
Impact of Working on a Real-World Based Case Study Project to Learn about Operating Systems and its Impact on One's Career

P. Klesius

Auburn University

I was responsible for the initial project leadership in development of a written case study for Chick-fil-A, Inc. Chick-fil-A, a quick-service restaurant, faced a critical decision for their next generation point of sales devices (cash registers) that were to be used throughout the entire organization. There were several issues that were considered by the information technology staff at Chick-fil-A; these issues have been captured in the case study that I helped develop with Dr. Chetan S. Sankar and the rest of the Laboratory for Innovative Technology and Engineering Education (LITEE) team.

My portion of the case study took over six months of diligent work and was submitted to Chick-fil-A's corporate headquarters for final approval and accuracy. Once the case study was approved, I had the pleasure of supervising the instruction of the material to several classes of undergraduate students. Furthermore, I was able to accept feedback on the written material, format for instruction, and the multimedia presentation from my peers.

The inspiration for working with the LITEE team occurred when I took Dr. Sankar's Management of Global Information Technologies class during the Spring of 1999. At the time, it was my first graduate-level course and I was not involved with the LITEE project. However, that particular course frequently made use of case studies that had been previously developed by the LITEE team under the leadership of Doctors Sankar and Raju. Although I was familiar with the format of case study instruction, I had not been exposed to a practical case study course of instruction. I found that case studies are very powerful for bringing real world issues into the classroom. Prior to that experience, I had not understood the effectiveness of case studies for enriching the learning experience. By working through case studies, I felt that I was

actually undertaking experiences that could only be gained through employment and practical experience.

After completion of the course under Dr. Sankar, I was invited to work with Dr. Raju and Dr. Sankar on the LITEE team. This was my first exposure to graduate-level research and writing. My skills were quickly developed by working with Dr. Sankar and Dr. Raju; however, I also give strong credit to way the LITEE team was developed and managed by these professors for honing my communication and leadership skills. Particularly, I was exposed to the proper protocols for escalating issues and seeking resolution of issues in a timely manner.

More than the research experience, I gained great exposure to working in cross-functional teams. Each member of the team had particular strengths and weaknesses; we tasked each other accordingly, often without any faculty supervision. There was a real commitment within the team to achieving all project goals to the best of our ability. When any one of us had achieved a level of success, we all shared the experience. Perhaps that aspect of the team didn't simulate true employment; I haven't belonged to another team that was more committed and focused since.

The project also exposed me to technologies that are often not offered within the Auburn University curriculum. The technologies in our two campus labs allow the engineers and management student members of the team to communicate seamlessly on projects from remote locations. We had hardware and software that were beyond the budget of the average student. I found that learning these technologies helped me better understand programming and business processes. Many of these skills were transferred to my professional skill set and are being used everyday. In particular, I learned the absolute need for QA processes that may

often be overlooked for academic projects.

The project allowed me to attend regional and national conferences that were often beyond the reach of my peers during my graduate studies. I discovered that the level of our work and past successes were taken seriously at a national level. Upon graduation I have not been able to attend a similar conference; however, I hope that I can return soon. These conferences are vital for transferring research and for learning new ideas.

I also learned more about how technology professionals in the information system industry behaved before seeking employment. Upon graduation, I was given a chance to work for a major software company in New York City as a software product consultant. After working for the company for one year, I launched my own consulting business in the Spring of 2001. I am now running my own data warehousing consulting business with clients in New York, Philadelphia, and Connecticut. In fact, my largest client has just launched a major initiative to overhaul their point of sales system. I am acting as a leading engineer of this process by providing the technical specifications for the device, reviewing the code that powers the point of sales engine, and designing the extraction routines that will transfer transactional data through to a central data warehouse. Once the data makes entry to the data warehouse, I will design the data model for reporting and build a web application for client access. I credit these successes and skills directly to the opportunities that were given to me through my experiences with the LITEE project. I often reflect on those experiences and the confidence that the project gave me with great satisfaction.

Finally, during my time with the LITEE team I felt that I was doing something of national value. I am confident that LITEE contributes not only to the

value of the students that it reaches, but that it also adds value to America by enriching and educating. The work that I did will be impacting students and industry for years. It is my ambition to continue contributing to Auburn University's LITEE program and similar programs that have the same vision and mission.

Patrick Klesius is working as a Senior Decision Support Analyst

for a large retailer in New York City. Previously, Patrick worked as a senior consultant for MicroStrategy software and as



an independent software contractor. Patrick holds a BA and MS degree in Management Information Systems from Auburn University, and recently retired from the US Marine Corps in November 2002. His hometown is Auburn, Alabama and he currently resides in New York City with his fiancée.