The Kick-Off Meeting

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A TIMELINE FOR CAPSTONE PROJECTS DURING TERM #1

• Week 5 – Kickoff Meeting. Issues: Getting to know each other and establishing expectations.
• Week 6-8 – Requirements Gathering. Issues: Learning the details of what is expected. *May involve multiple meetings.*
• Week 9 – Approval Meeting. Issues: Ensure the teams’ vision of what is expected and the sponsors’ vision of what is expected agree.
• Week 10 - Plan solution, prepare mid-term presentation
• Week 11 (Finals Week) – Deliver mid-term presentations
• The goal of a kick off meeting is to make introductions, discuss the process to be followed and establish expectations for both yourselves and the sponsor.

• The sponsor meets the entire team and the team has an opportunity to meet other members of the sponsors organization who may have some involvement in the project.

• The goal of the kick-off meeting is not to gather detailed requirements.

• **Probably a good time to explore the sponsor’s plans for the product in detail**
MAKE SURE EVERYONE KNOWS THE GOALS FOR THE MEETING

• Identify the “owner” of the meeting
• Prepare an agenda
  • Prioritize issues to be discussed – most important to least
  • Allocate how much time to spend on each issue
• You can’t cover everything in an hour
• Consult with others to finalize the agenda
MAKESUREEVERONEFEELSABLETOCONTRIBUTE

• A meeting isn’t a monologue or a negotiation between two people
• Be courteous and respectful to everyone
• Be inclusive – let everyone participate
• Start and finish the meeting on time
ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS

• It is important the sponsor and team agree on how things are going to work. Are you going to provide bi-weekly prototypes? Show up once and come back in three months?

• Will you develop on a server at PSU and port it over to their server at the end, or do your development on their server? Is their server a Server 2003 machine? Or Linux with Apache? Or a commercial ISP? What tools do you expect to be available?

• Discuss issues you can anticipate within your team before you go there so you're all on the same page.
POINT OF CONTACT

• Teams are large and sponsors are busy - more than one person contacting the sponsor will become confusing.

• At the Kick-off Meeting introduce the point of contact to the sponsor – exchange contact information between the two.

• Provide a reliable e-mail address that is checked daily and always use that address when contacting them – an .edu address is less likely to get filtered into the junk folder than a hotmail, yahoo or gmail address.
The POC’s job is to coordinate information flow and set (and maintain) customer expectations.

- Organize meetings between the sponsor and the team members
- Make requests of the sponsors
- Field questions from the sponsor

The POC’s job is *not* to gather requirements, negotiate deadlines, or deal with the sponsor’s ISP. Of course that same person may be playing some other role as well, in which case gathering requirements or negotiating deadlines may be appropriate in that other role.
THE (SUGGESTED) AGENDA

• Prepare an agenda before the meeting – while the kick-off meeting is light and social, it is also important to get whatever business you need to transact covered – write it down, or you’ll forget!

• Make one person a note taker so you have a reliable record of what went on at the meeting. When you're done, the POC should e-mail the sponsor and summarize the points that were discussed to confirm that the sponsor is in agreement.

• You don’t want a sponsor wondering when they're going to hear from you next or what the next step is
FOLLOW ON MEETINGS

• Trying to coordinate eight schedules to meet with the sponsor will be tough.

• After the initial kick off meeting, limit meetings with the sponsor to only two or three team members at a time – only those who need to be involved in the meeting.

• Don’t expect these meetings to necessarily be on Monday/Wednesday evenings

• The POC should, in general, organize these meetings – but they don’t have to attend

• Always have at least two team members attend a meeting – have an agenda and take notes
THINGS TO DO RIGHT AWAY!

• Organize
• Schedule Kick-Off Meeting
• Achieve Group Agreement on Process
WHILE WE’RE ON THE SUBJECT OF MEETINGS ... 

- Survey of 443 Software Engineers by InfoWorld in 2013
- **Time at work – 42 hours**
  - Design and coding – 19 hours
  - Collaboration – 7 hours
  - Meetings – 6 hours
  - Waiting for tests and builds to complete, or fiddling with their environment – 10 hours
HOW DO WE MAKE THESE MEETINGS PRODUCTIVE?

• Arrange logistics in advance
• Set Goals for the Meeting
• Prepare a Prioritized Agenda
  • Topics for discussion and time allocated
  • Responsibility for topic
• Distribute the agenda to all participants in advance
  • Gives participants a chance to prepare
• Control time - a meeting shouldn't last more than an hour
• Make decision about technology
• Bin/Parking Lot Process
• Stand-up meeting?
• Let someone know you'll be late or absent
ENDING THE MEETING

- Capture and Review Decisions
- Review action items - with owners and due dates
- Follow up with summary to participants - decisions made, action items, etc.
- Plan next meeting - everyone needs to use a calendar and have it available