

10 REASONS SPREADSHEETS DON'T WORK FOR REQUIREMENTS

Requirements development is an iterative and incremental process that involves elicitation, analysis, development, elaboration, and refinement. Word processing and data spreadsheet programs were designed to power the data-intensive nature of requirements definition and management.

Here's a look at what's needed to develop and manage accurate, complete requirements that result in informative business analysis and measurable outcomes—and why spreadsheets won't get the job done right.

1. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES SUPPORT FOR THE UNDERLYING PROCESS

When selecting a tool for better requirements and better business analysis, you need one that supports the underlying process—this includes requirements development and management. Requirements are often supported with linked documentation of business rules, visualizations, and dependencies to other requirements and use cases. It is difficult to track the evolution of requirements and their relationships with these documents using a word processor or spreadsheet. If a tool is selected that does not adequately support the process, then workarounds become needed and quality suffers.

2. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES COLLABORATION

Developing requirements in a collaborative manner greatly improves the completeness and accuracy of the final requirements. Business analysts and developers need to be able to capture, evaluate, and review comments on a requirement-by-requirement basis, and key stakeholders need to be able submit innovations and improvements. Ideally, stakeholders can see only the requirements that pertain to their function and are able to review requirements as they are developed or refined. Stakeholders then can determine which business rules apply and map these to the requirements. This is difficult to do using a word processor that is designed to create documents.

3. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES HAVING MANAGEABLE DATA

In today's agile environment, analysts need to manage backlogs and not be distracted by creating overly large requirements documents. With a backlog, analysts can add requirements when they are discovered, and then prioritize new requirements within the backlog of existing requirements. As requirements are transferred to development, analysts can then remove items from the backlog. A tool that lets users not only collect data but also manage, sort, prioritize, and maximize it is imperative.

4. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES BUSINESS ANALYSIS SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Not only are word processing and spreadsheet programs not requirement management tools, they also are not business analysis resources. Writing good requirements requires skilled business analysts who know how to draft clear, accurate, valuable, complete and prioritized requirements. Business analysts need to know:

- How should requirements be organized?
- What level of detail do I need in requirements?
- How should I prioritize requirements?
- How do I know if defined requirements are complete?
- What does a good requirement look like?

An effective tool will help users hone and apply their business analysis abilities by providing access to extensive research and training materials, templates, and examples. Word processing and spreadsheet programs are not loaded with resources for analysis, processes, and domain knowledge that can increase an organization's business analysis maturity.

5. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES REDUCING WASTE

According to the latest Standish Chaos Report, 45% of functionality developed is never used and a further 19% of functionality is rarely used. This represents significant waste and results in higher complexity, as well as higher development and maintenance costs.

The ability to evaluate requirements one by one as they are being developed provides the opportunity to eliminate unnecessary functionality. This benefit is not achievable with large requirements documents that strive to define 100% of all requirements before development begins.

6. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES REAL TRACEABILITY

Word processing and spreadsheet programs do not provide the level of traceability that requirements management tools provide. Adding to the issue, requirements management tools themselves do not provide the level of traceability that's actually needed to define accurate, complete requirements. Many provide for internal traceability, which is mapping of requirements to use cases or test cases. However, the real value of traceability is the ability to trace requirements to external artifacts such as design documents, training

manuals, program code, RFPs, and delivered software.

7. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES DEFINITION IN LAYERS

For good outcomes, requirements should be defined in layers. It is best to start with a set of features, and then use the set of features to gather functional and non-functional requirements to be satisfied by the planned solutions. Additional elaboration and details are added to the functional requirements as needed. Different individuals might provide documentation on each of these layers. For example, the skills to define a set of features for back-office solutions are different from the skills needed to create a UI mockup for a functional requirement. Word processing and spreadsheet programs do not have the functionality to define requirements in layers, making it difficult to match the skills and competencies of analysts with the needs of the project. This can result in delays, failed projects, or misuse of valuable resources.

8. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES ADDRESSING FIVE TYPES OF REQUIREMENTS

IIBA's BABOK defines five types of requirements, which all have a specific purpose:

- Business requirements
- Stakeholder requirements
- Solution requirements—functional
- Solution requirements—non-functional
- Transition requirements

Distinctly capturing all five types of requirements is critical for delivering maximum business value. Other programs, as well as many requirements management tools, do not have the capacity to capture and document all five types of requirements. Not properly addressing all five types of requirements can place projects at risk.

9. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES BUSINESS ANALYSIS

Requirements engineering and business analysis are not the same. Requirements engineering is primarily focused on building products and does not include many of the activities involved in business analysis, such as business process improvements, building a business case, or delivering business benefits. Business analysis is much broader than requirements engineering.

Word processing and spreadsheet programs and the majority of requirements management tools provide little or no support for business analysis. Unlike word processing and spreadsheet tools, a requirements management tool can work well

for defining and managing requirements. However, the final product may not deliver any business product value or may not help users perform their activities. This is because the tool only allowed for defining functional and non-functional requirements and did not allow for capturing business and stakeholder requirements.

10. REQUIREMENTS REQUIRES THE RIGHT TOOL

If the goal is to deliver business outcomes and help users better perform their daily activities, word processing and spreadsheets won't work. A tool is needed that:

- Addresses all knowledge areas in IIBA's BABOK:
 - Business Analysis Planning and Monitoring
 - Elicitation
 - Requirements Analysis
 - Requirements Management and Communication
 - Enterprise Analysis
 - Solution Assessment and Validation
- Captures all five types of requirements as defined by the IIBA
- Focuses on customer collaboration over rigid engineering specifications
- Addresses people, processes, and technology, not just technical specifications
- Traces requirements to needed business processes changes
- Provides a stakeholder impact assessment within the tool
- Links requirements to IT services and components
- Captures stakeholder needs separate from requirements, with full traceability from requirements to stakeholder needs
- Defines the problem statement and business case within the tool
- Records expected business outcomes in the form of measures or KPIs
- Focuses on collaboration between stakeholders and developers
- Allows all stakeholders to be engaged in the project lifecycle, not just upfront in requirements definition
- Allows requirements to be used for tracking and measuring benefits realization after the solution has been delivered

EXPLORE A TOOL BUILT FOR REQUIREMENTS MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS ANALYSIS

Enfocus Requirements Suite™ provides automation, collaboration, built-in resources, and a central repository of business rules and knowledge. It provides users with functionality they cannot get with word processing, spreadsheets, and requirements management tools. With it, users can develop and manage accurate, complete requirements, perform superior business analysis, and ultimately, deliver more value to the business. Learn more at www.EnfocusSolutions.com.