Miss the Schedule
Kill the Company

Impact of Cycle Time in Retail Software

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On-Fire Associates

Retail Software Business Cycle

- Budgeting / Staffing: October, November
- Concepts / Brainstorming / Prototypes: November, December, January
- External Alpha Test: May (4 weeks)
- External Beta Tests: July, August (8 weeks)
- Ship: September
- Any critical follow-up: November

Unconventional Control Variables

- Fixed
  - Time
  - Resources
  - Productivity
- Variable
  - Features
  - Quality

Development Strategy

- Rule: Trade lower priority features for better quality on higher priority features.

- Execution: Be ruthless with the above rule.

- Schedule: Milestones Fixed, Content Flexible
  - Feature Bundle 1 & Alpha test
  - Feature Bundle 2 & Beta test
  - Feature Bundle 3 & Ship

- Bundle tasks:
  - Design, Code, Internal Test, Rework
  - External Test, Rework

Project Sequencing
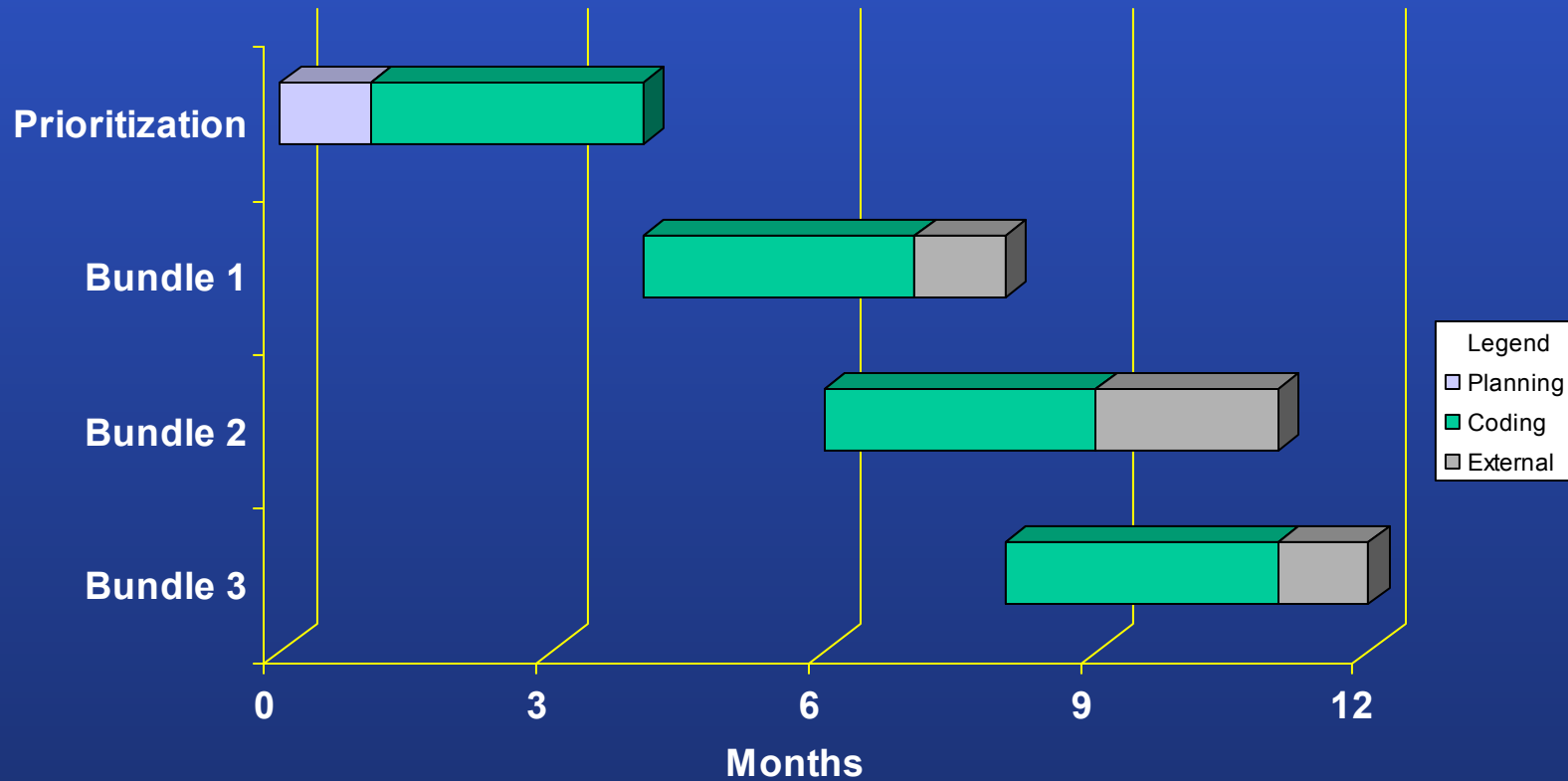
Project Tracking and Control

- Project plan
  - Used Mac Project or Microsoft Project
  - Created four sequential & traditional projects for bundle development
  - Created fifth parallel project for printed documentation
- DRATS (bugs)
  - Root cause known within a week
  - Some graphs
- Weekly meeting agenda
  - Cross functional meeting
  - Key dates, red flags, critical cross functional decisions

Was it Effective?

- Yes! Beat off Microsoft Money.

- Yes! Millions of Quicken customers and solid reputation for new product acceptance.

- Yes! Created project management bench strength for new products.

- How? Quality and basic execution consistency is more important than sophistication.