

Top 10 Mistakes Educational (K-12) Publishers Make

When Outsourcing Work to a Vendor and
How to Avoid Them



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Managing a content development project involves many steps and depends on finding a reliable team to support the project goal. Often, a new project starts out as a fabulous idea, birthed by people passionate about the end result. Like any journey though, there are potential barriers to success that can disturb the process. The good news is that many of these roadblocks can be avoided with careful planning.



Here are the top 10 mistakes educational (K-12) publishers make when outsourcing work and how to avoid them:

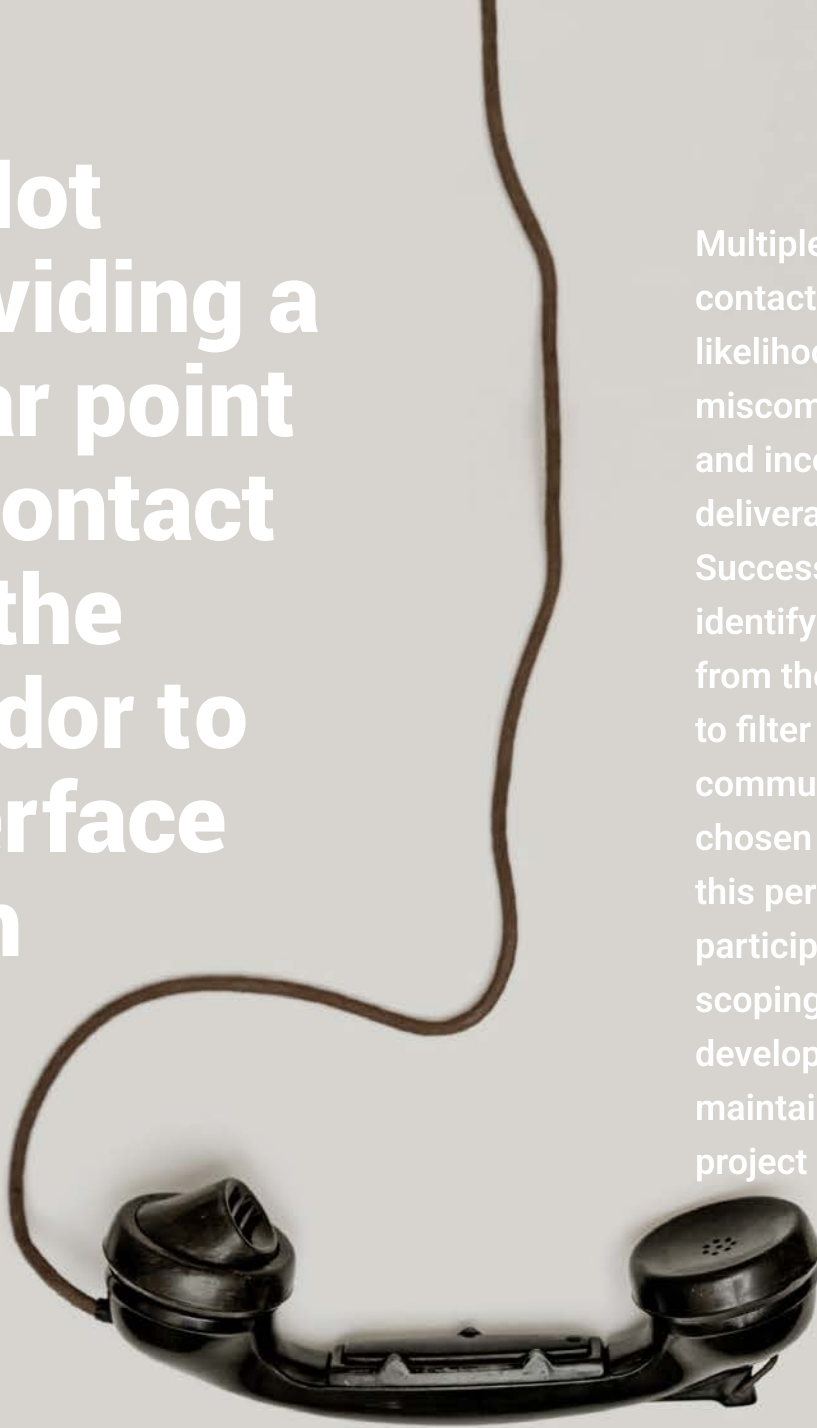
1. Not sharing a clear scope (or entering scoping without a vision)

