

## **ASANA – A PROGRAM FOR DIGITIZING TEACHING ACTIVITIES IN A UNIVERSITY**

Ioana-Gabriela GRIGORESCU<sup>1</sup>

Gabriel Eugen GARAIŞ<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

In recent years, but especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the education process has been severely affected, undergoing significant changes. Due to the efforts to curb the spread of the Sars-Cov-2 virus, countries worldwide implemented strict lockdowns, and those involved in the education process had to quickly adapt to a virtual environment with limited resources. Thus, it can be said that remote work and online education have become the preferred elements of the pandemic context, while in-person education remains secondary. In this sense, for all those involved in this process, it represented a significant challenge as they had to adapt to a digitized environment, leading to the emergence of new psycho-educational and social experiences for both educators and educational beneficiaries. If this digitization could be maintained, and the obligation for in-person education could be avoided, it would eliminate time and space barriers between teachers and students. The main purpose of this article is to present how the Asana program can be used in digitizing the teaching activities of students, especially practical assignments, and seminars throughout a semester.

**Keywords:** digitization, education, innovation

**JEL Classification:** I23; O3

### **1. Introduction**

Despite the abrupt transition to this education system, the adaptation was smooth. In this regard, it can be appreciated that the activity of a group of students can be the subject of a project within a specific field of study. Through this, I aim to highlight the benefits of digitization in the context of face-to-face education.

Education was heavily impacted in the context of the pandemic, and the beginning of 2020 brought about changes both professionally and psychologically. If remote work had not

---

<sup>1</sup> School of Computer Science for Business Management, Romanian-American University, Romania, grigorescu.ioana.gabriela@profesor.rau.ro

<sup>2</sup> School of Computer Science for Business Management, Romanian-American University, Romania, garais.gabriel.eugen@profesor.rau.ro

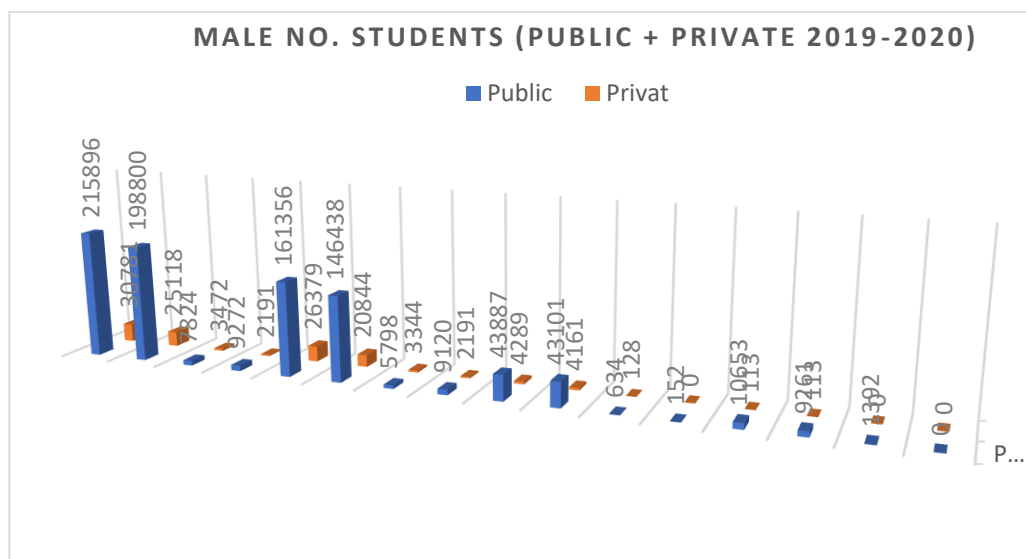
experienced significant development until now, it seems that during the pandemic, it became the norm for each of us.

There are several advantages to remote work, including the elimination of commuting time between home and the workplace, the reduction of certain additional costs for both employees and employers, and the opportunity to work in a friendly environment and be productive. Despite these advantages, there are also some disadvantages, such as the need for overnight adoption of teleworking, overlooking the importance of arranging home office space. Another negative aspect is the lack of social interaction, which can lead to long-term anxiety and depression. The process of working from home should be considered along with personal situations, which play a decisive role in assessing job satisfaction, such as education, age, gender, the number of dependent children, marital status, a positive attitude towards change, and the condition of the home office space.

In this context, both students and teachers in education were forced to use the online environment as the primary channel for providing and receiving various information.

