Memo

Date: November 20, 2023
To: USF English Department
From: The Fantastic Four
Subject: Collaborative Software Recommendation Report

Overview:

We are writing to bring to your attention the urgent need to implement collaborative software within the English Department at the University of South Florida. As we endeavor to enhance efficiency, communication, and productivity within our department, adopting such tools has become increasingly essential in the modern academic landscape.

Background:

The English Department is responsible for diverse tasks, ranging from curriculum development to collaborative research projects. However, our current mode of communication and document sharing primarily relies on traditional email and shared drives which can be cumbersome and time-consuming. As the demands for seamless communication and collaboration continue to grow, it has become imperative to transition to a more advanced and specialized collaborative software solution. Given the department's focus on writing, proofreading, and editing, reliable collaboration software is of utmost importance.

Benefits of Collaborative Software:

1. **Real-Time Collaboration:** Facilitates simultaneous work on documents, fostering efficiency in collaborative projects.
2. **Enhanced Communication:** Centralizes communication, reducing reliance on emails and promoting easy information exchange.
3. **Version Control:** Streamlines document versioning, ensuring accuracy and preventing conflicts.
4. **Accessibility:** Enables remote access to documents, promoting flexibility and contribution from any location.
5. **Task Management:** Includes features for task assignments, deadlines, and progress tracking, ensuring project alignment.

Our team recommends investing in a collaborative software solution tailored to the English Department's needs, such as Asana. The adoption of collaborative software will streamline processes and improve departmental efficiency.

Thank you for considering this recommendation. We look forward to discussing this matter further and exploring the best collaborative software solution for the English Department.

Improving the System of Team Collaboration and Management at The University of South Florida: A Recommendation Report

Prepared for: University of South Florida
               Department of Education

Prepared by: Diamond Johnson
              Gabe Glassman
              Talon Bottenfield
              Matilee Robinette
              Students in Technical Communications Fall '23

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Executive Summary

This report highlights the necessity of a recommended collaborative tool for the English Department at the University of South Florida (USF). To enhance productivity, accountability, and communication among its students, the department should consider implementing collaborative software that is easily accessible to students. Our recommendation for an effective task and project management tool is Asana. This platform is designed to streamline work processes by integrating multiple tools, such as Google Docs and Microsoft, onto a single platform. Asana's user-friendly interface enables teams to manage tasks seamlessly and efficiently, improving collaboration and productivity. The English Department students undertake a range of collaborative projects, both in person and remotely. Asana would be a valuable tool for dividing workloads, setting tasks, and meeting deadlines.

According to Forbes Advisor, in 2023, about 52% of remote workers feel more connected. This increase in connectivity is likely due to the widespread use of collaborative platforms such as Asana, which encourages communication throughout remote work. Students working on shared projects may only sometimes be able to meet in person, but connectivity can help them become more efficient and foster a sense of responsibility to their peers. Implementing Asana would benefit USF students, allowing up to 10 people to collaborate on a single project and enabling successful group collaboration. There are various payment plans available for this platform to suit different needs. The English Department must procure a dependable, collaborative tool to aid their students in achieving academic excellence and career success. Such a tool will facilitate the student's learning process and help them develop skills that will be

invaluable in their future endeavors. The department is encouraged to devote time and resources to identify a reliable and efficient tool that would serve the needs of their students.

Introduction

The Department of English at the University of South Florida Tampa campus comprises faculty, staff, and students who collaborate on various projects and assignments. A practical and reliable communication system is vital for the department to ensure seamless collaboration, especially given the significant amount of writing involved. Utilizing tools such as email, virtual meetings, document collaboration tools, and project management platforms can foster open communication and enhance the department's efficiency and productivity.

However, the students within the English Department currently need assistance with task coordination, project management, and communication due to the absence of a dedicated platform that houses these necessities. Efficient collaboration and communication are fundamental to the success of any academic institution. Currently, at USF, the most commonly used platforms for these purposes are Microsoft 365, Canvas, and Google Docs. These platforms offer a basic yet functional level of service: however, they do not provide a comprehensive solution for seamless collaboration. As a result, students must switch between multiple platforms to complete various tasks, leading to complexity and reduced productivity. These platforms are still helpful in writing documents and sending them. Nevertheless, their lack of integration makes it difficult to share files, edit documents in real-time, and track changes. Consequently, collaboration between individuals and teams can be challenging, leading to delays and errors in academic projects.

To address these challenges, USF requires a more interconnected system that enables enhanced collaboration and communication. While the problem mainly occurs during high collaboration times during the semester, it is imperative to resolve it soon.

To address the issue, the department urgently requires a centralized project management platform to streamline task management and improve student collaboration. Implementing such a platform would have numerous benefits, including increased academic engagement, improved project management, and effective communication channels. A dedicated project management platform allows students to manage their academic tasks more efficiently, track their progress, and collaborate seamlessly with their peers. A reliable project management platform would significantly enhance students' academic experience within USF.

