Requirements gathering

Sociology, Communication

Requirements Gathering 101 By Duncan Haughey, PMP Requirements gathering is an essential part of any project and project management. Understanding fully what a project will deliver is critical to its success. This may sound like common sense, but surprisingly it's an area that is often given far too little attention. Many projects start with the barest headline list of requirements, only to find later the customers' needs have not been properly understood. One-way to avoid this problem is by producing a statement of requirements. This document is a guide to the main requirements of the project.

It provides: A succinct requirement specification for management purposes. A statement of key objectives - a " cardinal points" specification. A description of theenvironmentin which the system will work. Background information and references to other relevant material. Information on major design constraints. The contents of the statement of requirements should be stable or change relatively slowly. Once you have created your statement of requirements, ensure the customer and all other stakeholders sign-up to it and understand that this and only this will be delivered.

Finally, ensure you have cross-referenced the requirements in the statement of requirements with those in the project definition report to ensure there is no mismatch. 10 Rules for Successful Requirements Gathering To be successful at requirements gathering and to give your project an increased likelihood of success follow these rules: 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. Don't assume you know what the customer wants, ask. Involve the users from the start. Define and agree the scope of the project. Ensure requirements are specific, realistic and measurable. Gain clarity if there is any doubt.

Create a clear, concise and thorough requirements document and share it with the customer. Confirm your understanding of the requirements with the customer (play them back). Avoid talkingtechnologyor solutions until the requirements are fully understood. Get the requirements agreed with the stakeholders before the project starts. Create a prototype if necessary to confirm or refine the customers' requirements. Common Mistakes Basing a solution on complex or cutting edge technology and then discovering that it cannot easily be rolled out to the 'real world'.

Not prioritising the User Requirements, for example 'must have', 'should have', 'could have' and 'would have,' known as the MoSCoW principle. Not enough consultation with real users and practitioners. Solving the 'problem' before you know what it is. Lacking a clear understanding and making assumptions rather than asking. Requirements gathering is about creating a clear, concise and agreed set of customer requirements that allow you to provide exactly what they are looking for. © Project Smart 2000-2011. All rights reserved. 1