Tools for collaboration in IT projects during the studies

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Abstract

There are numerous apps and frameworks to support the post covid collaborative work. Yet the key to unlocking effective, remote project management lies in developing new habits to make the most of the tools at our disposal. These habits should be developed and shaped by the education and provided during the study.

Being an university student often connects with collaborating with various people on multiple projects, which includes working with different teams on several initiatives at once. Students usually have different backgrounds, habits and work experience - on the one hand having to work with versatile people is very advantageous in early career. On the other hand, due to frequent changes in projects and teams, not knowing any systems for managing projects can lead to frustration and lack of engagement among students.

Knowing the tools itself seems to be helpful to support the decision of solving the real issue, which is the nature of a project that determines PM software choices. Kanban based apps (Trello, Microsoft Planner) are good for a fast start and suitable in handling most of the workloads. If a project involves code development the 'Jira family' (MS DevOps, Asana) comes into play. Practitioners point out, that Jira, although relatively hard to learn, has integration with many applications, offers wide customizations, and reporting options. They appreciate its tight integration with Confluence, a sister product from Atlassian (Confluence is an internal wiki and documentation software) where it is easy to create links between Jira issues and Confluence pages, and links to Jira issues automatically show up-to-date status of the linked issues. This is especially useful when preparing a quarterly planning documents with links to "epic" Jira issues that group multiple smaller tasks together. For less agile projects, where keeping close to the plan is still imperative (like a construction site) MS Project does the job well, as practitioners point out.

While it's important to remember that the project software choice doesn't contribute to the success if it is not utilized in the right way, it seems that teachers should show the application and benefits of using such a software in university classes and assignments. Pointing out the advantages and habits related to project management and knowledge in PM tools may cause students to eagerly cooperate in various projects and classes, mixing them in project groups, what could bring significant results without causing frustration and a lower level of engagement.

We are planning to include professionals to the process of choosing project management tools such as Jira or Trello in the study curriculum and to conduct the market penetration of such systems. Task management software and habits are so widely adopted by companies that there is a high chance that after or during studies, people need to use them, and this research shall help teachers, academics and students to find out and understand how to choose and use various tools and how it influences collaboration in various IT projects.