

ACS 567 - Software Project Management

Spring 2009 - Kalyan Govindu

SWEBOK Knowledge Area : Software Requirement - Extended

"The Problem with Requirements"

Requirements or a clear definition of what the customer is looking for in an application or system is very crucial and a very hard thing to come by. This is especially true of any medium to large scale projects. Usually, there are several layers in between the developer and final customer, like the Business Analysis and/or business representatives. The information gets distorted by the time it filters through the layer to the developer on what needs to be accomplished.

I have seldom seen any business requirements documentation that clearly and in a developer friendly manner the user wants from the system. Common language is to be blamed here to certain level. In some organization where there is not central data dictionary or a common definition of the terms mean, often what the business analysis are referring to might differ from what the developer or project technical lead has in mind. Such a common language/dictionary is crucial in a multi layered company for good communication between the departments.

The ray of hope that I have seen recently in this area, that beings to address the problem are the phases defined by the agile process or any flavor there-off. All the phases of an agile lifecycle are bundled into several iterations. In agile, at the end of iteration a release of what is complete thus far should be made and put in front of the actual customer. Essentially forcing the customer to look, approve and/or provide feedback. This has helped immensely in mitigating any misunderstanding

early on in the project helping the later iteration releases to be growly more successful.

Ultimately, it comes down to communication and common language between customer and developers. We at our company have come to realize this by implementing Software Development lifecycle (SDLC) that required it. No matter what the mean, regular feedback dialogue with the customer will result in a better application.