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Interview with Chuck Pearson, CEO of Projecturf

September 28th, 2009



Last week [I reviewed Projecturf](#). It's a relative newcomer to the project management tool-place, so I decided to talk to Chuck Pearson, CEO of [Projecturf](#). He's a man with big plans, and he's no fan of Basecamp or Microsoft Project...

Projecturf was first launched in March of 2008, but was in beta for a year prior to that. It started life as a product used internally by Projecturf's interactive agency, Rareview, who first developed it over 5 years ago. It got bigger, better and broke

away to stand on its own two feet. Chuck says it's, "a solution that will outperform other products like [Clarizen](#) by offering an innovative and intuitive way for users to collaborate and complete projects." Really? I had to ask him about that!

There are a lot of software products aimed at project managers. What makes Projecturf different?



We are the first project collaboration tool to offer unlimited storage on all paid plans with no cap on users, project managers, or features. Each Projecturf account offers complete customization, permission-based file sharing, and specific sections for designers, developers, freelancers, and agencies. These unique sections – designs, development, and Timecard – provide important functionality for a large portion of our customers. In addition, Projecturf has a 'tools' section with a Project Completion Report that gives the Project Manager a quick report on exactly where the project stands on a percent complete basis, the responsible party, and due dates.

We're also one of the only solutions offering a dynamic Gantt chart in a simplistic form, giving users the Gantt view without requiring any setup or customization on their part. The PM manages milestones and tasks and we create the Gantt chart for them.

We strive to help our customers get tasks completed, on their terms, not ours. So our development and features are based solely off direct customer input and suggestions. This is uncommon in our field of PPM solutions, unfortunately. Basecamp, for example, has many frustrated customers because they build the product the way they want to and have disregarded many user suggestions. We're the opposite. We don't want to tell our users how they should manage their projects and business, so we listen first and foremost to their suggestions. In many cases we've changed the application (and are currently building more features) based on user suggestions. We want to provide an effective solution for our customers. That means removing restrictions, incorporating user suggestions, making Projecturf as intuitive and elegant as possible, giving more customization options, and constantly adding more features.

Other products are available more cheaply. How do you justify your costs?

At first glance, Projecturf might appear more expensive, however we provide the ability to upload and store files without limiting storage space. This is uncommon in our industry. Projecturf is actually more affordable and aggressively priced. Our biggest competitor, Basecamp, offers comparable prices but falls short on features and functionality, and places storage limits on plans.

To illustrate the affordability of Projecturf – consider the fact that our product is used by small businesses, freelancers, design agencies, and development firms who often need to share larger files. If you acknowledge that a user using another PPM product other than Projecturf might be paying a monthly fee for the plan, plus additional fees for more storage space as they exceed the limits, and in some cases for "add-ons" – then our plans are substantially less expensive than what other PPM solutions offer.

From the buzz on the website it sounds as if users are trading up from Excel or email to Projecturf. Who is Projecturf aimed at?

Projecturf is used by and targeting Project Managers at small to medium-sized businesses and freelancers. One of our customers recently told us that they used to manage projects by email and local documents. This was a nightmare, as they explained, and conversations were lost and forgotten, approvals were missing, and arguments would happen in the later stages of a project because people would simply have forgotten what was said a few months prior. This is no longer the case with Projecturf. Conversations, milestones, tasks, designs, and much more are now time/date stamped and stored so there's no question on what transpired

months ago.

We also offer the ability for users to approve designs and documents directly within Projecturf. One user, in particular, is an interactive agency and they need client approval on many tasks when working on a project. Those approvals were via email in the past and often caused issues later on. Now approvals are done within Projecturf and recorded, eliminating disputes and issues that would arise before.

How does it integrate (if at all) with other project management tools like MS Project? I'm asking because I wonder if it will be easy for PM's to migrate from their existing tool set to Projecturf.

Our goal with Projecturf is to simplify project management for small to medium-sized businesses (SMBs) and freelancers. We believe that software like MS Project is extremely bloated, complex to use, and expensive for SMBs. While we do offer Gantt charts, task management, and certain functionalities that you also get with MS Project, we don't integrate with any Microsoft products. There are many businesses which don't use Microsoft products and we don't offer that type of product. We're interested in providing a more generalized import method where the user can get data into the system. We chose to serve the small-to-medium sized business not the Enterprise-level corporation – because in the post-recession world – it's small business that will be at the backbone of recovery and we feel SMBs are our niche.

How many users do you currently have?

We have approximately 5,000 users that we currently support and this number is increasing rapidly each month.

What's next for Projecturf?

Big plans lie ahead for Projecturf. We're not the type of company that is going to let the product sit. We're hiring additional developers as we speak and the next version is currently in the works. The next release is going to be massive. We've been working on it for several months and we've really tried to listen to our customers. The suggestions that we've gotten about how they work – and how they would prefer to work – have been discussed thoroughly and many of their feature requests and suggestions will be included in version 2.0 of Projecturf. It's a very busy, but exhilarating time for Projecturf and our customers. Our product has been very well received, and the feedback we've received has been so positive and constructive that it's allowed us to greatly expand our feature set and functionality. There's much more coming in version 2 that will surely solidify Projecturf as the top PM & Collaboration tool for SMBs.

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