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## Assignment Two: Developing a Strategy For Success

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Since I come from a one-person design and development company, it is interesting to see exactly how my project management planning and execution occurred in hindsight. I didn't have a plan set out beforehand in most of the projects I worked on. The easiest projects to work on were the ones where the client said do what you want, but here is what I need. Those projects were very few and far between.

Implementing a project management strategy to handle a development task was a very tough sell on a small business client. They saw it as a process that was not warranted for such a small endeavour and they commonly assumed it would increase development time and cost them more money.

What I didn't tell them was I had a project management plan whether they saw it or not. I was effectively managing myself. However, looking back on it now, it wasn't a good one.

The method of deployment, and thus the project management process, differed for each and every client. The smallest clients would not care what it was and they were the ones that assumed putting a website together was a quick, cheap and easy process. Those were the people I usually never argued with and vowed never to work with again.

I did not have a specific project management approach, and quite honestly never knew what Agile or Waterfall meant. When I look at the typical process I followed (I'm closing my business and starting a web project management business now), I followed a basic Waterfall technique. It worked for me and it worked for my clients.

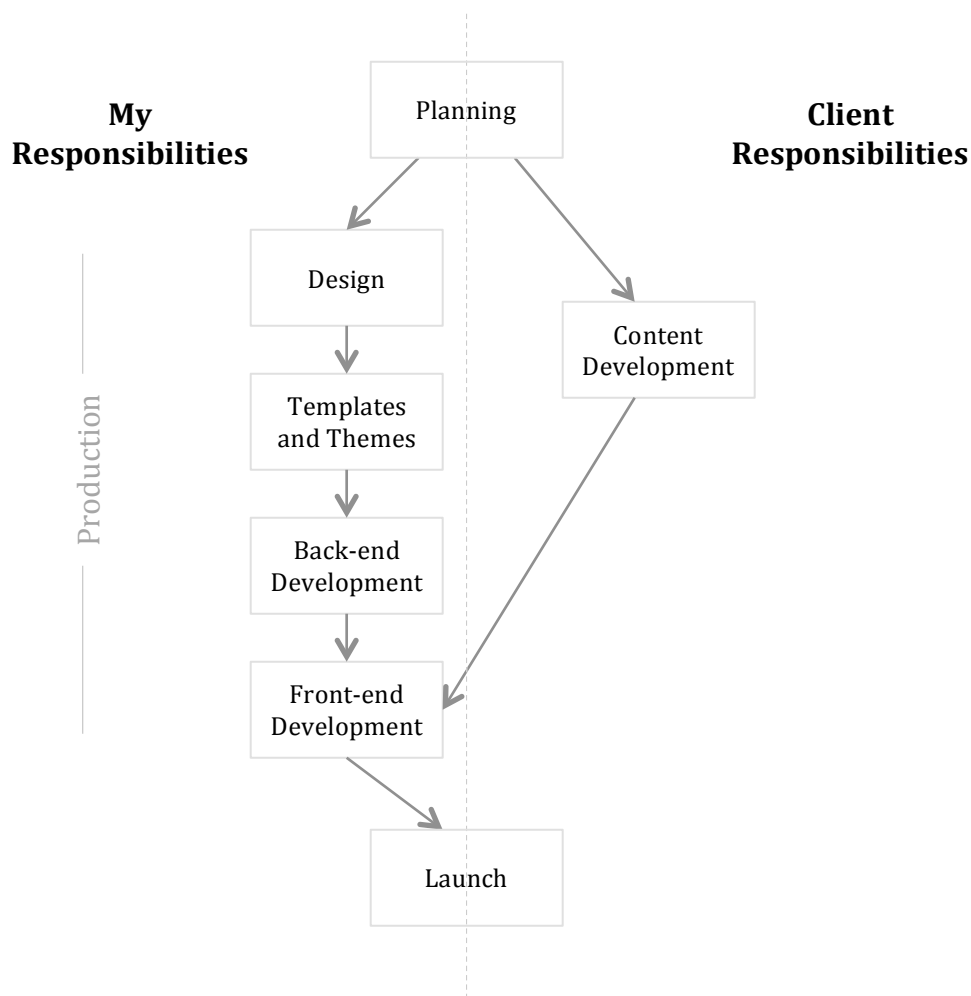
I typically did all the work. However, for some larger projects I would employ a designer, perhaps another programmer and admin help. Waterfall worked well for a few reasons. Some of them were:

