ESSAY – WHY DO SOFTWARE PROJECTS FAIL?

CSc 260, Winter 2018  Aaron G. Cass
Union College

OBJECTIVES

In this essay assignment, you will read about real software project failures and try to understand the various reasons why software projects fail.

TO DO

CHOOSE A PROJECT

You need to choose a well-known software project that experienced some sort of failure. You’ll want to choose a project that got a lot of press at the time, because you’ll need to find multiple sources that discuss it.

One good source for potential projects is the Catalog of Catastrophe managed by Calleam Consulting (though many of those projects are not software projects).

http://calleam.com/WTPF/?page_id=3

A recent well-known software project failure is the healthcare.gov website for managing the federal health insurance exchange as part of the Affordable Care Act.

FINDING SOURCES

Once you’ve chosen a project, find sources that discuss the project and its failure(s). These sources can be newspaper articles, blog posts, comments on blog posts, and scholarly articles. Limit yourself to sources with some authority, like journal and conference papers, national newspapers, and blogs with large national readership.

You must find at least three (3) sources. Try to find at least one source with some inside knowledge (an interview with someone on the project team, or perhaps an interview with someone experienced with similar projects.

A FIRST ESSAY

Based on your reading of the sources you have found, decide what you think is the most important reason the project failed. Write a short essay that makes the case. This essay should be 1-2 pages.1

A MORE COMPLETE ESSAY

Write a more complete essay that explains at least 3 different possible causes for the project failure, and makes the case that one of them was the most important one. This essay should also explain what you would do differently to make a similar project succeed. This essay should be 3-4 pages.

A NOTE ON CAUSES

In your essay, please focus on root causes. So, don’t focus on a bug that was introduced in the code; instead try to understand what might have lead to that. What part of the way to project was organized, managed, staffed, evaluated, etc... made it more likely that the bug found its way into the code.

1 double-spaced, 10 point font, 1 inch margins.
### Due Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Due Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find 3 sources</td>
<td>Monday, 2nd week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 page essay</td>
<td>Monday, 6th week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 page essay</td>
<td>Finals week</td>
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