

Creative methodology

How we work

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Introduction

This document is a comprehensive statement of how Getfrank go about designing, developing and delivering interactive services that take the form of internet websites and extranets, intranets, games and learning resources.

Part one – **The basics** – provides a context for the methodology itself, explaining what you as a client can expect to get for your money

Part two – **What to expect from us** – explains some of the things that it is good for you to know in order for the project to run smoothly

Part three – **The way we work** – takes you through the six phases of our methodology step by step

Part four – **Quality management** – sets out our approach to maintaining the quality of our work

Part five – **Planning, scheduling and tracking** – explains the means by which we monitor the progress of a project

Part six – **The navigator** – is our attempt to answer some of the more common questions that arise at the start of a project

1 The basics

1.1 What you get for your money

Companies who provide interactive services – like light separated by a wet sky into a rainbow spectrum of colours – refract into hues of cost, talent, ambition, ability, and a dozen other characteristics besides, when you look closely.

At the lower end of the spectrum is the Garage Crew – one or two talented, trendy youngsters in a backroom doing blinding work between eating late breakfasts and going clubbing.

Like low-fat crisps, the Garage Crew offers an initially attractive option that ultimately proves unsatisfying.

At the other end of the spectrum is Full Service Agencies – huge multi-national organisations with thousands of staff and turnovers heading for the mega millions, who offer fully integrated e-business solutions.

The promise is everything, a bit like a 3G phone. Sometimes with a large Full Service Agency, you've just got to wonder what all the fuss is about – and *why* it costs so much.

1.2 Getfrank are slightly different

Slightly – because we're somewhere in the middle of the spectrum.

We're not trendy clubbers (well, not all of us are anyway). Neither are we a serious e-business solutions provider (well, except that we *are* of course).

With Getfrank, what you get is a high quality interactive service expertly tailored to your needs and budget, reflecting all of our prodigious understanding of interactive design, graphic design, new media technology and brand marketing issues.

1.3 Quality and service

With Getfrank, you get what you pay for – the most exceptional and cost-effective business solution that we know how to create.

A refreshing lack of cynicism, a complete absence of pretence, and an experience of interactive services and what they can do, that extends back to the earliest days of the Internet through some of its most landmark periods and events – that's Getfrank.

So what do you get for your money?

Not the cheapest option. Nor the most expensive e-business solution, but an experience that leaves you feeling satisfied as a minimum and usually, absolutely delighted.

2 What you can expect from us

Knowledgeable, honest advice

We know about interactive services and have either created or helped to create some of the most seminal events the internet in particular has ever seen. We know what we're talking about. And we're happy to provide the benefit of that experience to anyone who'd like to hear. We like interactivity, especially the web, and derive satisfaction from showing how it can make your life better.

Thought-provoking creativity

We're not pretentious, self-indulged, precious or over-hyped. We're just good at coming up with original and effective ideas when presented with business needs and problems.

Professional, experienced design

Interactive design is a specific skill, requiring an appreciation of colour and balance, an intuitive understanding of usability and brand communication, as well as a detailed knowledge of the intended audience.

Stable, reliable, cost-effective technical solutions

When it comes to web applications we are open source software developers – which means that we use and re-develop some of the very best web services software around, and that you don't have to pay for exorbitant software licences.

High quality project management

You can rest assured that your project will be managed professionally, so that when we say your project will cost a certain amount, and be delivered on a certain date, that's what we strive to achieve.

Regular, relevant communication

We use a range of communication channels ensure you have the most up to date information on your project easily to hand. You might prefer regular face-to-face meetings, weekly telephone updates or emails. We're happy to meet your needs. We'll always maintain an extranet for you to ensure that there's a central repository of project information available in a suitably secure environment.

2.1 What we need from you

In this section, we try and make it explicit just what it is that we expect from you during the course of a project – and why it's important to the project that you are able to meet these expectations.

What we require from you is as follows.

Time – devoted to reading our documentation

And we mean *really reading it*, so that you understand it fully and are totally happy with what it says. If it's too complex please let us know – we're always happy to improve our documents and make them more accessible.

Understanding – a clear appreciation of what sign-off means and why its so important

A sign-off is a formal, written acceptance by you that a project deliverable is of a good standard, and can form one of the building blocks of your project. We will primarily ask you to sign-off documents and designs – doing so signals that consensus has been reached: we're happy that we have addressed your needs, and you're happy that we have understood your requirements.

