

How we work

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2012-01-30

We have been in business for quite a few years, and we have found out several things that work and other that don't in our activities. We have had our share of successes and failures, as any other business; and we hope to have learnt something along the way.

This post will outline the recipes that we have applied to obtain the best results in the collaboration with our clients.



Principles

What are the principles that guide our work?

- To begin with, we do not work **for** our customers; we work **with** them. This means that we are both collaborating in our projects, in equal terms, with as many expectations as our clients have.
- Creating software is hard. If you “have a friend that can make your application for 100 dollars in 2 days”, don't call us.
- If you are a “creative agency”, and “your first class client” wants an application, and you try to push our rates down, “for the sake of our future collaboration”, don't bother calling us. We're not interested.
- Similarly, if you are an agency and you are going to shield us and proxy (or “manage”) all communications between us and the final customer, we are not interested. We only work in projects where we have full access to the customer. We are not interested in other kinds of collaboration.

- We do not outsource projects¹. Period.
- We do as much as we can to reduce our carbon footprint². And you should, too.
- We do not sign NDAs. Really. Don't insist.

How we work

akosma software has a well defined workflow to help its clients bring their ideas to life; if you are into buzzwords, you could say that we use a mix of iterative and sequential approaches:

- We ask our clients for a single point-of-contact person, or a “Product Owner” as some methodologies call it; this person will be our sole communication proxy with the organization. We ask our clients to always forward questions and remarks through this person at any times. Doing so helps us work more efficiently and faster.
- We ask our clients for a well defined Statement of Work. We believe that the final product can only be as good as the Statement of Work provided. This document must provide as many details as possible about the final project. This helps us keep our costs low, it reduces misunderstandings, and helps us deliver features faster.
- For ad-hoc development projects, we usually work in “fixed time / fixed price” mode. We will provide you a cost and a deadline for your project, and we'll stick to it (that's why the Statement of Work is so important!) We can also work in “time and materials” mode if you need it.
- We try to manage project risks³ from beginning to end. For that, we require your commitment, understanding and collaboration.
- We ask our clients to avoid email and phone as a communication and coordination medium. We use our project management site⁴ instead, which features forums with threaded conversations, bug tracking and wikis. This allows us to centralize all the information of the project, as well as the communication with the client, in a single repository, to avoid losing information in crowded email inboxes.
- We provide feedback about our work continuously. Our clients can check the advancement of the project at any time in our project management site without even having to contact us. Everything we do is logged in the screens of the “Activity” panel, at any given time. This helps us reduce interruptions, which are costly, and also helps us increase customer satisfaction, because the client can always know what's going on.
- We divide small projects (with a duration less than one month) in one-week long iterations, while longer or more complex projects are divided in two-weeks long iterations. At the end of each iteration, the client is able to test the application in their own devices and infrastructure, and we expect feedback from this. The clients' feedback is fundamental; without it, we will assume that everything is going according to plan and continue working in the next iteration.

¹<http://akosma.com/2011/08/05/why-do-not-we-outsource-projects-overseas/>

²<http://akosma.com/2009/12/15/reducing-the-carbon-footprint/>

³<http://akosma.com/2009/08/03/risk-management-in-iphone-projects/>

⁴<http://projects.akosma.com>

Expectations

From each client that we agree to work with, we have as many expectations as you have.

- We expect you to provide us with clear explanations of what you need. We mean it. In written form. With diagrams. Color. Details. Everything.
- We expect your feedback, quickly, because every week we are going to use this feedback to make your product better.
- We expect you to take care of your project as we do. In particular, do not mess with the source code of what we provide to you: not only this breaks the warranty (yes, we provide one), but even worse, it breaks our trust in our relationship.
- We expect that you pay our invoices in time. As simple as that.
- We expect you to have a smile in your face, just like we want to have one when we work with you. That's why we do what we do.

If you would like to work with us, then just contact us!⁵

⁵<http://akosma.com/contact/>