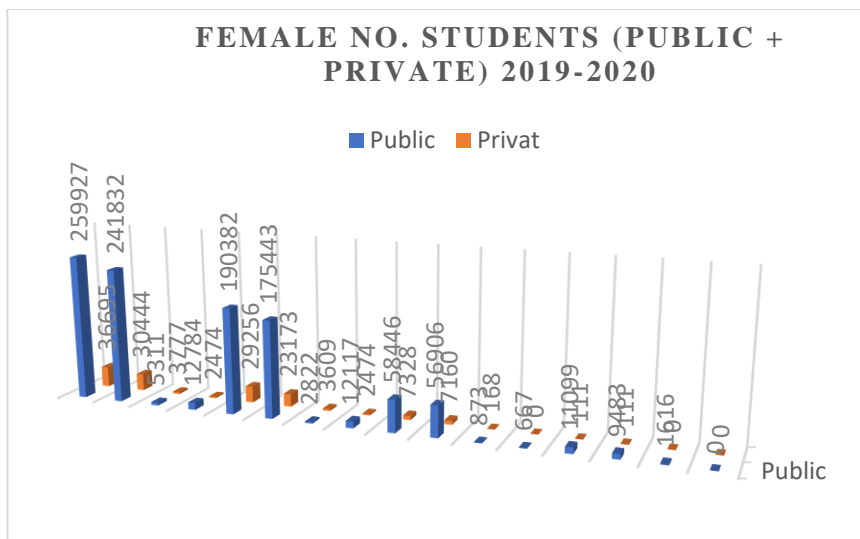
We will further analyze the impact that the pandemic had on the university education system based on the forms of education, gender, and ownership structures.

The graph below examines the proportion of male students in public and private education. As observed, public education dominates over private education, regardless of the form of education. An important aspect highlighted by this graph is that, in addition to traditional in-person education, distance education is gaining ground. However, it appears that the desire to pursue doctoral or postdoctoral studies decreases after completing master's studies, according to the graph.



Source: INS, Statistical research in the field of education, academic year 2019-2020.

We will continue the analysis with the number of female students in public and private education.



Source: INS, Statistical research in the field of education, academic year 2019-2020.

Asana is an application that provides easy project and task management for team collaboration. The free version allows a maximum of fifteen participants with no limit on projects and tasks. The user interface is intuitive, integrates with Dropbox, allows file uploads, sends email notifications for assigned tasks to each team member, informs us when a new task has been added, and allows comments to be added directly through the email inbox.

Globally, over 90,000 companies use this application. There are versions available for iOS, PC, and Android. The application allows integration with over a hundred apps, aiding the team in communication, collaboration, and coordinating work from the beginning to the end of the project.

## 2. Introduction to ASANA

**Purpose and Functionality:** ASANA is a multifaceted online project management tool designed to streamline team collaboration and work management. At its core, ASANA facilitates task management, enabling teams to create, assign, and track tasks through

various stages. Its central shared workspace is pivotal in allowing team members to stay informed and engaged, regardless of their location. The platform offers different work views, including a timeline view for project planning and management, as well as a Kanban board view which is useful for visualizing work progress.

Additionally, ASANA provides a project overview feature, giving users a comprehensive context of their goals, resources, and other essential project information. This overview is integral for maintaining a clear vision of the project's trajectory and ensuring that all team members are aligned with the project's objectives.

One of the standout features of ASANA is its customizability. Users can tailor projects and workflows according to their specific needs and save them as templates for future use. This customization extends to the platform's rules-based automation, which significantly reduces manual efforts and error rates, consequently enhancing efficiency.

**Market Position and Popularity:** ASANA has established itself as a leading software in the realm of product and project management. Its popularity stems from its ability to connect company-wide goals to the necessary work across different teams and functions. ASANA's role in increasing employee productivity and company efficiency has been recognized and documented, making it a go-to choice for many businesses seeking a robust project management solution.

Moreover, ASANA's appeal extends beyond traditional office environments. It is equally suitable for remote teams, university users included, offering features that support both onsite and remote work setups. This flexibility has been crucial, especially in the evolving work dynamics post-2020, where remote work has become more prevalent.

### **3. History and Development of ASANA**

**Founding and Initial Development:** ASANA's journey began in 2008, founded by Dustin Moskovitz and Justin Rosenstein. The inception of ASANA was rooted in the founders' experience at Facebook, where they developed a productivity tool named Tasks. Leaving Facebook, they embarked on creating ASANA, which officially launched out of beta in November 2011 and commercially in April 2012. The foundation of ASANA was built on the principle of enhancing team productivity and efficiency through better task management and collaboration tools.