Background and Context

Collaboration among colleges is of utmost importance for several reasons. It fosters diversity of ideas, promotes the development of critical skills like communication and teamwork, and prepares students for the demands of the workplace. Collaborative projects help integrate knowledge from various disciplines, while exposure to diverse perspectives enhances cultural competence. Pooled resources improve efficiency and productivity, and networking opportunities arise within and outside the institution. Collaboration prevents academic isolation, prepares students for research and innovation, and enhances problem-solving skills, thereby contributing to a well-rounded education.

According to Apollo Technical, ineffective communication accounts for 70% of corporate errors. Excelling in communication is crucial for success. Collaboration is equally vital. Our

team conducted a survey to better understand how often they collaborate with others and their priorities for efficient collaborative software. As illustrated 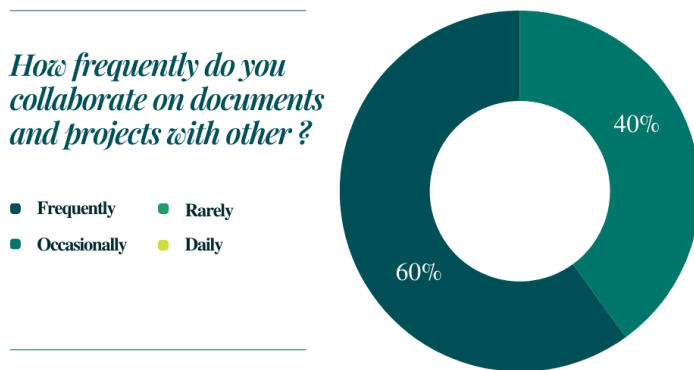in Figure 1 from the "Student Collaborative Software Survey," 60% of students reported frequent collaboration on documents, while 40% mentioned occasional collaboration. This data underscores the significance of reliable communication and collaboration software for students. With new technologies, team members can connect through various means more easily. Consequently, teams feel more connected, as 52% of remote workers and 34% of On-Site Workers attest, according to Forbes Advisor. Although the majority of remote workers feel more connected, it is worth noting that a third of them feel disconnected. The data shows that 45% of workers, including in-person, hybrid, and remote, all feel more connected in 2023.

How frequently do you collaborate on documents and projects with other?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Daily

40%

60%

Figure 1. Survey answers from our group's "Student Collaborative Software Survey". November 2023

Decision Criteria

Decision criteria are the predefined standards used to assess the viability of proposed solutions or projects within a recommendation report. They enable stakeholders to evaluate factors such as cost and customer experience that facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the proposed solutions. By defining decision criteria, a recommendation report ensures that all

relevant aspects are considered, helping decision-makers make informed choices that align with the solution's goal.

Cost

Cost is a kind of financial measurement representing the amount of money needed for projects, services, materials, and other economic endeavors. For instance, it is an essential tool for most companies because it directly correlates with budgeting and decision-making. Keeping this in mind, cost provides valuable insight for our report as it evaluates a financial aspect across all areas. However, Asana has no cost, including within the option we are recommending.

Customer Experience

Customer experience is a decision criteria solely based on what an individual experiences. This criteria is very important because it keeps the customers consistently engaged, or in other words, it's what keeps the customers coming back. Equally, it can cause customers to stray if they have a bad experience. If the students from USF do not have a good experience or relationship with the collaborative software Asana, it will discourage them from using the extremely reliable platform for their collaborating needs.

The Solution

Asana is a work management platform that provides a solution to the needs of the English department for students. Forbes Advisor ranked the platform with a 4.2 star ranking, mentioning it is a "powerful project management tool" (Katherine Haan). The platform is designed to help organize and manage tasks, making it an essential tool for effective collaboration. There are

many other collaborative tools available, such as Google Docs and Microsoft. However, as shown in Figure 2, Asana stands out because of its ability to integrate multiple tools, including Google Docs and Microsoft, which are widely used. Asana provides a project task management feature as a one-stop shop for all collaboration needs. The platform allows groups to divide
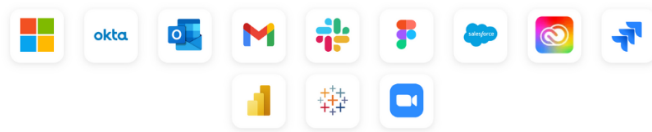
Figure 2. Screenshot from "Asana" regarding apps that can be integrated. December 2023

tasks easily among members, making it easy for teams of up to 10 people to collaborate. According to Asana, over one hundred thousand organizations worldwide use the platform, which is a testament to its effectiveness.

The platform offers its users a range of three plans, with the free payment plan being the most suitable for students. Since it is free, there is no cost for the English Department to be concerned about unless there are more than 10 students per team. Then they would have to consider other payment plans the platform offers, which is $11 for the "Starter" and $25 for the "Advanced." The free plan provides unlimited tasks, projects, messages, and activity logs.