You wouldn't want to build the plane as you're flying it, so why would you treat outsourced developments any differently? Upon scoping, publishers should be prepared to provide vendors with a clear vision for each deliverable. Expect a vendor to clarify several details including the specific skills and knowledge that the project communicates to the intended audience, the exact breakdown and desired format of all components of the deliverable, sourcing information, and of course, workflow/schedule expectations.



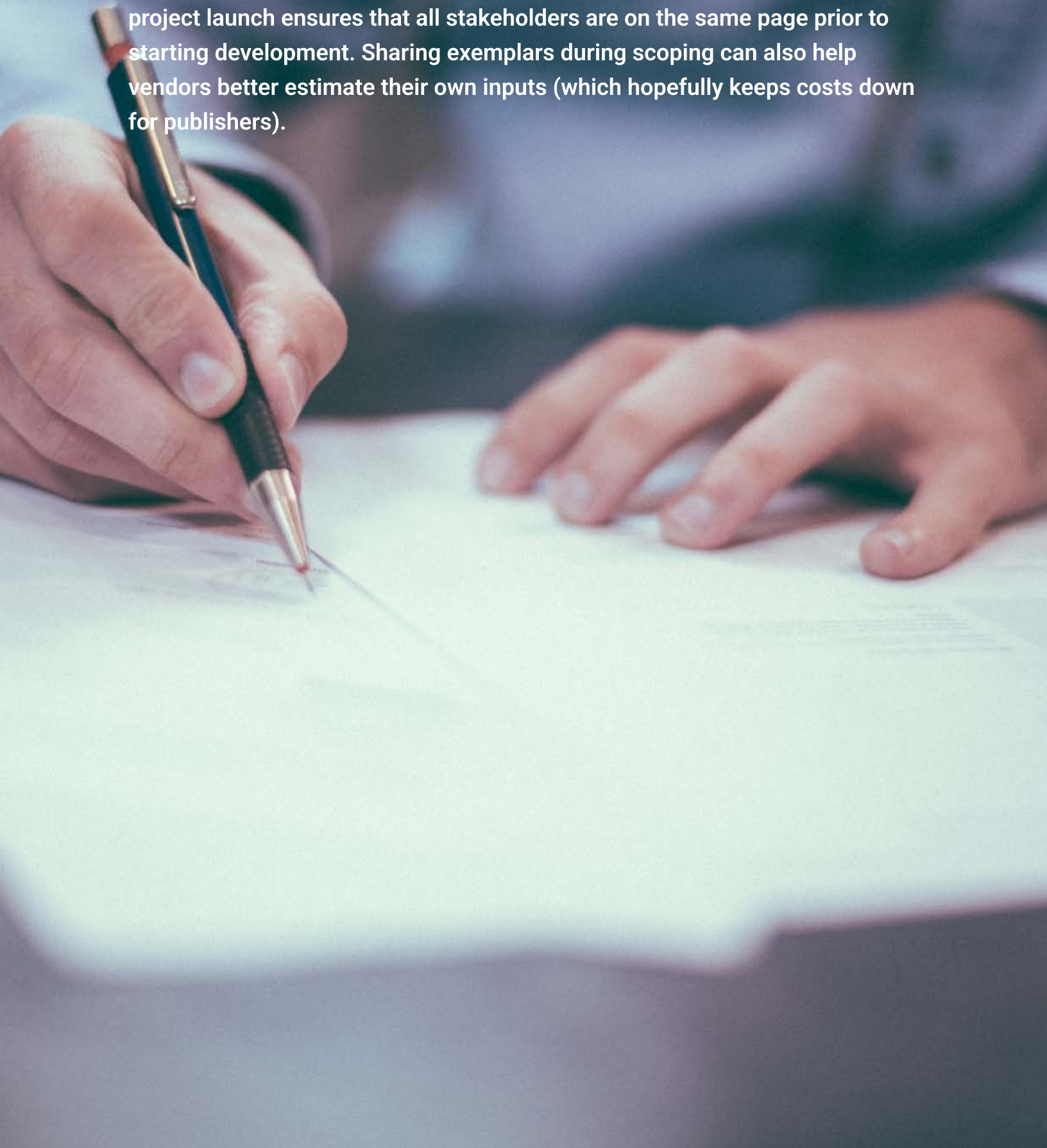
2. Not providing a clear point of contact for the vendor to interface with

