

Canadian student Formula team is on its way to win the race with Wrike's help



Interview with Jean-Philippe Landry, project manager at EPM's Formula SAE team

Jean-Philippe, tell us a little about your organization and your project. What was your primary need when you decided to use Wrike?

Team:

Formula SAE team at Ecole Polytechnique de Montreal, one of the three biggest engineering schools in Canada.

Challenge:

To organize the car-building process and to establish real-time visibility into every operation of a distributed team of 20 students

Solution:

A clear, hierarchical structure of tasks and sub-projects helped introduce absolute transparency into the teams' actions. A timeline view lets each student see the updated, visualized project progress plans, so that each team member stays in the loop and can move the project forward.

Result:

A successful car presentation at the Formula SAE competition at Michigan International Speedway, with 120 other teams from 15 countries.

I'm a project manager of the Ecole Polytechnique de Montreal (EPM) Formula SAE team. EPM is one of Canada's leading engineering schools. Every year we participate in The Formula SAE®. This is a competition is for SAE (Society of Automotive Engineers) student members to conceive, design, fabricate and compete with small, formula-style racing cars. We compete with about 120 other student teams from all over the world. While getting ready for the race, we feel the unique, hands-on taste of the modern engineering work environment. We have to deal with team organization challenges, presentation issues and limited budgets, and we strongly believe this experience will help us in the future. We have one year to build our car, and it is vitally important for our team effort to be well-coordinated during this period. This would be hard to achieve without a flexible, online collaborative system. Looking for project management software we evaluated many options. Our primary objective was to be able to get complete insight into the project progress, anytime and anywhere. The introduction of Wrike turned out to be a huge benefit for our team.

Why did you choose Wrike over other project management software?

We tried MS Project, Excel and some other Web-based systems. None of these applications was able to provide us with real-time visibility into our team operations. Wrike allowed the whole team to harmoniously collaborate, while being separated by time and distance. Wrike has two unique features – Flexible Structures and Dynamic Timeline – that let everybody on the team get a clear vision of the project status.

What are the major benefits Wrike has provided to the organization of your project?

Building a formula car implies designing and manufacturing lots of small parts. We need to design each part, verify it, manufacture it, and install it in the car after that. It's easier for us to split the workload into major subsystems of the car, for example, power train, chassis, electronics, suspension, etc. These subsystems are in their turn divided into smaller sub-assemblies. If we take power train as an example, the sub-assemblies are engine, intake, exhaust, muffler, differential, etc. It means we have to deal with more than 20 sub-projects, each of which includes 10 or more smaller sub-projects. Only with Wrike's Flexible Structures we were able to organize work on all those numerous sub-projects properly. Now our team is divided into several smaller groups, each of which is assigned to their own sub-project and share some of the tasks related to another group's workload. This structure is



Customer Success Story

complicated, but Wrike made it simple and absolutely transparent for us. We build hierarchies for our systems and sub-systems in Wrike and get a clear illustration of what every team member is working on with a timeline.

Besides that, what changed in your workflow process after you decided to adopt Wrike?

Before starting to collaborate in Wrike, we used to print an MS Project Gantt chart and post it on the wall in our team room. Every time we changed something in our project plans, we had to reprint the timeline and let everybody know about the updates. Of course it was never done on time, and some members of the team were unaware of what the latest project progress updates were. Wrike's Dynamic Timeline solved this problem. Now every team member is always aware of the latest changes in the project and can update his part of the workload at any time. We love Wrike for this! Our collaboration became much more efficient. This is proved by the successful presentation of our racing car at the Formula SAE competition in Michigan. Now we are preparing for the Formula SAE West event at California Speedway. This is a big one for us. We're planning to make it to the top-ten, and I'm sure Wrike will help us to get ready for the competition on time.