Understanding Stakeholders and Creating a Requirements Elicitation Plan

By The Business Analyst Boot Camp

Objective: To gain an understanding of the needs, interests, concerns and product success criteria of the stakeholders of your project. You need this understanding to properly create an elicitation strategy for the project.

In the previous class, we examined tools and techniques for identifying all of the stakeholders you need for successful requirements gathering for your project.

Once you have identified all of your stakeholders, the next step is to sort those stake holders into categories so that you can choose the right elicitation techniques.

You also want to be sure that you know the right elicitation sessions to include each stake holder in.

A front line user of a software application may become frustrated if he is included in the elicitation meeting for the high-level business objectives of a software system.

The reason for this is that he will probably want to discuss his need for new and improved features of the system, but may not be interested in the impact the system will make on the company's financial bottom line.

If his needs are not discussed in the elicitation session, he will feel left out or feel that his needs are being ignored.

So, you need to sort your stakeholders into categories based on their needs and interests to successfully hold your elicitation sessions.

Stakeholder Categories

There are three basic stakeholder categories: Customers, Users and Others.

Customers will include your Project Sponsor and your Project Champion.

Users are divided into Direct Users (those who interact directly with your software system and Indirect Users.

You may or may not be able to neatly categorize your stakeholders into Customers, Users and Others.

However, these stakeholder categories are not set in stone. What matters is: What Stakeholder Categories Matter to **YOUR** Project?

To find out the real categories for sorting out your stakeholders, ask the following questions:

1. Who are the stakeholders responsible for authorizing and paying for the system?
2. Who are the stakeholders responsible for helping the system gain acceptance?
3. Who are the stakeholders who will directly interact with or use the system?
4. Who are the stakeholders who use products from the system?
5. Who are the stakeholders who are affected by the system?

6. Who are the stakeholders who have information that we need about the system?
7. Who are the stakeholders who will create the system?
8. Are there other systems that interact with this system?

As you answer these questions for your project, you will begin to gain a clear understanding of who your stakeholders are and how to group or categorize them.

The answers to these questions will identify the different segments of stakeholders and give you an idea of how much or how little each category will need to be involved in the requirements elicitation process.

All of this serves to make your requirements elicitation process more precise and successful.

A note of caution: Your stakeholder categories will only prove useful if you have properly and thoroughly identified *all* of your stakeholders as discussed in the previous class – Identifying Stakeholders.

If your list of stakeholders is incomplete, you are likely to end up with inadequate requirements no matter how thorough your categories are.