SAP BW Consulting, Inc.

Top 5 Best Practices for Software Requirements Gathering

1 **Interview Customer.** Put yourself into your customers shoes. You can not document a requirement until you understand the requirement as well as the customer does. This means you have to interview the customer until you thoroughly understand their requirement.

2 **Work in Multiple Passes.** Gathering requirements is a learning process for you. You have to learn all you can about the requirement so that you can lead the conversation when talking to the developers. You won't learn everything the first time you talk to the customer about a new requirement. So plan on sitting with the customer several time over the next 2 to 3 weeks in order to ask questions to the customer and learn from them. Each time you will learn more about their requirement and you will use these updates to your knowledge to update and clarify the requirements document.

3 **Use a template that best reflects the Requirement.** Many times the project mandates that all requirements must be submitted on such and such form. 9 times out of 10 though, the form they want you to use, does not really fit to the requirement. What should you do? Fill their form out minimally to get it into the system. At the same time, you have to invent a new form that does fit the requirement. No other way effectively works.

4 **Story Board and Create Mock Ups.** What ever the requirement might be about, you have to create a story board or a mock up of the final finished product on paper. You want to site with the customer and work out the details of the final output. In the case of SAP BW, this will be a BEx Query, Webi Report or xCelsius dashboard. You want to create with pencil and paper different views of the final output you expect from the developers. You want to create as many views as possible of the final output and you want to sit with the customer and discuss what happens when you push each button in your mockup. You want to know if your mockup will actually work and that the developers can actually build it before you even submit the requirement to the developers.

5 **Test Each Mockup and answer any final questions.** After you create a pencil and paper mockup of the different views of the final output you expect from the developers, you need to run walk through simulations of each screen and button and try to answer any additional questions you think the developers will be asking you. Such as: What is the sources of the data. What systems are they on. Who owns the data and what is their contact information. What tables and fields from each data source are you pulling data from.

6 **If you have done everything right.** Then the developers will still ask you a few questions, that is normal, but they will not bog you down for weeks after you submit the new requirement trying to clarify the items above. They will be able to concentrate their time on development rather than additional requirements clarification. This keeps your schedule and project on track.