**Growth and Expansion:** The following years marked significant milestones for ASANA. In 2014, it launched its native iOS app, followed by the Android app in 2015, catering to the growing need for mobile accessibility in project management. The year 2016 saw ASANA raising \$50 million in Series C financing, led by Sam Altman of Y Combinator. This funding was pivotal in scaling the platform's capabilities and reach.

In 2017, ASANA integrated with Gmail and launched its app in French and German, demonstrating its commitment to global expansion and user accessibility. By January 2018, ASANA had over 35,000 paying customers, including notable names like eBay, Uber, and IBM. This period also saw the company raise \$75 million in Series D funding, further solidifying its financial and market position.

**Public Listing and Recent Developments:** The year 2020 was a landmark for ASANA as it went public on the New York Stock Exchange via a direct public offering. In August 2021, ASANA dual-listed on the Long-Term Stock Exchange, indicating its sustained growth and stability in the market.

As of December 2021, ASANA's customer base expanded to 114,000 with two million paid seats globally. A significant number of these customers, 739 to be exact, were spending over \$50,000 annually, showcasing the platform's appeal to large-scale enterprises.

In 2022, ASANA continued to innovate and expand its capabilities. It released the annual Anatomy of Work Index, a comprehensive report surveying over 10,000 knowledge workers to understand trends in the modern workplace. Furthermore, it announced a partnership with Align Technology, introducing Asana Smiles for Align, a customizable workflow for Invisalign trained doctors in the U.S. By September 2022, the number of customers had increased to 131,000, with a significant 41% increase in customers spending over \$5,000 annually.

#### **4. Advantages of ASANA**

**Advanced Tools and Regular Updates:** ASANA's commitment to innovation is evident in its continuous enhancement of existing features and introduction of new tools. Regular updates ensure that the platform remains on the cutting edge, offering users the latest in project management technology.

**Workflow Automation:** One of the most significant advantages of ASANA is its ability to automate repetitive tasks. Users can set up to 50 rules per project to automate processes, which simplifies workflows, reduces errors, and saves time. This automation empowers teams to focus more on problem-solving and less on administrative tasks.

**Dynamic Reporting:** ASANA excels in providing real-time reporting and insights. With features like dashboards, charts, and graphs, users can visualize high-level data and zoom in for detailed analyses. These interactive reports allow teams to delve into project details with ease, enhancing the decision-making process.

**Work Request Management:** The platform's Forms feature enables users to standardize their work intake processes. This feature is particularly useful for managing a variety of work requests, keeping everything centralized, organized, and trackable.

**Integrations:** ASANA's strength also lies in its integration capabilities. With over 100 integration options, including major platforms like Microsoft Teams, Office 365, and Google products, ASANA fits seamlessly into various digital ecosystems. This vast range of integrations streamlines workflows by connecting different tools and services.

**Customization:** Custom fields in ASANA allow for significant flexibility, letting teams track essential information and maintain visibility of work progress. This customization ensures that stakeholders have a complete understanding of ongoing tasks and projects, tailored to their specific needs.

**Free Plan for Small Teams:** ASANA's free plan is a notable advantage for startups and small businesses. It supports teams of up to 15 members and includes essential features like unlimited tasks, projects, messages, and file storage (up to 100MB per file). This plan offers small teams a robust work management solution without financial commitment.

## **5. Disadvantages of ASANA**

**Learning Curve:** One of the significant challenges new users face with ASANA is its learning curve. The platform's array of features and options, while beneficial, can be overwhelming, especially for non-technical users. This complexity necessitates training and onboarding, which could lead to additional time and costs for organizations implementing ASANA.

**Scope and Scale Mismatch:** ASANA's advanced features, tailored for comprehensive project management, might not align well with the needs of small teams or projects with limited scope. For such teams, the platform might offer more functionality than necessary, leading to underutilization of its capabilities.

**Single Assignee Limitation:** A notable limitation in ASANA's task management is the assignment of tasks to only one person. This approach, aimed at clarity of responsibility, can become a bottleneck if the assigned individual becomes unavailable. Teams then require workarounds to maintain workflow continuity.

**Absence of Built-In Time Tracking:** While ASANA is effective in tracking projects and tasks, it lacks a built-in time tracking feature. This gap can be problematic for projects that involve billing clients or require team members to track time against budgets. Users need to integrate third-party time tracking apps to compensate for this shortfall.