Trust – the invisible oil that lubricates all business relationships

If two parties trust each other to make good, rational decisions on the other's behalf, then very little can go wrong that was either unanticipated or unplanned. We work hard to ensure that you trust us to make good rational decisions.

Clarity – help us to help you by being specific

Waving your hands is great for keeping you cool or attracting the attention of passing taxis, but it's appalling when it comes to expressing requirements. So if you have a specific content need, creative idea, or technical requirement, please take the time to express it. We will always try to accommodate your wishes if possible within your budget. If it means taking a bit more time at the beginning of a project, it's always worth our while. Please don't be afraid to ask simple questions of us – we'll do the same, it saves a lot of time later down the line.

Dialogue – talk to us

Comprehension is not like beer or tea, to be poured out into a container, thereby filling it. Genuine understanding arises when two or more people find a common language that bridges their different experiences and aptitudes. This often takes time to develop and misunderstandings are common. But as long as a dialogue is left open, comprehension can leak through.

Openness – share your ideas with us

We are interactive experts – but we're not experts in your business. You are. You can help us to make your interactive services better by sharing your knowledge and experience with us.

2.2 Important things you should know

To help us deliver your interactive service on time, to budget and to the quality standard you have every right to expect, it is important that you read the following information carefully and complete the checklist following the guidelines overleaf.

If you have any questions please call us on 01273 201 111 or email hello@getfrank.com.

2.2.1 Checklist

Tick box when complete

Content – do you have a body of content for the project already written?

1

If you haven't, then now is the time to start creating it. We'll need all of the text content completed before we start Implementation

Imagery – do you have any imagery that you particularly want to use on the site?

2

If you do have imagery that you particularly want to use, please ensure that we're made aware of it and receive it before the project begins

Ideas – do you have any specific ideas that are not already documented?

3

If so, now's the time to let us know.

Sign-off – do you understand what sign-offs are and why they are important?

4

If you anticipate the need to involve colleagues or superiors in the approval process for the project, are you confident that they will make the time to get engaged and think about the project?

Budget – are you happy with what and when you are being asked to pay?

5

If you're not completely happy, please let us know.

Brand – do you have brand and/or design guidelines that we need to see?

6

We would appreciate a copy of these guidelines.

Politics – are there any potential political difficulties that you can foresee?

7

This is of course quite a sensitive issue, but do you anticipate any problems with getting the site approved by superiors or other colleagues?

Technical awareness – are you comfortable dealing with technical issues?

8

It is not in our best interests to blind you with science, but there are occasions when we must ensure that you understand what we are proposing. Is this potentially problematic?

Creative awareness – are you more comfortable with the creative side of things?

9

It is not in our best interests for us to unreasonably assert that we know "creatively" more than you but there are occasions when we will robustly defend creative and design decisions. Do you see this being potentially problematic?

2.3 More important things to consider

If you have any questions please call us on 01273 201 111 or email hello@getfrank.com.

Content – how to get it to us

We'll need all of the content you supply us in electronic format, e.g. Word, text or HTML files, as soon as the project starts. Ideally, the content should be delivered to us on CD and accompanied with instructions on how things are labelled, if necessary.

If you'd like any help with copywriting, please ask – we're also accomplished word-smiths as well as interactive experts!

Imagery – how to get it to us

Again, we need you to supply us with electronic versions of all artwork, either as EPS or PSD files, as high-quality JPEGs for photo-imagery or as TIFFs if rendered from print imagery. A CD is the best delivery medium, accompanied with a clear and documented labelling convention.

Sign-offs – why these are so important

If you're unsure about what a "sign-off" is, and why it's so important, please speak to us right away. We really need you to understand what this means.

Sign-offs are your chance to make sure everything is going to plan, and that you're happy with what's been delivered thus far. The aim of having sign-off points scattered throughout the project is thus to ensure consensus and to promote clarity. Getfrank use sign-off points as stable platforms on which we can build, so it is vital that consensus is genuine and clarity is absolute.

Brand – what to supply to us

We will need any branding, design or corporate style guides that you may have, as well (if necessary) guidelines on use of language or house-style, as well as electronic copies of any logo artwork and/or font(s) on CD

Technical awareness – what we mean

It is really important that there is clarity on the technical implications and consequences of our work. We would always strongly recommend that the project has the input of a technical person – if that isn't you – who is equipped to understand the issues, and willing and able to help, e.g. an IT Manager, Webmaster or CTO.

