FRITS J. BOS, PMP

1602 - 145 Hillcrest Ave., Mississauga, ON, L5B 3Z1 | C: (416) 524-7790 | frits@pm4hire.com

The need for proper requirement is no new phenomenon. **"Alice asked the Cheshire Cat, who was sitting in a tree, "What road do I take?" The cat asked, "Where do you want to go?" "I don't know," Alice answered. "Then," said the cat, "it really doesn't matter, does it?"** Clearly, if you are not specific, you have no idea where you end up, even though it matters very much if you want your project to be a success.
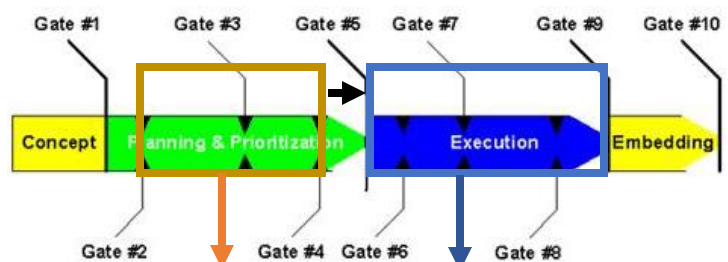
Requirements Elicitation Methods

The success of a project is often decided based on initial stakeholder requirements that establish a scope which can be on target, or way off-base. Part of our role in projects is to elicit the requirements in an objective manner (that does not include flippant conclusions), to make sure the results will match where the stakeholders really want to go. This is meant to be a thorough preparation for a future project.

I can provide requirements elicitation for your company.

With over 30 years of project management experience in managing projects, I have seen the cost of jumping into projects before fully understanding the expectations. In part this is encouraged by considering initiation by project charter to be the start of a project: it implies that the systems analysis is performed within the course of project execution. Unfortunately, achieving consensus among many stakeholders can take considerably longer than bargained for in the charter, which puts many projects behind schedule.

In accordance with Prince2™ methodology, Requirements Elicitation is part of deciding if there is justification for the project. When you charter a project without establishing justification, you end up with an effort that tries to justify its existence no matter what requirements the project identifies. As the Cheshire Cat implies, any result is accepted.

Requirements Elicitation is the a necessary first step in the project life cycle.

Starting execution with a project charter leaves a big unknown to deal with.

With Prince2™ methodology, Requirements Elicitation is an up-front work effort that defines the stakeholder wants and needs, so that we can establish a business case *before* a project charter is considered. As a separate consensus-building exercise it does not have to rush stakeholders into agreeing to something they have not fully thought through, which reduces the frequency of subsequent change requests that otherwise further delay the project execution. In a pre-project state the number of IT resources are limited, eliminating the need to rush stakeholders into any decisions they may come to regret. Once you have a team twirling their thumbs waiting for the requirements to be finalized the project costs accumulate quickly, even if you use Agile.
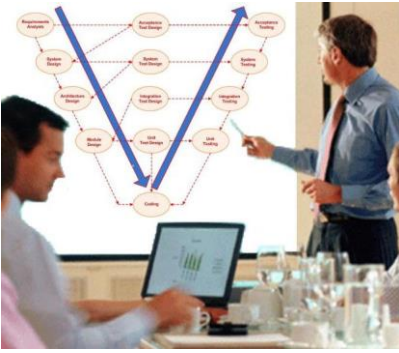
Requirements are the backbone of a development project: they tell developers what code to write, and testers how to determine if the code is functioning correctly. Without requirements you have no traceability into a development process – making up requirements as the project moves along ends up reflecting what is implemented rather than what stakeholders truly want. Unfortunately, that is not usually the same thing. We need to match requirements with the business processes that we need, not simply change processes.

Requirements must reflect how the business operates, to make sure that the required processes continue to be supported (but with greater efficiency). We must validate the impact on business units, operating departments, and clients. We must confirm that the new process will improve the bottom-line, by determining the cost of implementing specific functionality relative to what it contributes to revenues. This assessment helps to prioritize requirements, so we can create a backlog of functionality in priority order starting with prerequisites (aspects that we cannot leave out of the initial implementation) and add elective functionality to stay within budgetary limits. An important product from this effort will be documentation and user-training that enables the stakeholders and employees to adapt to, and perform well with, the new product.

We can identify the trade-offs between COTS and custom development, before we charter the project that will then implement these requirements accordingly. If a ready-made solution can be purchased (even for part of the implementation) that should be considered up front. This is an opportunity to transform requirements into an RFP that solicits vendor proposals for a COTS product. Based on what a selected product may have to offer, new development scope may be reduced based on a gap analysis and the overall project risk may be significantly reduced.

I developed several tools and techniques based on using Excel™-VBA as an elicitation tool and a tracking tool, as well as a tool for requirements analysis and documentation. It reflects progress during the elicitation process, and it provides the input for a business case to decide if the scope is sufficient to warrant a development project. This tool is independent of other documentation so that it retains its usefulness to cross-check traceability of code implementation and to drive the QA testing process that confirms the operations of that code. I can explain the relationship between the requirements and the business acceptance testing and how this ensures that there are appropriate testing provisions at each stage of the project to ensure we deliver the solution that stakeholders are expecting.

Low cost introductory offer for commercial engagements

For this **introductory offer** we charge $850.00 per day for commercial engagements (for out-of-town venues add $400.00 for travel time, plus reimbursement of transportation and lodging expenses at cost).

Respectfully,

Frits J. Bos, PMP