Each file uploaded to the platform is granted access to 100MB of storage and comes equipped with Assignee and Due Date Views. Additionally, Asana offers List, Board, and

Calendar views for projects. The plan included basic search filters, status updates, and an option for time tracking with integrations.

Asana provides seamless integration with over 100 free applications, making it easy for students to work with their favorite tools. With its functionality, ease of use, and extensive integration capabilities, Asana is an excellent tool for managing tasks and collaborating effectively. As shown in Figure 3, students mentioned they find "Ease of use" to be the most widely desired aspect within the collaborative software from the "Student Collaborative Software Survey." The students also mention simplicity, document sharing, having a decent number of team members, and real-time editing. These factors are critical to the students at USF. Asana provides a suite of features that enable seamless collaboration in project management. Its intuitive interface, streamlined processes, and document-sharing capabilities make it an effective tool for team collaboration. Asana's scalable design accommodates teams of any size, while real-time editing ensures everyone is continuously updated with the latest developments. The platform's accessibility and flexibility are reflected in its design principles, emphasizing the importance of integration with existing workflows and adaptability to different collaborative scenarios. Asana facilitates efficiency and dynamic collaboration among team members by prioritizing user adoption and reducing the

What do you look for in a Collaborative Software?

- ✓ Ease of Use
- ✓ Easy file sharing
- ✓ Real-Time editing
- ✓ Simplicity
- ✓ How many people in the group use it

Figure 3. Survey answers from the "Student Collaborative Software Survey" conducted by our group. November 2023

learning curve. Productivity is essential for students, especially when completing team projects. According to TeamStage, the average worker is productive for less than three hours during an eight-hour shift. However, Asana can help increase productivity by tracking completed tasks and allowing group leaders to monitor progress easily. Moreover, since Asana is an online platform, it caters to in-person and remote work styles. According to GoRemotely, more than two-thirds of employers have seen increased productivity among remote workers. Furthermore, 83% of workers believe they can be productive without working for an office. With Asana, students can work from anywhere and stay on track.

Final Recommendation

Following an assessment of the current requirement of the English Department at the University of South Florida, it is recommended that Asana is implemented as the preferred collaborative platform. Based on the survey from the students, Asana best suits all of the needs of the students (Figure 3). Adopting Asana would streamline communication, promote accountability, and enhance department productivity. For the English Department, the ability to delegate tasks and minimize communication-based errors is a crucial aspect of success.

The English Department offers various in-person and online courses. Furthermore, for students collaborating on a project, it is not always feasible to convene in person. Connectivity can expedite tasks and foster a sense of responsibility towards group members. Large portions of the USF community do collaborative work; therefore, there is a dire need for a collaborative program that meets the needs of USF students.

Moreover, with numerous organizations utilizing this tool, Asana is recognized as an effective solution for an extensive range of tasks. One of the most significant benefits for

students would be the increased productivity that comes with Asana. Instead of spending time planning, students can dedicate more time to their assignments. This platform can also help students feel connected during their work, even when they are not physically present together.

The widespread use of Asana and its overwhelmingly positive reviews are a testament to its usability in collaborative projects. The capacity to accommodate up to ten members working on an individual project will enable practical group work for classes and personal endeavors. As Figure 3 shows, user-friendliness and uncomplicated file sharing were the most significant concerns for students working with collaborative software. Asana is user-friendly, and free training videos are available to simplify the learning process.

Our team has had the privilege of utilizing Asana in the past, and we have experienced significant advantages from its implementation. Asana's comprehensive platform has enabled us to manage deadlines, assignments, and projects more effectively. It has proven to be an exceptional collaboration tool and software that has greatly assisted us as college students within the English department. With Asana, we were able to streamline our workflow and keep track of all our tasks in one convenient location. We were able to use other tools that we integrated from Asana. The platform's user-friendly interface made it effortless for us to assign tasks, set deadlines, and communicate with one another. Overall, we completed our projects on time and with greater efficiency, and we highly recommend it to anyone seeking a dependable project management platform.

Call to Action

Promoting academic excellence among students at USF should be a top priority for the English Department. Students must be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to collaborate effectively with others and solve complex problems. In order to maximize the benefits, it is imperative to implement a robust, user-friendly, and effective collaborative software that promotes teamwork and knowledge sharing among students. As a work management platform, Asana can help take USF's educational experience to new heights. With its proven track record and numerous success stories, Asana can help students work together more efficiently, share ideas and insights, and achieve their goals faster and more effectively. By integrating Asana into its educational ecosystem, USF can help students develop critical skills such as project management, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

In light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to adopt innovative and technology-enabled solutions that can help students overcome the limitations of online learning and adapt to the new normal. With its intuitive interface, powerful features, and user-friendly design, Asana is an ideal tool for students and faculty members who need to collaborate on projects, assignments, and research papers.

Now is the appropriate time to adopt Asana as a core tool for collaboration and teamwork at USF, as it can yield numerous student benefits. By leveraging the power of technology and innovation, USF can help its students achieve academic excellence, develop essential skills, and prepare for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

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