Creative awareness – what we don't mean

It is really important that there is consensus on the creative aspects of our work. If you don't feel confident in making judgement calls on issues of aesthetics or balance, we recommend that you enlist the help of a creative colleague who is prepared to engage with the project, e.g. perhaps a Communications Manager or CMO.

3 The way we work

Getfrank have learned (the hard way) that there are good ways of building a happy client a successful interactive service of which we can be proud – and we have learned that there are bad ways of throwing together dull, pointless productions.

And because we are motivated enough to care, we have sought to integrate these hard-learned lessons into what we call our "creative methodology".

The Good, the Bad and the Methodological

Our creative methodology is really nothing more complex than a collection of suggestions, forms, and procedures that we use to do our jobs, all following a timeline organised into a number of different stages, all with a specific purpose.

Figure 1 summarises what we mean by this methodology, and in the sections that follow we'll take you through these stages in more detail.

Figure 1: How we work

	Requirements	Design		Production		
	DISCOVERY	ORINATION	DEFINITION	IMPLEMENTATION	DELIVERY	ENHANCEMENT
Purpose of phase	To develop a deep understanding of the project, to generate personas, and to accurately identify the problem to be solved.	To explore graphical and conceptual solutions to the issues identified in Discovery, or as specified in client brief.	To clarify how the solution as generated in Origination will be implemented, including choices of technology, method and so on.	To create the solution based upon the various specification documents produced in Definition.	To ensure the completed solution is delivered on time, that it is marketed and tested properly, and that it is launched successfully.	To ensure that we learn from the project, that the client is happy and that the project passes into post-build maintenance.
Outcomes and deliverable	Requirements specification	Design concepts Brand exploration Creative specification Storyboards	Interactive design specification Functional specification Technical specification	Front-end & back-end code Graphic assets User guides & code documentation	Completed deliverable UAT plan Marketing plan	Project review Enhancement plan Maintenance proposal
Objective of deliverable	To help the client to be objective, to formalize the problem, and to establish consensus on the possible "solution space".	To explore solutions to an identified problem, and/or to originate ideas to a client brief.	To specify exactly what is going to be created during the implementation phase.	To realize the clients requirements and ambitions in working code.	To ensure a fully tested solution is available to its intended audience on time and in the appropriate fashion.	To capture the clients experience of the project, to learn where mistakes were made, and to improve the service in the future.
Methods used	Brainstorms & other meetings Workshops & interviews User modeling	Creative and technical brainstorms Graphical & conceptual development	Written reports In-person briefings	Programming Graphic design Project management Consensus	Feedback Gathering UAT	Review meeting Written reports
	Pre-production			Production	Post-production	

3.1 Discovery – what we'll do first

What we'll do first is develop an understanding of who you are, what you do, why you want an interactive service, who your audience is, and what you need and expect the resulting service to do.

3.1.1 The role of Discovery

The primary purpose of Discovery is to cultivate understanding, in both you and us, as to the goals and aspirations of the project. As such, Discovery is concerned with the following:

- **Business/organisation** – what are your overall objectives?
- **The project** – what are its specific aims and objectives?
- **In partnership with us** – what are your expectations?
- **The technology** – what tools are we proposing to work with?
- **The brand** – what does it represent? Are we extending it or reflecting it?

3.1.2 The deliverables from Discovery

There are really two deliverables from this phase of our methodology.

- **Understanding** – the development of a deep, thorough understanding of both you and the project is a valuable, priceless advance
- **Personas** – personas are “user archetypes” that are created to guide the design process
- **Requirements specification** – we write up the knowledge and insights we have gleaned during the phase in this document, which could potentially cut across technical, creative, strategic, branding, content and/or functional issues.

3.1.3 The importance of Discovery

The objective of the Discovery process, and of the deliverable at the end of it, is four-fold:

- To inculcate understanding in all project stakeholders
- To create useful, realistic personas
- To help you as the client be objective about what you are asking for
- To formalize the problem
- To establish consensus on the possible “solution space”

3.1.4 What we do during Discovery

The Discovery phase of the project proceeds by a series of meetings and brainstorming, as well as via ethnographic research conducted via focus-group interviews.

All of the information we glean during Discovery is then synthesized into a “Requirements Specification” document.

3.2 Origination – what we'll do second

What we'll do second is to apply ourselves creatively to solving the problem(s) identified by you and brought into focus during Discovery.

