

LearntFirst.com: from micromanagement to getting things done



Interview with Scott Whigham – founder of LearntFirst.com

Scott, please tell us a little about LearntFirst.com. What was your primary need when you decided to use Wrike?

I founded LearntFirst.com as a way to provide IT people with affordable, on-demand training. Subscriptions are for project management and technical topics (like SQL Server, .NET programming, and SharePoint) and they generally cost around \$70 USD. We have over 2,000 training videos online and our subscribers can access the videos 365/24/7. Such low prices and the great variety of videos boost the company's growth. As the company grows at a fast pace, we just can't afford to waste time on routine and inefficient communications.

Business:

LearntFirst.com is an online IT training company, helping people to study topics like software, databases, server management and project management at affordable prices.

Challenge:

Establish a collaborative planning process so that it is possible to avoid micromanagement and make the business more productive

Solution:

Turned the email communications of a distributed team into well-organized and easily tracked business plans

Result:

Getting things done is quicker and easier thanks to streamlined planning and communications

That's why we needed a **time-saving system that will help us to manage the whole business**, not just video project-related tasks. When I was looking for such a system, I knew it should be able to somehow merge our email communications into our planning process. I needed email integration for two main reasons: First, we are heavy BlackBerry and iPhone users and we wanted to be able to quickly assign tasks via our phones. Second, we wanted a process that didn't inhibit our stream-of-consciousness. With BlackBerries and iPhones, you can't always depend on JavaScript support which is what many PM-related websites use extensively. We needed to use email to assign/update tasks so that we could just do what we needed to do, regardless of the technology.

Why did you choose Wrike?

We felt that our current system was not doing the job, the way we wanted it to do. We used Zoho Projects for over a year before moving to Wrike. Before that, we used Basecamp but found it too expensive for our small group of seven. I personally use John Wood's Priorganizer for personal to-do's, but it's not a collaboration tool and would not suit our team.

So you can tell that we decided to use Wrike after a pretty thorough search through the online task/project management tools. The features that really caught my eye were the Intelligent Email Engine and the fact that I can link directly to tasks and folders.

How has your business changed with the introduction of Wrike?

Now **we use Wrike to manage all aspects of our business**, including video editing, production, author timelines, CRM – whatever. Wrike naturally fits into our workflow. We generally have meetings in-house or by phone using pen and paper. During the meetings we usually discuss several projects and afterwards, we create the associated project folders and tasks in Wrike. Wrike provided us with an **excellent way to track our multiple short-term projects in one place**. As the head of the company I can trace my team's collaboration on each task and at the same time view my whole business.



Customer Success Story

What benefits and team improvements do you attribute to your business thanks to Wrike?

Wrike allows me to let go of the micromanagement so that I can focus on getting things done. We have great people – people who can do tough tasks without close supervision – but I personally needed a way to be able to view the whole group’s tasks, request status updates, and assign things quickly and easily. We are now much more productive than we were before as Wrike saves us a lot of time. For example, with Zoho Projects, everything took 4 or 5 clicks before I could get any useful information. All too often, I was multitasking and, by the 3rd or 4th click, I would forget why I went to the website in the first place! What I found was that it was often faster and easier to pick up the phone or fire off an email requesting a status update.

All this is so much simpler in Wrike. **I create a task via email with only one click, and that’s when I hit the “send” button.** What I love about Wrike is that it lets me create a task in a particular level of a plan. I just need to type the name of this folder in the subject field of my email message using square brackets. **A task status update request is also available in one click,** and what’s especially convenient is that I can do it directly from the task list. But the best thing is that **I can see a complete and clear picture of my team’s work on a Dynamic Gantt chart.** I love this feature.

Besides that, what are the features that you like most of all in Wrike?

Besides Email Engine and Dynamic Gantt chart I love various small things in Wrike, like how **I can drag and drop tasks among folders and on a timeline.** Really, as a multitasking founder of a supersonic growth startup, **I need a project management tool that doesn’t make my life harder - and what Wrike does best. It makes things** easy.

Do you plan to extend the use of the Wrike services?

I’m sure we will. We are planning to involve our whole team into doing things the Wrike way. Also, I’m first and foremost a techie so I’m sure we’ll integrate the email features with other systems that we use.