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Best Practices

WE'VE LEARNED WHAT IT TAKES

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This year marks my 21st year with Clientek. In that time, I've had the opportunity to work on thousands of projects and come to learn what it takes to be successful. Over the past year, myself and the other leaders of Clientek have shared some of those lessons in our weekly articles and monthly newsletters. In those we have summarized numerous tactical and strategic lessons that we hope will benefit you, our readers.

Today, I wanted to step back and highlight the top 4 things that I believe summarize how to "get it done" on any project or initiative. The interesting thing, they're all mindsets.

1. Focus everything on your objective(s). There are a lot of ways to do this, but whichever approach you choose must be clear and understood. In the Army we had the "commander's intent". The idea was that if everything goes to hell, just complete the commander's intent. You can use defined measures, vision statements, or smoke signals for all I care; but make sure people know what success means.

2. Embrace learning. For years, the software industry has villainized learning by calling it names like "scope creep" and putting processes in place to penalize "change requests". These concepts were holdovers of other engineering practices. Often, people use illustrations such as "I can't build a house without knowing if the foundation was laid properly". That may be true, but we are not building houses, we are building software. Software results in interactions with human beings, interactions with human beings means a constant state of change, it requires change. The idea that learning is bad has cost our industry billions in wasted dollars and hours.

3. Be transparent. Our transparency often spooks our customers at first. They are so used to having people telling them to ignore the man behind the curtains, it can scare them just to see us work. Being transparent means always having a plan that indicates when we will be done. Transparency means that when we learn something new, we communicate its impact, both good

or bad. Only with transparency can we become partners with our customers and enable them to make the best decision possible. We give our clients the ability to achieve their objectives.

- 4. Get it to market ASAP!** In how many projects have you delivered a feature, only to find out the business never used it because the need for it changed or went away? Too often business partners ask for too much (having been conditioned for years by our once-a-year releases) and don't know how to ask for something incremental. Even if they do, too often the development teams go into "if I build it, a requirement will come". The ability to define and change that mentality can be incredibly difficult. Focus energies on how to do this and try get your smallest changes out the door as soon as you can, always!

For Clientek, these four concepts are at the heart of our delivery process. They are not easy; they take discipline, and above all else, they require an undying commitment to the success of the project. These four concepts, regardless of your technology or process, will lead you to success every time.

If you are not getting this level of commitment and dedication to your success from your current partner(s), I promise you will get it from us.



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