3.2.1 The role of Origination

Origination is an *ideas* phase, concerned with generating new stuff. The primary purpose of Origination is therefore to explore graphical and conceptual solutions to the problem identified either by you in your brief or by us in the Requirements Specification.

3.2.2 The deliverables from Origination

Principally origination has three kinds of deliverable:

- **Creative specification** – this is a written document detailing, as it might be, ideas for games, a brand identity, or a novel kind of technical solution
- **Design concepts** – these are graphic design concepts (usually mounted on board but also provided electronically via extranet) that are intended to illustrate key points of our thinking about your brief or requirement
- **Storyboards** – can be wireframe diagrams, or more illustration-rich diagrams, that demonstrate the flow-of-control of a Flash or Shockwave game, or scene-movement in a Director movie
- **Moodboards** – usually used for a branding exercise, these can be thought of as “pre-design” designs, intended to evoke emotional reactions and responses that can guide a later design process

3.2.3 The importance of Origination

The objective of the Origination process, and of the deliverables at the end of it, is two-fold:

- **Exploration** – of the possible “solution space” of an identified problem
- **Generation** – of ideas in response to your brief

3.2.4 What we do during Origination

Origination is a highly creative phase of a project lifecycle, and must be given time and resources if project stakeholders are at all interested in quality. It also requires frequent and open dialogue, within an environment where exchange and cross-fertilisation of ideas are encouraged and facilitated.

Given such an environment, Origination best proceeds via:

- **Creative (and technical) brainstorming**
- **Graphical exploration and development**
- **Conceptual development**

3.3 Definition – what we'll do third

What we'll do third is specify and clarify, in a variety of creative and technical written documents, exactly what we are going to produce for you.

3.3.1 The role of Definition

Definition can best be thought of as the “documentation” phase of a project, where we *describe* the nature of the work that has occurred during Origination, and *define* exactly the nature of the work that will take place during Implementation.

3.3.2 The deliverables from Definition

The deliverables from the Definition phase are all documents, and it is crucial that all project stakeholders read and understand this material before the project moves into implementation – or, if this is not possible (and for some clients, it isn't) are guided towards an understanding by a Getfrank presentation. The four key deliverables from Definition are as follows (not all projects will require all of these, of course):

- **Interactive design specification** – this document describes the “what” of the interactive service. It will usually contain a summary of the site's purpose and overall function, details of the navigation model and any technology implications thereof, a website or CDROM sitemap, browser specifications, wireframe diagrams of “template” pages, accessibility requirements, details on any important front-end technology choices, and examples – if possible – of designs produced during Origination. It may also include an identification of the target audience; details of any data capture facilities (e.g. feedback forms), explanations or justifications of palette/design choices, as well as other client-specific instructions or aspiration.
- **Functional specification** – this document describes the “how” of the interactive service. It will usually describe the operation and technical specifics of any server-side code controlling the dynamic display of data or other page elements, e.g. a CMS or other publishing system.
- **Technical specification** – this document describes the “technical architecture” of the interactive service. It will typically include prescriptions for the various code components that require building in order to deliver the functionality described in the above two documents. It will primarily serve as an instruction set for the developers building the various behaviours described in the Functional Specification.
- **Content specification** – this document details the words (and occasionally, the graphic elements) that will actually appear on the pages of the interactive service.

3.3.3 The importance of Definition

The Definition phase of a project is all about building a stable platform on which the project can build, as well as documenting the consensus that has been agreed up to that point. Given the varied nature of the deliverables from this phase of the methodology, there is no single objective of the deliverables at the end of it. However, we can say that the deliverables variously serve:

- To describe the nature of the work conducted during Origination
- To build a platform for the rest of the project
- To establish and document consensus amongst project stakeholders
- To describe what will be produced during Implementation

3.3.4 What we do during Definition

Definition works by project stakeholders sitting down and talking, and then writing. Then talking some more, and then writing some more. Followed by more writing and more talking. That's it really. Oh, and probably coffee too.

3.4 Implementation – what we'll do fourth

What we'll do fourth is generally what most people will think of as “making stuff”, i.e. we write programming code and create imagery.

3.4.1 The role of Implementation

Implementation is the most obvious of our methodological phases – its purpose is simply to create the solution the client has paid for, with construction based upon the solid foundations created during Definition and Origination phases.