**Limited Exporting Options:** ASANA allows data export only in CSV and JSON formats. Direct exporting to commonly used formats like Excel or PDF is not available, which might be inconvenient for users needing to present or analyze data outside the platform. While third-party apps can facilitate this, it adds an extra step in the data handling process.

## 6. Case Study - Outreach Using ASANA

**Background and Challenges:** Outreach, a sales engagement platform, faced challenges with its internal workflows as it scaled. With different teams using a variety of tools ranging from work management platforms to spreadsheets, there was a lack of consistency and efficiency. This situation led to difficulties in scoping projects, meeting deadlines, and aligning on common goals. Moreover, the IT department was struggling with the proliferation of tools and the need to manage security risks and permissions.

**Implementation of ASANA:** In their quest for optimization, Outreach chose ASANA for its ease of use, security, and adaptability. The decision to implement ASANA was driven by its simplicity and ability to cater to a wide range of use cases, making it an ideal choice for the company-wide application, except for the Engineering team, which continued using their existing project management tool. This selection allowed for better cross-team collaboration and information sharing.

**Results and Improvements:** The adoption of ASANA led to significant improvements in Outreach's operations:

- **Improved Security:** With ASANA, Outreach strengthened its security with access controls and simplified user management, crucial for a company handling sensitive sales data.
- **Accelerated Processes:** ASANA's automation features eliminated manual steps in employee onboarding and other routine processes, leading to faster and more efficient workflows.
- **Greater Accountability:** ASANA created a heightened sense of accountability, even in a remote environment, which was particularly beneficial during the shift to remote work in 2020.
- **Flexibility and Scalability:** The IT team gained flexibility in managing licenses and could integrate ASANA with other tools like Okta for secure identity management.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Various teams within Outreach, including Marketing, Sales Operations, and HR, leveraged ASANA to manage their workflows more effectively. This ranged from running marketing campaigns to onboarding new hires through automated processes.
- **Company-wide Impact:** The widespread use of ASANA within Outreach led to increased work visibility, reduced back-and-forth communication, and better management of security risks.

This case study provides insight into how ASANA can be leveraged to address specific business challenges and enhance overall organizational efficiency.

## **7. Comparative Analysis: ASANA vs. Microsoft Planner**

**Overview and Core Features:** ASANA and Microsoft Planner are both prominent project management tools, each offering a suite of features tailored to task and project management. ASANA enables the creation of subtasks, setting deadlines, assigning tasks, and creating multiple workspaces for projects. Microsoft Planner, part of the Microsoft Office 365 ecosystem, offers task groups, swim lanes, deadlines, task assignments, and notes.

**Native Features:** ASANA boasts native time tracking and workflow automation, allowing users to track time spent on tasks and automate routine actions. Planner, however, lacks a native time-tracking feature and built-in workflow automation, relying on third-party integrations for these functionalities.

**Pricing:** ASANA's pricing is considered flexible, offering a free basic plan and several premium options. In contrast, Planner is part of various Office 365 subscription plans, making it a cost-effective option for those already using the Office 365 ecosystem.

**Integrations:** ASANA stands out with its integration capabilities, offering more than 350 third-party integrations, including Salesforce, Dropbox, and Power BI. Planner, while integrating well within the Microsoft ecosystem, is limited in terms of third-party integrations compared to ASANA.

**Collaboration and Usability:** Both tools provide avenues for team collaboration. ASANA offers features like task comments, project conversations, and team pages, whereas Planner's collaboration capabilities are more aligned with its integration with Microsoft Teams. However, Planner may be less intuitive for users not familiar with the Microsoft ecosystem.

**Pros and Cons:** ASANA's strengths lie in its thorough automation, delegation capabilities, and customization options. However, its plethora of features can be overwhelming for new users, and its premium tiers may be expensive for small teams. On the other hand, Planner's key advantages include great team collaboration features and easy setup, but it falls short in terms of third-party integrations and customization options compared to ASANA.

## **8. ASANA vs. Trello**

**Core Features:** ASANA offers task dependencies as a built-in feature, while Trello requires integration for this. Both platforms provide templates and workflow automation. ASANA has a more robust native reporting and analytics feature compared to Trello, which offers basic functionality and requires third-party integration for full range reporting.



