# Transcript: IT Podcast – ep 63 – C769 choosing your Topic w/ Charlie paddock

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1:

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Speaker #2:

Your capstone course has arrived and you are hoping to graduate soon. Congratulations. Chances are you have thought about this for some time now and are anxious to nail down your project idea so you can start writing and get it done. Since project idea approval is task 1, let's talk for a few about what makes for an acceptable project. There are at least five characteristics. First and foremost, it must relate to your degree program emphasis. How it relates to that emphasis is dependent more on how you present the relationship than in anything obvious about the project itself. Almost any tech project can relate to any emphasis if you tilt it the right way. How do you tip an idea toward one emphasis or another? First, the analysis or discovery phase of the project could include an issue or problem related to your emphasis. Second, you could include emphasis-related outcomes and deliverables. Third, project execution could involve significant emphasis- related expertise. When reviewing your topic approval form, your instructor will consider these things. Since you are the one who creates the scenario, these are things within your control. As you complete the topic approval form, use these recommendations to help place the project squarely in run of your emphasis. After relationship to your program emphasis, the next or second trait that an acceptable project has is a clearly stated business problem or need. Does this mean that home-based projects are not acceptable? No. But you should be judicious in your use of terminology. You determine the setting. Adapt a setting that is outside the home or related considerations that problems and needs are stronger motivation than a want. Avoid expressing a problem or need as a want. Instead of stating that an organization wants to move its data center to the Cloud, tell us why. Is it because upgrading current equipment is prohibitively expensive? Or maybe it's that the cost of providing adequate security is beyond our means and suffers from a lack of available talent. Even if something looks like a want, there is always a need or a problem driving it. The third characteristic of an acceptable project is that the IT professional project manager is not the same person as the stakeholder. In other words, you should not address your own problems. Instead, you must deal with users. Note that this makes you a project manager so it is your responsibility to make sure that the project is properly researched, the goals, objectives, and deliverables are clearly stated, and the project management methodology is correct for the undertaking. Fourth, your papers are neither prescriptive or descriptive. That is, you're not writing a paper about how to do a project or the best way to do this project, you are producing a realistic proposal for a project and an equally realistic after-action report about what happened during project execution. The fifth and final characteristic relates to deliverables. Soft deliverables like training, plans, policies, etc are okay but an IT capstone project should also include hard deliverables like hardware, software and other tech. Diagnostic activities like audits and assessments are okay for analysis, but they are not in themselves suitable for an entire project. Remediation of the problems discovered by way of these activities is the project, and that remediation should include our deliverable. That's it for capstone project attributes. You have probably figured out by now that the capstone is not about accurately reporting outcomes from a real project, it's about demonstrating competency across an entire degree program. While you may draw on your real experience of producing this work, remember to stay open to the possibility that you have to tweak your perception of reality to satisfy requirements. I hope that you found this worth your time. I'd advise you to get in touch with your course instructor early on in the process. Thank you very much for listening.

Speaker #1:

Schedule time with your course instructor to explore more deeply. WGU, a new kind of you.