3.4.2 The deliverables from Implementation

These will obviously vary project to project, but a project will usually require at least one or more of the following:

- **Front-end code** – this may include some or all of the following: HTML, DHTML and JavaScript, CSS (and variants), XML, Flash, Perl, PHP, VB script, Lingo, ASP, or any other required “client-side” script
- **Back-end code** – this may include Perl, Python, C, SQL, Java or any other required “server-side” scripting or code
- **Graphic assets** – these are typically GIF or JPEG rendering from PSD or EPS files, or SWF files or snippets, correctly sized and treated according to the original design
- **User Guides** – these are typically produced if the site has an accompanying CMS that requires administrator usage
- **Code documentation** – this should always be produced during code development by the developers involved

3.4.3 The importance of Implementation

Implementation is the most obvious part of our methodology- the part where we build stuff. More concretely, it's important because of the ultimate objective – to synthesise all of your expectations and aspirations with the agreed deliverables of Definition and Origination, within budget and timescales, to produce a working interactive service.

3.4.4 What we do during Implementation

The “real work” of implementation is produced by four inter-related activities, plus a nebulous fourth quality ...

The four activities are:

- **Programming** – websites are software, which means that to create a website, it is necessary to write programming code and formatting instructions
- **Testing** – we're good, but even the best code has bugs in it, and Implementation involves a good amount of on-going bug testing and browser-testing. If necessary, testing will also involve more complex user acceptance testing (UAT) where more detailed feedback from users is sought and integrated into the build.
- **Asset creation** – the agreed designs of Origination must now be sliced up and their individual components rendered out as images suitable for web publication
- **Project management** – this is the activity that binds the above two disparate activities into one focussed endeavour

And the nebulous other quality?

... consensus!

3.5 Delivery – what we'll do fifth

What we'll do fifth is ensure the completed interactive service gets transferred to its live environment correctly, that it goes through a rigorous period of acceptance testing before going live, that any tweaks to design or functionality are implemented prior to official launch, and that it is marketed appropriately.

3.5.1 The role of Delivery

The Delivery phase of a project is sometimes taken for granted, dismissed as unimportant, or misunderstood as "simply flicking a switch". It shouldn't be. Delivery is all about formally ensuring the interactive service that has been produced meets requirements and expectations – both yours, and those of potential users.

3.5.2 The deliverables from Delivery

The finished service is obviously the key thing we're talking about here:

- **Completed interactive service** – that is, a service that has been designed and built according to all relevant design specifications, that has been tested to confirm to stated platform and browser specifications as well as published functional specifications.

There are additional deliverables that need to be equally carefully considered however. The most important is:

- **UAT plan** – the User Acceptance Testing plan should be so designed so as to allow the site to be tested by users in a "semi-live" environment (e.g. on a private IP address) in order to generate feedback, bugs and Change Requests. This UAT data can then be fed into a rolling process of bug fixing and Change Request collation. The UAT process can be as simple or as complex as required. At the far end of the spectrum is a period of "strategic user advocacy", in which dedicated focus groups are recruited to assess the live service, responses analysed, recommendations drawn up, and then fed back into a revised Implementation phase.
- **Marketing plan** – if the service is to be a success, its intended audience needs to be made aware that it is there. Hence the need for a marketing plan (either online, or offline, or both)

3.5.3 The importance of Delivery

The importance of Delivery is to draw a line under the technical and creative development of Implementation, and re-focus attention on making the service available to its intended audience. That is, to ensure that a fully tested service is available to the intended audience on time, in the appropriate fashion, working correctly and to specification.

3.5.4 What we do during Delivery

The service itself is the cumulative result of all preceding phases of the methodology, but there are additional ways in which deliverables from this phase comes about. Most important is:

- **Feedback gathering** – this may be done electronically or manually. The objective is to gather test data that can be sorted and collated into categories of Bug, Non-Issue and Change Request, and dealt with accordingly.

3.6 Enhancement – what we'll do sixth

What we'll do sixth – after the service has been designed, built and delivered – is stand by the quality of our work and stick around, if you want us to, for technical support, strategic consultancy, online marketing advice and creative input, all bound under the terms of our formal Service Level Agreement (SLA).

3.6.1 The role of enhancement

Enhancement is Getfrank's "After Sales" service, our way of providing you with a warranty, of not leaving you in the lurch, and of standing by should you need to ask questions, request help, or indeed, plan further extensions or strategic developments.