1. The projects were pretty **small** and turnkey time would be less than 6 weeks;
2. **Clients preferred to stay out of the mix** and only answer questions if I had some. I can't blame them for this as they were hiring me for my expertise and I found the clients that intervened the most thought they knew more than I;
3. This process let the client understand what I'm doing and **eliminated confusion**. They were not getting confused at all of the stuff I'm doing concurrently. It is much easier for a client with very limited knowledge of website development to understand the principles if everything is done one

step at a time; and

4. Waterfall is a good process to use to **hide inefficiencies in my business**. If something was behind schedule, which happened frequently in periods of busyness, I could use it as an excuse. For example, if the client was complaining that the back-end programming wasn't done yet, I can then say that's because the designs haven't been approved. They didn't know any better, they assumed it was a linear process. But in the meantime, I'm working on another client's work! A very unfortunate reason, but very realistic.

The process I typically used was based on Waterfall, but looked like this:



The process worked quite well for most of the projects I worked on for the reasons stated earlier, but a couple of notes about it:

1. The client was only involved at the initial Planning Stage, Content Development Stage and the Launch Stage. They were not involved in the design or development phases except to approve designs.
2. The Planning Stage was typically a one-meeting process where everything was hammered out, including goals, budget and ultimately, documentation and contracts.
3. The client was assigned to get his or her own content. I did not write it for them. This included pictures and any downloadable files. This was the only part of the process where more than one deliverable was being worked on at a time and it helped take some focus off me while I began the creative journey. I didn't need eyes looking over my shoulder when I was designing. This 'distracted' the client while I got a start.

Although I say it worked well under most circumstances, it does contain numerous areas that can be improved. These include:

1. The Planning Stage needed to be **drastically overhauled** and broken down into smaller bites. Too many times links within the chain of process failed because of poor project definition and planning. It was very unfortunate that most clients failed to see the importance of the planning and goal setting stage and how it can affect phases later on.

Only on a couple of larger projects was the Planning Stage broken down into "Discovery" and "Planning." As mentioned in the readings and the lecture for this week, planning the project should be separated from the fact-finding mission. Even on the small projects.

2. Content development needed to be **assigned to my company**. Content development is as important as ever and specialists need to take a hold of the reins. Again though, this needed to be conveyed to the client as a cost savings initiative, not a cost addition. Very hard to do. Especially in 2003 when we didn't even know what SEO stood for.

By freeing up the content task from the client, they can now concentrate on what they do best – approve the work we are doing for them. We can get their input but we do the work.

3. Testing and staging was **not a separate phase** in the process. Testing was viewed as an on-going initiative that was incorporated as we went.

Nothing conveys the trustworthiness of a business as well the functionality of their website. And the downfalls in this functionality can be found in the testing. It had to be a separate stage and not taken lightly.

4. And finally, **website usability** was rarely taken into consideration. Again this goes back to the 'client needs website done as soon as possible and as cheap as possible' adage. Its hard to take someone into the important aspects when they wanted the website done yesterday.

Jakob Nielsen's concerns that website usability is not adequately represented in Agile's process framework ([www.nngroup.com/articles/agile-development-and-usability](http://www.nngroup.com/articles/agile-development-and-usability)) are valid and the solutions he offers would easily fit into a process. How it would have fit into my previous process with limited budgets would have been difficult to come up with.

I am very interested to see how the rest of the course, and the textbook, deal with usability in custom project management processes.