

REQUIREMENT COLLECTION

Introduction

When it comes to any type of project, requirement collection plays a key role. Requirements collection is not only important for the project, but it is also important for the project management function.

For the project, understanding what the project will eventually deliver is critical for its success. Through requirements, the project management can determine the end deliveries of the project and how the end deliveries should address client's specific requirements.

Although requirements collection looks quite straightforward; surprisingly, this is one of the project phases where most of the projects start with the wrong foot. In general, majority of the failed projects have failed due to the wrong or insufficient requirements gathering. We will discuss on this in the following section.

Following is an illustration indicating where the requirements collection comes in a project:



The Importance of Requirements

Let's take a software development project as an example. Once the project initiation is over, the business analyst team is in a hurry to collect requirements. The BA *businessanalysts* team use various methods to capture project requirements and then pass the requirements to the project team. Once business requirements are converted into technical requirements, the implementation starts.

Although the above cycle looks quite normal and trouble-free, the reality is somewhat different. In most of the cases, the BA team is unable to capture all the requirements related to the project. They always overlook a portion of requirements. During the construction of the project, usually the client recognizes the requirements gaps of the project.

The project team will have to implement these missing requirements with no additional client payments or with client approved change requests. In case if it was BA team's fault, the service provider may have to absorb the cost for implementing the missing requirements. In such instances, if the effort for missing requirements has a significant impact on the cost of the project, the project may be a financial loss for the service provider.

Therefore, the requirement collection process is the most important phase of any project.

The Process for Requirements Collection

For the purpose of requirements collection, there are a few methods used by the business analysts. These methods usually differ from one project to another and one client organization to another.

Usually requirements for a new system are gathered from the potential end-users of the system. The methods used for gathering requirements from these potential end-users vary depending on the nature of the end-users. As an example, if there is a large number of end-users, then the workshop method can be used for requirements collection.

In this method, all the potential end-users are asked to participate for a workshop. In this workshop, the business analysts do engage with the users and collect the requirements for the new system. Sometimes, the workshop session is video recorded in order to review and capture any user feedback.

If the user base is quite small in number, the business analysts can carry out face-to-face interviews. This is the most effective way of finding all the necessary requirements as the business analyst can have all their questions asked and cross questioned as well.

Questioners can be used effectively for requirements collection process, but this should not be the

only method of interacting with the end-users. Questioners should be used as a supporting feature for interviews or a workshop.

In addition to the above methods, there are many other specific methods that can be used for specific conditions.

Tips for Successful Requirements Collection

Following are some of the tips for making the requirements collection process successful:

- Never assume that you know customer's requirements. What you usually think, could be quite different to what the customer wants. Therefore, always verify with the customer when you have an assumption or a doubt.
- Get the end-users involved from the start. Get their support for what you do.
- At the initial levels, define the scope and get customer's agreement. This helps you to successfully focus on scope of features.
- When you are in the process of collecting the requirements, make sure that the requirements are realistic, specific and measurable.
- Focus on making the requirements document crystal clear. Requirement document is the only way to get the client and the service provider to an agreement. Therefore, there should not be any gray area in this document. If there are gray areas, consider this would lead to potential business issues.
- Do not talk about the solution or the technology to the client until all the requirements are gathered. You are not in a position to promise or indicate anything to the client until you are clear about the requirements.
- Before moving into any other project phases, get the requirements document signed off by the client.
- If necessary, create a prototype to visually illustrate the requirements.

Conclusion

Requirement collection is the most important step of a project. If the project team fails to capture all the necessary requirements for a solution, the project will be running with a risk. This may lead to many disputes and disagreements in the future, and as a result, the business relationship can be severely damaged.

Therefore, take requirement collection as a key responsibility of the project team. Until the requirements are signed off, do not promise or comment on the nature of the solution.

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