3.6.2 The deliverables from Enhancement

There are really two deliverables of this phase of our methodology:

- **Peace of mind** – by accepting enhancement, you guarantee yourself peace of mind with regard to the hosting, maintenance and updating of your website, with the added advantage of knowing that we are always there on the end of the phone to answer questions and provide advice. Would you buy a car without a warranty? The same principle applies here – we want to stand by the quality of our work, if you give us the opportunity.
- **Service level agreement (SLA)** – this is the formal document that specifies the what, when, where and how of your warranty and maintenance agreement.

3.6.3 The importance of enhancement

Enhancement is – of course – optional. You don't have to sign-up for enhancement. But our experience teaches us that by far the best way to ensure your service stays up to date in design terms, to ensure it remains focused on the needs and requirements of its users, and that it retains its effectiveness in the face of a constantly changing business and information requirements,

3.6.4 What we do during enhancement

This very much depends upon the kind of project that we are enhancing, how much support you as the client believe you need, and the requirements of the project in general.

As a rule of thumb, we will provide technical and programming support for any CMS or other software product, HTML support for any minor refinements to layout or formatting, graphic design support for any on-going visual design changes, and strategic consultancy for any required extensions to functionality.

4 Quality management

Quality assurance and project tracking are really two sides of the same coin, namely, the cost-efficient delivery of a final product or service that meets (and hopefully exceeds) your expectations.

In our creative methodology, project tracking is concerned with timesheet data, accurate recording of project effort, and hence budgetary control, whereas quality assurance is more concerned with criteria (both subjective and objective) by which the effectiveness, suitability, functionality, appropriateness and “fit-to-requirements” of all project-related deliverables can be measured.

Let's consider both of these factors – quality and tracking – in more detail.

4.1 Ensuring quality

In our experience, ensuring that interactive service is effective, suitable, functional, appropriate and “fit-to-requirements” – i.e. that it is high quality – is about six inter-related things:

- **Trust**
- **Consensus**
- **Project management**
- **Checks and balances**
- **Documentation**
- **Criteria**

4.1.1 Trust

Trust is the invisible oil that lubricates all business relationships. If two parties trust each other to make good, rational decisions on the other parties behalf, then very little can go wrong that was either unanticipated or unplanned.

If you as the client trust the creative and technical judgement of Getfrank as the supplier, the quality of the deliverable is almost 100% guaranteed, because there is consensus, dialogue and willingness to compromise.

Where trust has broken down however, quality invariably suffers – often catastrophically.

Getfrank's view

The first step in ensuring that we deliver quality is, for us, to try and ensure that we build and maintain a good, honest relationship with our clients.

No trust, no quality.

4.1.2 Consensus

Ensuring the quality of a deliverable is a two-way street, involving responsibilities on both sides of the client-supplier relationship. Yet one of the simplest and easiest ways to ensure that everyone is happy is ... to ensure that everyone is happy!

Or in other, less tautological terms, quality can be best achieved by reaching consensus on a succession of interim deliverables along the way to the final delivery.

Our creative methodology and policy of “checks and balances” is aimed at delivering exactly these “opportunities for consensus”, and (borrowing a technical phrase) “hard-coding” them into what we do as a matter of course.

Getfrank’s view

As the supplier, we must obviously ensure that we deliver what we promised we would deliver, to a standard on which we would be prepared to stake our professional reputation. While for you as the client there is an obligation to provide feedback promptly when it is required and to respond honestly and objectively when appropriate.

No consensus, no quality.

4.1.3 Project management

The counterpart of the above – i.e. the reaching of consensus on agreed interim stages during production – is the efficient management of the project.

A clear project plan should be produced and agreed prior to any work being initiated. This plan should clearly enumerate the various project tasks to be performed, who is to perform them, how long they will take, when they will be delivered and how much they will cost.

A sequence of review and approval points must be agreed, and adhered to, such that all parties know and understand the implications of agreement: work should not proceed without all parties reaching consensus on what has been produced to that point.

In addition, a project should have a full-time project manager responsible for delivery – ideally, on both the client and the supplier side. Communication between these two individuals is obviously key – as is trust!

Getfrank’s view

Managing a project efficiently is a skill that straddles technical, creative and administrative functions. Done well, it empowers design and technical origination rather than (the common view) hindering some ill-defined “creative process”. Good project management rests squarely at the centre of everything we do.

No management of process, no quality.