**Project Planning:** Trello focuses on Kanban-style planning, whereas ASANA allows teams to create new projects and organize tasks and subtasks into sections, offering multiple views like List, Board, Calendar, and Timeline for project planning.

**Integrations:** Both platforms offer a wide range of third-party integrations, enhancing their adaptability to different workflows.

**Pros and Cons:** Trello is noted for its simplicity, impressive mobile app, and robust automation features, but it has limited reporting tools and may not be ideal for handling multiple or complex projects.

ASANA is loaded with features and offers extensive integrations, but its advanced security tools are only available in the Enterprise plan, and its mobile app experience could be improved.

## **9. ASANA vs. Monday.com**

**Approach to Task Management:** ASANA emphasizes a structured approach to organizing tasks and is designed for teams seeking a simplified experience. Monday.com offers a more flexible and customizable platform suitable for teams with complex projects and workflows.

**Pricing Comparison:** ASANA and Monday.com both offer free plans, but with different features and user support. ASANA's Premium plan is slightly more expensive than Monday.com's Basic plan, with each offering different features. Both platforms have Business and Enterprise plans, with varied features and price points.

**Functionality:** ASANA provides Kanban boards with a clean interface and supports custom fields for task organization. Monday.com offers more comprehensive customization options for its Kanban boards. ASANA's Timeline view serves as a simplified Gantt chart, whereas Monday.com offers more robust Gantt chart functionality. Monday.com includes native time tracking in its Pro plan, unlike ASANA which relies on third-party integrations.

**Pros and Cons:** ASANA is praised for its intuitive user interface and strong task management, but its Gantt chart functionality is limited, and premium features are confined to higher-tier plans. Monday.com is highly customizable and offers powerful automations, but some essential features are only available in higher-tier plans, and its pricing can be relatively expensive for smaller teams.

In summary, while ASANA offers a structured and feature-rich environment, Trello stands out for its simplicity and ease of use, and Monday.com excels in customization and flexibility. Each platform has its unique strengths and limitations, making the choice dependent on specific project requirements and team preferences.

## **10. ASANA's Impact on Managing Student Projects**

**Organizational Efficiency:** ASANA can significantly improve the organization of coursework and extracurricular activities. It serves as a central hub for storing important information, notes, and tasks, ensuring better collaboration and continuity as members join or leave.

**Workspace Creation and Usage:** Students can create specific workspaces for their organizations or clubs within ASANA. These workspaces can house various projects, ranging from bookkeeping to event planning, providing a structured approach to manage different aspects of student organizations.

**Member Involvement and Communication:** ASANA facilitates greater member participation. Students can be invited to contribute to existing projects and tasks and are encouraged to initiate their own. The platform aids in maintaining ongoing communication, reducing the need for frequent meetings or extensive email exchanges.

**Meeting Management:** Running meetings through ASANA can optimize meeting times and productivity. By setting up projects for meeting agendas and organizing them in priority order, ASANA ensures that meetings are focused and efficient, allowing more time for impactful discussions and activities.

## **11. Use in University Courses and Workshops**

**Collaborative Learning Environment:** ASANA's structure enables faculty and students to collaborate effectively on various projects and tasks. By creating teams within the university's ASANA organization, educators can foster a more interactive and engaged learning environment.

**Data Visibility and Privacy:** The platform's structure allows for control over who can see and access data, essential for maintaining privacy and compliance with academic standards.

**Resource and Seat Management:** In a university setting, managing the number of users (or seats) and ensuring that all necessary members have access to ASANA is crucial. The platform's flexibility in team and user management can align well with the dynamic nature of academic institutions.

**Scalability and Customization:** Universities can scale their use of ASANA based on needs, choosing from various plans including Premium, Business, and Enterprise. This flexibility is crucial for adapting to the diverse requirements of different courses and workshops.

**Educational Discount and Compliance:** ASANA offers a 50% discount for eligible academic institutions. Additionally, it supports compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), ensuring the security of personal data, which is crucial for educational institutions.

In summary, the use of ASANA in a university setting can enhance the management of student projects, courses, and workshops by improving organization, collaboration, and communication. Its adaptability, scalability, and compliance with educational standards make it a viable tool for academic environments.

## **12. ASANA's capabilities for e-learning and online teaching in academic environment**

**Templates for Educational Processes:** ASANA offers ready-to-use templates specifically designed for education. These templates can assist in planning student events, creating curriculums, and streamlining logistics. This feature allows educators to focus more on teaching and less on organizing information.