Multiple points of contact increase the likelihood of miscommunication and inconsistent deliverable quality. Successful publishers identify one person from their organization to filter thoughts and communicate with the chosen vendor. Ideally, this person would participate in both scoping and project development to maintain continuity in project expectations.



3. Not providing exemplars

Providing an example of a deliverable that meets expectations at or before project launch ensures that all stakeholders are on the same page prior to starting development. Sharing exemplars during scoping can also help vendors better estimate their own inputs (which hopefully keeps costs down for publishers).



4. Not having clear acceptance criteria

Clear is kind. Having a pre-agreed upon list of acceptance criteria is key to the success of any project, whether it be assessment items or course development. It is also important that these criteria be objectively interpreted and observed by both the publisher and vendor in order to avoid the need for heavy rewrites or revisions midstream.



5. Assuming vendors know what is expected and not providing any guidance or training

One size does not fit all when it comes to organizing a project structure. Each project is unique, and while some are straightforward, other projects may require large volumes of information to be transferred from client to vendor. Successful training communicates all client expectations, provides access to resources, and identifies tools used to benchmark quality.



6. Not providing adequate time for the full QA cycle: development, review, and revisions

The job isn't complete after an initial submission-- it's a workflow! Experienced publishers know that high-quality deliverables take time to produce and review. When working with a vendor to create a schedule, be sure to plan for revisions, including how long it will take each party to review work and provide feedback.




```
@keyframes ripple {
```

```
  from {
```

```
    width: .1%;
```

```
    height: .1%;
```

```
    opacity: 1;
```

```
  }
```

```
  to {
```

```
    width: 100%;
```

```
    height: 100%;
```

```
    opacity: 0;
```

7. Not providing art specs

The job isn't complete after an initial submission-- it's a workflow! Experienced publishers know that high-quality deliverables take time to produce and review. When working with a vendor to create a schedule, be sure to plan for revisions, including how long it will take each party to review work and provide feedback.

8. Not providing enough time for staffing and training



The job isn't complete after an initial submission-- it's a workflow! Experienced publishers know that high-quality deliverables take time to produce and review. When working with a vendor to create a schedule, be sure to plan for revisions, including how long it will take each party to review work and provide feedback.

9. Not engaging in a calibration round or skipping a calibration round when starting new developments



Before diving into development at full-speed, it is wise to schedule a review of a small set of deliverables, or calibration round, to solicit feedback and make sure the product is meeting expectations. Engaging in calibration prior to starting additional work on the project allows publishers to provide feedback early on and nip many global issues in the bud.

10. Not having scheduled status meetings (or another means of communication)



Just because a development may be going well does not mean that the need for status meetings is unnecessary. Effective communication is the foundation of any relationship. Status meetings should be quick check-in with all stakeholders at a regular interval to keep the lines of communication open. Consider using collaborative real-time communication logs as another tool for discussion between status meetings.

Conclusion

While every development process may look a bit different, collaboration between publishers and vendors is key to the success of any project. Use the above strategies to promote open, two-way communication, clear expectations of project specifications, and flexible project timelines to help ensure that your organization receives only high-quality on time deliverables.

About A Pass

A Pass Educational Group, LLC is an organization dedicated to the development of quality educational resources. We partner with publishers, K-12 schools, higher ed institutions, corporations, and other educational stakeholders to create custom quality content.

Have questions? Contact Us to discuss your next project:

Ph: (248) 742-5124 | E: info@APASSeducation.com

