PlainJoe Studios Increases Projects Closing Within Budget by 50% with Mavenlink

Accelerating Immersive Storytelling

PlainJoe Studios is a multi-discipline, experiential design studio intently focused on spatial, strategic, and digitally immersive storytelling.

PlainJoe uses a team of artists, architects, strategists and problem solvers to drive connection, create value and captivate client audiences.

PlainJoe’s strategic storytelling is focused on defining everything from a company’s brand identity to its corporate culture. The studio’s digital storytelling focuses on augmented and virtual reality as well as website design and technology integrations for physical space.

In addition, PlainJoe’s spatial storytelling includes everything from concept illustration to the architecture of physical space. Together, these various disciplines create 360-degree experiences for clients and brands.

"Mavenlink is a lot more intuitive than other project management solutions. As a leader of project managers, it’s proven to be a really great system."

Kelsey Sibal, Director of Production, PlainJoe Studios
THE CHALLENGE

Constant Growth Brings New Challenges

PlainJoe’s success as an innovative design studio led to continued growth, leading to larger teams and a greater amount and wider diversification of projects.

This growth led to teams taking on many different project management solutions for their expanding needs, with Google Sheets used for budgeting and Google Tasks for resource assignments. In addition, PlainJoe tracked time with Intervals and exported assignments to Google Docs.

While these solutions provided the team with important data, all of these processes had to be manually completed. As a result, the PlainJoe team experienced several challenges in how projects were handled and improved upon, including:

**Unclear Profitability**

Project contracts were frequently budgeted and tasked without a clear ability to forecast resource availability. As such, teams would need to run through projects to the best of their abilities and manually work with budgets to remain profitable and collaborate with accounting teams to bill project milestones. As a result, PlainJoe lacked clarity into the profitability of their projects and could not take effective steps to recoup profits.

**Understanding Project Needs**

PlainJoe’s biggest issue was being able to understand resource efficiency and effectiveness. As the company grew, the project management department was upstaffed, with team members managing and changing tasks in multiple systems that did not talk to each other. Due to these complications, team members often had to talk to each other face to face to inform others of project statuses and resource needs.

“We pretty much had to hodgepodge everything together,” said Kelsey Sibal, Director of Production at PlainJoe Studios. “We had no way of going back and seeing what our original estimates were for projects.”

THE SWITCH

We were making tons of gut decisions before Mavenlink. By having real information on hiring the right people, we’re now able to project various needs for hiring. Mavenlink has helped us make great business decisions.”

Kelsey Sibal, Director of Production, PlainJoe Studios
THE SWITCH TO MAVENLINK

Building a Future on Insights

The continued limitations that PlainJoe experienced with its legacy systems pushed the organization to look for a project management solution that could consolidate legacy systems and support the crucial aspects of their diverse business needs.

While its search led them to consider 10,000ft by Smartsheet, PlainJoe decided upon Mavenlink to support their unique studio demands:

Data Consolidation
The PlainJoe team’s number one goal in the project management search was to find a solution that could consolidate the functions being fulfilled by their many different legacy solutions. Combining scheduling, budgeting, tasking, and time entry all in one system was an especially high priority, as these were previously all separate.

Business Intelligence Support for Resources
As PlainJoe began to grow and took on contract workers to fulfill increasing demands, the organization began to analyze profitability in detail. However, they were unable to completely quantify their data for hiring needs. Mavenlink’s Business Intelligence became a critical aid in effectively expanding their team as needed.

Improving Resource Profitability
Mavenlink’s Gantt charts and the ability to tie in accounting data with resources helped PlainJoe Studios better understand its team’s demands through stronger reporting.

“
We’ve been learning how to use Mavenlink in a deeper way for scheduling and utilizing people. Master Planning has played a major role in PlainJoe’s success.”

Kelsey Sibal, Director of Production, PlainJoe Studios
THE RESULTS

Bringing Support for COVID-19 Care

Supporting the Shift to Remote Work
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost no employees at PlainJoe Studios worked remotely, although the company allowed some flexibility. However, the need for social distancing has led to 95% of team members working from home. Thankfully, Mavenlink’s resource management has supported the change. “We still function exactly the same as if we were all in the office,” said Sibal.

Effective Project Budgeting
PlainJoe’s adoption of Mavenlink has led to a major increase in data quality, enabling the organization to better understand resource needs. Today, the company knows when they are about to go over budget through budget burn alerts, helping to evaluate the best course of action. Since adopting Mavenlink, PlainJoe Studios has seen a 50% increase in projects closing within budget.

Business Intelligence for Staffing Needs
The use of Mavenlink Business Intelligence (BI) in the area of profitability and resource staffing has helped PlainJoe grow from a small organization to a large one. With these insights, the company was able to bring critical members onboard while knowing that these team members would continue to be needed, preventing layoffs. Specifically, Mavenlink Master Planning has helped the business collaborate and plan more effectively by seeing what tasks are slated and meeting their needs.

Increased client satisfaction
Insights into project success has helped PlainJoe understand if they were able to know if they made the right calls during a project and estimated budgets correctly. In addition, Mavenlink BI helped resource managers understand the growth of team member skills to understand how to improve team members and support their ongoing needs. In addition, PlainJoe was able to increase billing rates by 15% to match project margins with the quality of work they provide.

“Mavenlink 100% informs our business decisions, especially in how we estimate contracts. Being able to run reports on our projects to determine our delta and quickly understand staffing demands had made a major difference.”

Kelsey Sibal, Director of Production, PlainJoe Studios

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