

How would you describe and assess a project's quality? Is there specific criteria for all projects, or will that change from project to project?

When we try to judge the quality of a product, we need to take into consideration the expectations of the client and what we were contracted to do to begin with. Did we meet the contractual obligations? That's the number one level of judging quality? In my book, I always want to go back to that contract. What did we agree to do? Did we deliver? And if we didn't deliver the whole thing, what did we deliver? So we can judge where we are on that continuum? But how good was it? I have an agreement with my students that I go into. And actually I've used this even in corporate settings, with teams, where I say, if you're on this team, I need your specific buy in right from the beginning, that you'll do anything you can to bring this thing home. We can't leave the project dangling. And I want three things. I have mentioned this previously, I want this thing on time, on budget and beyond expectations. I want to take whatever we agreed to do. And whatever we deliver, I want it to be incrementally better than what we agreed to do. That's where reputation begins. That's where client expectations are, you go beyond expectations, and it's where you can get repeat business. If you're doing this as a private contractor or working for a company, you're going to get repeat business if you actually go beyond what people expected. You can't always do it. Sometimes you can't even meet those basic expectations. But judging those, what do you look like? What do you look for? I look for user experience an awful lot. I think that we use user experience a lot as we're developing things. I think it's also the bellwether notion of whether something was successful, do people actually go back to it and use it? Is it being employed the way you expected it to be? I'm going to go back to that example that I used of the training that we did, for the charge gross report and the operating statement for grocery stores. We ended up doing basic computer based instruction for that. Because we had a particular unfortunate disagreement with the client. We actually wanted to change their reporting forms and they didn't want that to happen. They wanted all of the managers to just go through the training and learn how to read the report. We thought the reports weren't very good, or very clear, and there was an easier way because we just learned how to do them. We kind of thought we were kind of full of ourselves about it. And we thought, well, we've got some answers that we can make this a lot easier for you. You don't need training, you need new reports. Well, they disagreed with this. We were hired by the accounting department and actually the vice president of finance for this organization, and who took great exception to that. And so we developed the training, which frankly, I thought was kind of boring training, it was really turn page training about how to do this stuff. It was what they expected. It was what they requested. It was what we were contracted to do, we delivered, we included some graphics that they didn't ask for, and some things like that. So we tried to get beyond expectations. But in the end, frankly, I wasn't satisfied with what we delivered. I really thought it was kind of boring, needlessly boring instruction. The client was happy with it. But what they did was they rolled out new laptops to all of the store managers, and said, "When you're on taking a break, or whenever you have some downtime in your store, we want you to go back into your manager's office. And we want you to sit down and go through this training from beginning to end." We didn't have tracking built into the software, about how far each individual went. If we really wanted to know whether or not it was successful, we probably should have. But we have very high suspicions that those laptops got used more for playing solitaire, than going through the instruction we created. So we probably should have, if we were looking at it from a corporate perspective, put tracking

software on there to make sure that the training was happening. And of course you can do those kinds of things. We weren't contracted to do that. We didn't add that in. I would love to know if anybody ever actually, it's kind of, it's heartbreaking in a way. Did people ever use this product that we spent a lot of time putting together and a lot of expense for the client?