**Business Requirements Analysis: Clearly Agreeing What You're Going to Deliver**

**Step 1: Identify Key Stakeholders**

Identify the key people who will be affected by the project. Start by clarifying exactly who the project's sponsor is. This may be an internal or external client. Either way, it is essential that you know who has the final say on what will be included in the project's scope, and what won't. Then, identify who will use the solution, product, or service. These are your end-users. Your project is intended to meet their needs, so you must consider their inputs.

Tip:

Make sure that your list is complete: remember, end-users for a product or service might all be in one division or department, or they might be spread across various departments or levels of your organization. Our article on Stakeholder Analysis will help you identify stakeholders.

**Step 2: Capture Stakeholder Requirements**

Ask each of these key stakeholders, or groups of stakeholders, for their requirements from the new product or service. What do they want and expect from this project?

Tip 1:

Remember, each person considers the project from his or her individual perspective. You must understand these different perspectives and gather the different requirements to build a complete picture of what the project should achieve.

Tip 2:

When interviewing stakeholders, be clear about what the basic scope of the project is, and keep your discussions within this. Otherwise, end-users may be tempted to describe all sorts of functionality that your project was never designed to provide. If users have articulated these desires in detail, they may be disappointed when they are not included in the final specification.

You can use several methods to understand and capture these requirements. Here, we give you four techniques:

***•Technique 1: Using stakeholder interviews***

Talk with each stakeholder or end-user individually. This allows you to understand each person's specific views and needs.

***•Technique 2: Using joint interviews or focus groups***

Conduct group workshops. This helps you understand how information flows between different divisions or departments, and ensure that hand-overs will be managed smoothly.

Tip:

When using these two methods, it's a good idea to keep asking "Why?" for each requirement. This may help you eliminate unwanted or unnecessary requirements, so you can develop a list of the most critical issues.

***•Technique 3: Using "use cases"***

This scenario-based technique lets you walk through the whole system or process, step by step, as a user. It helps you understand how the system or service would work. This is a very good technique for gathering functional requirements, but you may need multiple "use cases" to understand the functionality of the whole system.

Tip:

You might want to find existing use cases for similar types of systems or services. You can use these as a starting point for developing your own use case.

***•Technique 4: Building Prototypes***

Build a mock-up or model of the system or product to give users an idea of what the final product will look like. Using this, users can address feasibility issues, and they can help identify any inconsistencies and problems.

You can use one or more of the above techniques to gather all of the requirements. For example, when you have a complete list of requirements after your interviews, you can then build a prototype of the system or product.

**Step 3: Categorize Requirements**

To make analysis easier, consider grouping the requirements into these four categories:

***•Functional Requirements*** – These define how a product/service/solution should function from the end-user's perspective. They describe the features and functions with which the end-user will interact directly.

***•Operational Requirements*** – These define operations that must be carried out in the background to keep the product or process functioning over a period of time.

***•Technical Requirements*** – These define the technical issues that must be considered to successfully implement the process or create the product.

***•Transitional Requirements*** – These are the steps needed to implement the new product or process smoothly.

**Step 4: Interpret and Record Requirements**

Once you have gathered and categorized all of the requirements, determine which requirements are achievable, and how the system or product can deliver them.

To interpret the requirements, do the following:

**•Define requirements precisely** – Ensure that the requirements are: •Not ambiguous or vague.

**•Clearly worded.**

**•Sufficiently detailed so that everything is known**. (Project over-runs and problems usually come from unknowns that were not identified, or sufficiently well-analyzed.)

**•Related to the business needs.**

**•Listed in sufficient detail to create a working system or product design.**

**•Prioritize requirements** – Although many requirements are important, some are more important than others, and budgets are usually limited. Therefore, identify which requirements are the most critical, and which are "nice-to-haves".

**•Analyze the impact of change** – carry out an Impact Analysis to make sure that you understand fully the consequences your project will have for existing processes, products and people.

•**Resolve conflicting issues** – Sit down with the key stakeholders and resolve any conflicting requirements issues. You may find Scenario Analysis helpful in doing this, as it will allow all those involved to explore how the proposed project would work in different possible "futures".

•**Analyze feasibility –** Determine how reliable and easy-to-use the new product or system will be. A detailed analysis can help identify any major problems.

Once everything is analyzed, present your key results and a detailed report of the business needs. This should be a written document.

Circulate this document among the key stakeholders, end-users, and development teams, with a realistic deadline for feedback. This can help resolve any remaining stakeholder conflicts, and can form part of a "contract" or agreement between you and the stakeholders.

**Step 5: Sign Off**

Finally, make sure you get the signed agreement of key stakeholders, or representatives of key stakeholder groups, saying that the requirements as presented precisely reflect their needs. This formal commitment will play an important part in ensuring that the project does not suffer from scope creep later one.

Key Points

The key to a successful business requirements analysis is identifying what the new system or product will do for all appropriate end-users/stakeholders – and to understand what they WANT the new system or product to do.

You can use various techniques to gather requirements, but make sure those requirements are clear, concise, and related to the business. This process also helps you identify and resolve any conflicting requirements issues early on.

Once you complete your analysis, record it in a written document. This becomes the "contract" for creating the product or system that addresses all the needs of your business or your client.

**Reference**

Mind Tools (2015), Business Requirements Analysis Clearly Agreeing What You're Going to Deliver, available online: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM\_77.htm