, but I did not think about what I would do when it came time to design them. My brochure itself has elements imported from Canva, but the process became lengthy and frustrating as I was learning as I was adding elements to my showcase poster, etc. when I was working on InDesign.
From the Author:

Thank you to all who have contributed to my learning and successes personally and academically. I am beyond grateful for my professors, advisors, and peers who have become friends over the journey we call ‘getting a Bachelor’s degree.’ The support from this community, our GrC pod, was overwhelming in the best way possible. It was the most meaningful experience I could have asked for.

Signing off,

Claire Han
Sources