4.1.4 Checks and balances

The process that Getfrank use in their production, our “creative methodology”, has a number of review and approval points built into the way it works, which appear throughout a project lifecycle. We will often insist that work does not progress further without all parties achieving consensus on what has been achieved to date. These can be both internal review and approval points, and external review and approval points

- **Internal review and approval** – the project plan should include specific named individuals from within the supplier organisation, who are responsible for ensuring the quality of the deliverable being produced at any given stage. Getfrank will generate internal documentation to this effect.
- **External review and approval** – the project plan should include specific named individuals from within the client organisation, who are responsible for agreeing that the deliverable meets with their expectations and is of a sufficiently high quality. Getfrank will insist upon the generation of verifiable evidence of such agreement.

Getfrank’s view

No deliverable should enter into the project lifecycle proper without being reviewed and approved by all relevant stakeholders.

No checks and balances, no quality.

4.1.5 Documentation

The provision of accurate, timely documentation is central to what we do. Our aim is to produce a written record of everything that is agreed, designed and built throughout the duration of the project lifecycle.

With good, verifiable documentation, all parties have a benchmark against which to judge the final deliverable.

Documents are, of course, always themselves the subject of a detailed QA process, as detailed in the Checks and balances section above, and are internally tracked via version numbers and digital signatures.

Getfrank's view

The production of good, clear documentation is central to our methodology, providing clarity, recording consensus and serving as a platform on any potential conflict-resolution can be built.

No documentation, no quality.

4.1.6 Criteria

For some, this is the first recourse when considering a QA system. For us, it represents the last.

If there is no trust, little consensus, poor project management, out of kilter checks and balances, and inadequate documentation, no amount of criteria-setting or benchmarking is going to ensure quality: all that it will do is point out the need for greater trust, consensus, balances, checks, project management and documentation!

That said, however, the five aspects of a QA process above all in corporate some notion of criteria, either objectively or subjectively. Our approach could therefore be said to employ incremental "micro-criteria".

Getfrank's view

Quality is not a simply achieved thing, or indeed, something that can be bolted on at the conclusion to a project. Ensuring quality must be a systemic activity, engineered in at the base of all activity.

4.2 Summary

For Getfrank, quality management is not a trendy add-on to, nor a passing nod in the direction of best practise or some vague aspiration.

On the contrary, our creative methodology has the management of quality engineered into the core of it, with nothing allowed to become canonical that has not been peer-reviewed and critiqued.

In this sense, quality management is not an add-on, but central to what we do. Ensuring quality must be a systemic activity, engineered in at the base of all activity.

5 Planning, scheduling and tracking

Crucial to the success of a project is good, clear lines of communication between stakeholders, decision makers and budget holders.

Getfrank make use of project-specific extranets and email communications – along with paper and physical mail – to ensure that all parties know what is going on at all times, as well as to communicate work-in-progress, approval forms, documentation, design concepts and other important project deliverables.

Use of extranets, in particular, ensures that all project communication is available online 24 hours per day. Planning and scheduling lie at the heart of a well-managed project, because a good plan lets all stakeholders know what needs to happen, and the schedule lets all stakeholders know when everything needs to happen.

5.1 Planning & scheduling

Getfrank use Microsoft Project software to plan, schedule and cost all projects using the methodological phases as outlined above.

Getfrank will create a plan and schedule for any and all projects prior to commencement – such a plan and schedule usually forms the basis of the contractual agreement between Getfrank and a client.

Thereafter, the electronic Project file will be owned by the Getfrank Project Manager, which will be the canonical source for all planning and scheduling queries and conflicts,

5.2 Project tracking

Getfrank use a proprietary project tracking system throughout the lifecycle of a project to record all time and effort that Getfrank staff devote to a project. Unless indicated otherwise, we will invoice on this basis of the information contained in this system based upon a payment schedule agreed with the client, and forming part of the contractual agreement.

6 The navigator

We've put together this document to help you understand the journey upon which you are embarked.

But hang on a minute – in what direction are you going? On what kind of surface are you walking? Carrying what? How far?

To help you on your journey we have provided you with your own Navigator, designed to provide you with answers to questions, pointers to explanations and tips on what to do when you encounter unfamiliar terms or issues.

6.1 Find your own way around

We cite these questions as illustrations – doing something like commissioning Getfrank to build you a website is probably a little scary, as well as not a little exciting. Will they do a good job? Will they listen to me? Will the finished interactive service delight end-users? These are all legitimate concerns – and we want to do everything we can to answer these questions. So what we suggest is that you take a little time to consider some questions, and then find the answers below.

