

Not all projects go completely to plan, meaning there will always be project risk. Can you describe a situation where you or a team you worked with had to deal with an uncertain event or condition? How did you/your team manage? Is there a process for identifying and mitigating the potential risk?

Risk Management is a part of any project you do. A lot of risk management can be anticipated at the beginning of a project, or a lot of risk can be managed or at least contained at the beginning of the project by not over promising. It's important that clients get a very clear understanding of what you can't do, in addition to what you can. And I found that many times over, that clients have ideas of what a product will be, and what it will look like, but they can't express it clearly. But then at the end, it's possible, they might be disappointed. Because whatever you do won't match up with whatever their ambiguous idea would have been or whatever their clear idea was, but it was just so amorphous, that you didn't reach it. So I think that one of the things that you do is try to anticipate that kind of thing right at the very front end, and then communicate that clearly with the client. So many things just come down to communication, clear communication. Going back to them and saying, "We're running into a problem." If you see slippage in a budget, let's say, and you'll see that starting to happen. And it's not going to get better, you can manage the risk by getting to the client right away with it, and alerting them to the problem. Letting them know you have an issue and you need to solve it together. Most clients are very good at that. Most clients are very good at working with you through a problem, even if there are financial ramifications. But as far as risk, so often, there's just risk at almost every point of everything we do. And I think being alert to it, watching for things, looking for speed bumps, looking for fractures, looking for cracks in the foundation everywhere you possibly can, and then try and avoid them. Some things you just can't avoid. I'll give you an example of one. I give a lot of examples of things where I've made mistakes, I've learned way more from my mistakes than my successes with instructional design. But here was a risk I didn't even know I had. But when I was working with a Catholic school division on a technology plan moving forward, and it was for a division that was rural, largely rural. And so they had particular challenges that they were trying to meet with things. And one of the challenges that they had was finding strong technical support personnel. So I wandered into this and we were doing the whole workup and evaluation and attack evaluation and all of that. And we made and delivered a big report. And I sat down with superintendents and went through the report that was delivered ahead of time. And one Superintendent was giving me the eye, the stink eye through the whole thing. And I thought "I'm in trouble here. And I don't even know what I did." And it turned out that in one of our recommendations to them, I had recommended because they couldn't find technical personnel conventionally, that they should hire outside the faith. And that was built into the division, was to hire inside the faith. I didn't know it. And I walked flat into that. I don't know how I would have managed that risk. I think sometimes you just stick your neck out and apologize later if you didn't anticipate everything that could have happened. That's what I did there.