**Knowledge Management:** A knowledge management template in ASANA helps ensure that all team members, including students and faculty, prioritize and organize information consistently. This can be particularly useful in managing course materials, assignments, and collaborative projects.

**Centralized Information Hub:** With over 260 app integrations, ASANA can centralize information from various tools in one place. This integration is invaluable for keeping track of conversations, classroom materials, and action items, ensuring that all educational content is easily accessible and organized.

**Integration with Communication Tools:** ASANA integrates seamlessly with popular communication tools like Microsoft Teams, Google Drive, Gmail, Outlook, and Slack. These integrations allow for turning emails and conversations into actionable, trackable tasks directly within ASANA, thereby streamlining communication and collaboration in an educational setting.

**Automating Repetitive Tasks** The integration with Zapier allows for the automation of repetitive tasks without the need for coding. This feature can significantly reduce the administrative load on educators and students, allowing them to focus more on the educational content.

**Enhancing Engagement with Multimedia:** ASANA's capability to embed Vimeo videos directly into the platform can enhance engagement and collaboration. This feature is particularly beneficial for online workshops and courses, where multimedia content plays a crucial role in the learning experience.

In summary, ASANA's range of tools and integrations offers a robust solution for managing e-learning and online teaching in university settings. By facilitating knowledge management, centralizing information, integrating with essential communication tools, automating tasks, and enhancing multimedia engagement, ASANA can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of educational processes.

### **13. Conclusion.**

In conclusion, ASANA's implementation in university settings for project management, e-learning, and online teaching presents numerous benefits:

**Enhanced Organizational Efficiency:** ASANA streamlines the management of student projects, coursework, and extracurricular activities, fostering better collaboration and efficiency.

**Improved Meeting and Classroom Management:** The platform's features allow for more focused and productive meetings and classes, with efficient agenda management and task tracking.

**Integration and Automation:** ASANA's extensive integrations and automation capabilities centralize information, streamline communication, and reduce administrative burdens, enhancing the overall educational experience.

**Support for E-learning and Online Teaching:** With specialized templates, multimedia integration, and tools for knowledge management, ASANA supports diverse educational needs, making it a valuable tool for universities adapting to evolving teaching methods and digital learning environments.

Overall, ASANA's adaptability, user-friendly interface, and robust feature set make it a compelling choice for universities seeking to improve project management and educational delivery methods.

### **REFERENCES**

- [1] A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (the PMBOK Guide), Project Management Institute, 2021, ISBN: 978-1-62825-664-2.
- [2] Project Management Absolute Beginner's Guide, 5th edition, Greg Horine, Que Publishing, 2022, ISBN: 9780137646876.

[3] Project Management for Non-Project Managers, Jack Ferraro, AMACOM, 2012, ISBN: 9780814417362.

[4] The Fast Forward MBA in Project Management, 6th Edition, Eric Verzuh, Wiley, 2021, ISBN: 9781119700760.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Asana.com [<https://asana.com/>] - Official website of ASANA, offering comprehensive information about the platform, its features, and usage.

Asana Guide [<https://asana.com/guide/>]- A detailed guide provided by ASANA itself, explaining various aspects of the platform.

Asana Blog [<https://blog.asana.com/>] - The official blog of ASANA, offering insights, updates, and tips on project management and ASANA's features.

PCMag: Asana Review [<https://www.pcmag.com/reviews/asana>] - An in-depth review of ASANA, providing insights into its functionality and usability.

Capterra: Asana Reviews [<https://www.capterra.com/p/139907/Asana/reviews/>] - A platform where users review ASANA, giving potential users an idea of the platform's pros and cons from a user perspective.

TechRadar: Asana Review [<https://www.techradar.com/reviews/asana>] - A review by TechRadar, offering an expert opinion on ASANA's capabilities.

Forbes: Asana Articles [<https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2018/06/11/how-asana-hopes-to-eliminate-the-chaos-of-teamwork-and-get-more-done/>] - Articles on Forbes discussing ASANA and its impact on project management.

Product Hunt: Asana [<https://www.producthunt.com/posts/asana-2>] - A platform where ASANA is discussed and rated by a community of tech enthusiasts.

G2: Asana Reviews [<https://www.g2.com/products/asana/reviews>] - G2 provides user reviews and ratings, giving insights into how ASANA is perceived by its users.

Asana Community Forum [<https://forum.asana.com/>] - A community forum where users of ASANA discuss the tool, share tips, and offer support to each other.