6.2 Ask us anything you want

That's what the Navigator section is for – to answer your questions. In another life, it may have been called a "FAQ" – any terms that you might find confusing are explained in the Dictionary.

1 What is a website?

Good question. At a basic level, a website is a collection of HTML pages and images sitting on a computer somewhere, and available to users by typing the URL into their web browser. On another level, a website may be a communication and marketing tool, a way to sell products and services, or it may be a virtual community or forum. In many ways, a website is whatever you want it to be.

2 What is an extranet?

An extranet is a password-protected website, made available only to those that require access to it. You might already use extranets with suppliers. When working with Getfrank, an extranet is best thought of as a little, temporary website where all of the necessary project information lives. Getfrank routinely create an extranet dedicated to your project at the beginning of production, where we will publish every single document, asset and / or deliverable that your project requires.

3 What is a project plan?

At the root of your project with Getfrank is a formal, electronic document (we use Microsoft Project software for this purpose) that specifies all of the tasks that need to be done to deliver your interactive service, the resources that will be required to perform all the tasks, how long everything will take to do, and how much it will cost. The project plan is generally split into six sections corresponding to the six stages of our methodology, and is always available for you to look and review at any stage.

4 Why are you asking me to sign an “approval form”?

An approval form is a formal statement by you that you are happy with the work that Getfrank have done up to that point in the project. We will generally ask you to sign several approval forms throughout the course of a project – and certainly at least for each stage of the methodology, e.g. Discovery, Origination, Definition, Implementation, and so on.

An approval form is a way for both you and us to find consensus on work produced to date, to say to each other: "This is good stuff. We can use this to go forward, confident that both of us know what has been produced."

If you're unhappy with anything we have produced at any point, then you are entirely free to withhold your signature from an approval form. We want to proceed on the basis of consensus – we're not interested in bullying or railroading you into a decision.

5 Why am I paying for a project manager or producer? What do they do?

At Getfrank, your project manager or producer fulfils both coordination and leadership roles. They are your primary point of contact, the person to speak to with any queries, and the person who is ultimately responsible for turning your aspirations into reality on time, to budget, and to specification. They will direct the Getfrank creative team, and generally be your “champion” with regard to cost, design, brand, content and technology. Project managers focus on the smooth running of projects, as do producers. For some projects, usually those where original ideas are part of the interactive service, we may use a producer to raise the importance of the idea and to champion it throughout the creative process. For larger projects we may employ both resources.

6 What's the difference between Origination and Asset Creation?

Origination is all about new ideas and generating novel solutions to your stated business or organisational requirements. Once we have reached agreement on the conceptual direction in which the design of your interactive service is progressing, then we do asset creation, which is the creation of specific graphical or multimedia assets on the basis of an agreed “concept”.

7 What happens if I don't like the design you produce?

We will always try to originate a design that appeals to you, meets the needs and sensibilities of your target audience, and that works well as an online identity. Part of the way in which we ensure you're happy is by seeking consensus at all opportunities – essentially asking you as often as possible, within budget constraints, “Are you happy?” If all our safeguards fail however, and it's not possible to reach consensus, all is not lost – we can always do another design iteration!

8 I don't understand all this business about hosting – what is it?

Hosting is the name for “putting a website somewhere where your audience can see it”. A “host” is nothing other than a computer dedicated to delivering the pages or systems which your users see as your website. All the text, imagery, code and other data that make up your website is stored on such a host, and “served out” to anyone who asks for it by typing your website URL into a browser.

9 Why are you called Getfrank?

Long story, and a topic for discussion over a good cup of coffee.

10 I feel like I'm being rushed into decisions

When we say we value consensus – we really do. We also want you to be totally satisfied with the service that we deliver, and will do everything that we can to ensure the highest quality in all aspects of our work. Sometimes, that means we may press you for a decision. But feel free to press back. It's your service, after all. If you need more time, then we can re-visit the schedule and give you that time.

11 I don't understand why you produce so many documents. Are they all necessary?

Yes. We believe so. The purpose of our documentation is to establish a common understanding – between you and us. That is an understanding of exactly what we are creating and what you are paying for. It's also because we're often collectively creating something totally new (we call it a "bespoke" offering) and it is common for two parties in such a collective creative enterprise to actually have completely different conceptions of what is being proposed. Good, comprehensive documentation solves this problem – it's hard(er) to be vague with words.

12 I've got some more questions

That's fine. Please call us on 01273 201111 or email hello@getfrank.com. We look forward to talking to you.