

Case Study: Validate Requirements – Change Request

Contributed by Giorgos Sioutzos

Background

ABC Company, a software development company based in Greece, mainly specializes in delivering and implementing high-risk and complex projects concerning information systems that are used by public social security institutions to perform everyday tasks more effectively.

ABC Company is divided into Divisions and Subdivisions concerning the geographical structure of delivering social security solutions, with subdivisions concerning the different teams (sales, development, business analysis etc.).

ABC Company retains a network of partners such as legal firms, consulting firms and IT firms at the locations of the public social security organizations that are using its solutions. In this way, it ensures comprehensive and clear understanding of local peculiarities and the context of the client's activities.

Change Request

A client requested a new component in the existing social security system for a country in Asia.

- The communication with the customer is done through the partner in Asia.
- The preparation of the document given the inputs of the partners is assigned to the Europe Division, as the Asia Division is not available due to concurrent activities. (Given the same Change Request (CR) is being implemented for the client in Europe, it is assumed the team will be able to effectively handle the task.)
- The final CR will be prepared by the headquarter team in Greece.



Challenges

The Business Analysis Subdivision of the Europe Division has no knowledge of the business domain of the social security system in Asia.

The assigned team has no understanding of the requirements of the system the Asian customer is using.

The team assigned the CR's requirement documenting does not know the mentality, the communication preferences nor the thinking styles of the partners of ABC Company in Asia, nor do they understand the customer's expectations.

The team is not aware of the business analysis approach agreed upon with the key stakeholders at the beginning of the project.

The perception of quality from the Asian client is different from the perception of quality from the European clients.

Actions

The solution scope was expanded / broaden from the initial solution and a new team was in charge of continuing and enhancing the existing requirements. Every addition needed to be done to achieve a concise wholeness. The addition was embedded to fit the philosophy of the initial requirements so there would be a harmonic addition from the old to the new.

The team referenced **the Glossary** that had been developed which was very helpful for specific terms in the requirements' description.

A **discussion with the project manager** was held so the team could understand the fundamental aspects of the business of social security in Asia.

A **checklist** of quality aspects common for the ABC Company was used in the requirements writing process.



Outcomes

The first version of the document concerning the change requirements was not approved from the customer as the terminology and the “philosophy” of the additions did not achieve a concise wholeness. A holistic approach was missing and the additional requirements were perceived as foreign to the initial approved requirement set. After completing the mentioned actions, the second version of the document was approved.

Lessons Learned

It is common as a business analyst to be member of a team that is responsible for formatting the requirements for a solution that is already developed and functional.

New demands of the customer for an existing solution that may have been produced several years prior may require the solution to be broadened and enhanced. The changes do not affect the core of the solution; however, they are additional capabilities and functionalities.

- Write the requirements of an initial solution in a way that allows additions and modifications. Future demands should always be a consideration when you write requirements, meaning the requirement should be flexible enough to accommodate future enchantments.
- Identify assumptions as soon as possible, and communicate them to the stakeholder(s) to create a clear path for the future state of a request for enhancing the solution scope.
- Inform the stakeholders that the basis of your initial solution cannot dramatically change. This indicates a new solution. However, based on the current solution, additions can be possible and every solution shall have inherited elements of expansibility.
- Reduce the assumptions as much as possible for stakeholder’s expectations. Try not to creatively fill in gaps in understanding and information.
- Pay attention during the confirmation of the elicitation results. Try to understand expectations and assumed benefits from the client side that are not clearly stated.
- Define specific evaluation criteria approved by the client for the implementation of the solution. The criteria and metrics will help you validate the deliverables concerning the requirements before you submit them for approval.
- Check the alignment of the requirements set and designs with the solution scope. Note: In a Change Request the initial solution scope is changed.

Techniques Used

- **Reviews**
 - › Perform regular reviews with the stakeholders before the final requirements document is submitted for official review.
- **Document Analysis**
 - › Perform document analysis to gather background information to understand the context of a business need.