

# Wrike Helps Translate 18-year Project Management Experience into Business Management



## Interview with Cornelius Fichtner, PMP, Show Host at The Project Management PrepCast and The Project Management Podcast

*Cornelius, you are an experienced project manager, and now you are running your own business. Please tell us about your business endeavors and the team.*

I'm a trainer for the Project Management Professional (PMP) exam and I've been self-employed for 1.5 years now. I run a PMP exam training program that is fully portable. People who want to prepare for the PMP® exam the easy way download the video lessons and watch them on iPods, iPhones and computers, or listen to them on the car radio. I also host The Project Management Podcast and run a few other project management training items, but The PM PrepCast is the main focus of my team's daily work. My team comprised of full-time virtual assistants who work from around the world.

### **Business:**

Production of Multimedia Content for Project Managers.

### **Challenge:**

Organize work of a startup company.

### **Solution:**

Wrike became a unified collaboration, coordination and management platform for the virtual team.

### **Result:**

The manager saves 30 hours a month. The startup gets corporate maturity.

*What challenges did you have while organizing your team before using Wrike?*

Recently, my company snowballed from 1 to 5 employees within a month. We had no precedence, system, mechanism, or maturity for assigning and managing our various projects. Since my team is separated by time and distance, we collaborate via e-mail. I was sending e-mails back and forth and trying to keep a handle on who was doing what by running it through an Excel file. In the Excel sheet, I captured the very basic things: who is doing what by when. But I kept forgetting to add tasks to this Excel sheet. Things got lost, and I had to send e-mails, saying "Are you still working on this? Is this done? What's the status?" I was totally overwhelmed and did not have a system in place that could help me manage my new team properly.

**I'm a project manager with 18 years of experience, but I have never had my own company.** Managing a startup is very different from managing a project. A startup deals with many projects at a time. It operates in a more frequently changing environment than a typical project.

Besides the problem of managing things from e-mail, another issue also had nothing to do with the Excel sheet. None of us was on top of the communication flow. In a small team, where a person performs many roles, this is very important for each team member. I was wasting about 1 hour every day on managing my Excel sheet, trying to figure out who was working on what. And still I was staying in the dark about the projects' status.

*Did you try other tools before using Wrike?*

**I didn't even try to manage my business with the help of traditional tools, like MS Project.** They might be good for detailed planning, if you do that once and then just strictly follow that plan. If your project involves collaboration, discussions and frequent updates that should be instantly communicated to the team, these tools fail. That's why I knew that MS Project would not help me with my business. **I needed a management tool that would let my team be on top of things, foster communication and receive reminders. Wrike is just perfect for what we are doing.**

*Please tell us how you found Wrike and why it won over other project collaboration tools?*

I read an article about Wrike and instantly thought that this was a great idea to use e-mail to manage your project teams. I contacted Wrike's CEO, Andrew Filev, and did a short segment on my Project Management Podcast in which I introduced Wrike to my listeners. When I faced a bunch of problems that I described above, I thought back about that podcast. **I was using e-mail, and I didn't want to change my team's habits. Wrike allows everyone on the team to create and update tasks via e-mail without the need to login into its Web workspace, so Wrike was a natural choice.** I understood that there was no other tool out there that does what Wrike does through e-mail. I decided to go with Wrike and immediately jumped into this tool.

*How did Wrike help you overcome challenges with managing your business?*

Now I CC all e-mails with tasks to [wrike@wrike.com](mailto:wrike@wrike.com), so nothing is missed. Whenever a task is discussed or updated, I receive an instant e-mail notification. Wrike keeps me up-to-date on my projects. Whenever I need to see the big picture of my projects, I simply login to my Wrike workspace and see an overview on Wrike's Dynamic Gantt Chart. I can see the detailed view of individual employee's plans and progress, or get a general overview. **In the end, I would say that now Wrike saves me about 30 hours of work every month!**

*What's your favorite feature in Wrike?*

Smart e-mail integration, of course! It's about 75% of the time that I'm working through e-mail and only 25% that I'm working in the system itself.

*What is the major improvement Wrike brought to your business?*

**Besides saving me tons of time, Wrike has also allowed me to grow in corporate maturity.** I'm a project manager, as I mentioned, I've been doing it for 18 years, but I have never had my own company. If you give me a project, I can manage it. But now I have to lead a startup company, and I have to translate my experience into business words. It takes time to really learn how to use the benefits that a project management background gives you. Wrike now allows me successfully translate my experience and capitalize on that.

*What would you recommend to people who are currently looking for project management software?*

Your choices are endless. You could select one of the free and very good tools that are available today. Outside the public domain, you could also go with an online project management and collaboration tool (SAAS – "software as a service"), or you could host the software on your own servers. **But no matter what software you select, it is imperative that you select a tool that supports your business needs and the way your team likes to work and collaborate.** By implementing new PM software, you force your team to have a certain change in thinking. If you can ensure that there is no paradigm shift in the area of collaboration, you have a winner. **For us, that winner was Wrike.**