

They Wanted WHAT?!?!?!?

Three Keys to More Successful Projects

Presentation Handout

Great requirements are the foundation of a great project. To get great requirements:

● ASK

- Talk to all stakeholders.
- Seek problems, not solutions (very hard for our people to do!).
- Ask individuals whenever possible, not groups.
- As with the written requirement in mind.

● WRITE

- Use standardized language: [WHO/WHAT] shall be able to [VERB] [VERB EXPANDER] while [CONSTRAINTS].
 - [The system] shall be able to [queue 8,000 incoming 9-1-1 calls] [simultaneously] while [maintaining quality and response requirements detailed in Section 4.3 of this document].
- Decomposition is your friend! (Not the stinky kind...). Reduce each requirement to the level that it can be completed by a single discipline involved in the project. This can be “the vendor,” “the dispatchers,” or “the manager.” More than one discipline means you have more than one requirement.
- Use “shall” and “must,” avoiding “should,” “can,” “may” and other ambiguous words.
- Trace each requirement to a specific person.
- Verify each requirement supports a business need.
- Write problem statements, don’t design the solution.

● REVIEW

- The easy part: get someone else to read the requirement and tell you what it means.
- The hard part: rewrite it so it means what you meant it to mean!
- Remember, the purpose of communication is the response you receive.
- Repeat
 - Work the steps until your requirements meet the criteria shown below.
 - Hang in there. All this planning and precision pays off in better vendor responses, faster detailed design, nearly automatic testing and training plans, and the knowledge that you really “gave them what they wanted!”

Great Requirements are...

- ▶ Correct
- ▶ Complete
- ▶ Brief
- ▶ Prioritized
- ▶ Owned
- ▶ Clear
- ▶ Consistent
- ▶ Role Defined
- ▶ Verifiable
- ▶ Traceable
- ▶ Feasible
- ▶ Modular
- ▶ Design-free
- ▶ Positive

Learn more:

“The Fast Forward MBA in Project Management,” Eric Verzuh, 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN: 0-471-69284-0

“Specifying Good Requirements”

Donald Firesmith, Software Engineering Institute, U.S.A
http://www.jot.fm/issues/issue_2003_07/column7/

“Writing Effective Use Cases,” Alistair Cockburn, 2001 Addison-Wesley. ISBN: 978-0-201-70225-5 (considered the authoritative source for use case creation, often used in software development but useful for other process-oriented projects as well)

“Structured Systems Analysis: Tools and Techniques,” Chris Gane and Trish Sarson, 1977, IST Books. ISBN: 978-0930196004

The PowerPoint presentation Dave used will be available from www.adcomm911.com shortly after the conference. Contact Dave at d.magnenat@adcomm911.com .