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Subject: [Norton AntiSpam] [Success with Requirements] Teasing Out the Hairball with Separation of Concerns; Webinar Recording on Requirements & Trust and other Resources
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Ellen Gottesdiener, Publisher

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Helping your business and technical teams get product requirements right so their projects start smart and deliver the right product at the right time

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Welcome to our Newsletter!

Hi, Ellen - How are you? Welcome to our lastest edition of EBG's eNewsletter, *Success with Requirements*.

If you have not done so already, please add ellen@ebgconsulting.com to your address book to be sure you receive *Success with Requirements* (and not in your junk mail folder).

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I hope you find this issue useful. Please contact me with your suggestions and feedback.

Ellen Gottesdiener,
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Webinar Access

On May 24th, Ellen Gottesdiener delivered a free Webinar, "*Practical Techniques to Elicit Requirements -While Building Trust*". This webinar was sponsored by Compuware in conjunction with The Requirements Network Group.

We had a wonderful turnout, and *lots* of great questions. I am currently responding to the questions we did not have time to answer live. Those of you who pre-registered will be receiving a link to the recording, slides and answers to the questions in several weeks. (For those who did not pre-register: I'll be provide a link on my website so you too can access this information).

If you missed the live event and would like hear to the recording now, click here.

Let me know what you think! email me at: ellen@ebgconsulting.com

Teasing Out the Hairball with Separation of Concerns (or "What Doesn't Belong"?)

One of These Things
(Is Not Like The Others)

One of these things is not like the others,
One of these things just doesn't belong,
Can you tell which thing is not like the others
By the time I finish my song?
Did you guess which thing was not like the others?
Did you guess which thing just doesn't belong?
If you guessed this one is not like the others,
Then you're absolutely...right!

from Sesame Street, by Joe Raposo and Jon Stone

On Sesame Street children are given a set of items and be challenged to find out what doesn't belong. For example, one group might be: table, chair, bed, door, baby. A correct answer means the child can differentiate between classes of objects.

A lot of our work as analysts involves figuring out what doesn't belong: you've got to untangle a complex hairball of business and technical issues, navigate competing stakeholder needs, tolerate organizational and team politics, consider competitive concerns and market needs, manage schedule pressures, and more. To straighten all this out, you need to **separate out all the issues while exploring their interconnections.**

Practice the software engineering principle called *separation of concerns*, meaning you focus on one item of interest at a time. This does not imply you ignore other concerns. Rather, you separate and associate related concerns; this enables you to discover hidden complexities and relationships. This sound principle plays itself out in many aspects of computer science including object orientation, aspect oriented programming, service-oriented architecture, and data normalization.

If you're an analyst, you need to apply separation of concerns in your requirements modeling work to both understand and manage requirements complexity. I'll give you some pointers on this below.

Traps lie waiting in those very requirements models. For example, many analysts utilize *use cases* for user requirements modeling, then **violate the separation of concerns principle**.

I was recently reviewing a set of use cases for a project team. They had loaded up their use cases with requirements information that should have been separated into multiple related models. Their use cases contained data attributes, business rules, user interface details, and more. To make things worse, data and business rules were inconsistently named.

The upshot of this? **The analysts ended up reworking the models to separate yet link** (through requirements trace matrices) the previously entangled models; they finally recognized inconsistencies and had to spend additional time teasing them out. In the end, separating yet associating their models allowed them to plan for incremental implementation and better adapt to changing requirements.

Derive and maintain multiple interrelated views of requirements. Example categories to separate and concurrently link - when it comes to user requirements models - include separating:

- Timing and dynamics details in events and states
- Data details in the data or class model, or data dictionary
- Business rules in a business rule repository
- User interface details in dialog maps or prototypes
- Process and task details in use cases, scenarios or stories

Help business stakeholders understand how business goals and objectives (e.g. business requirements) drive user and software requirements. Detect and correct internal inconsistencies in user requirements that share common events, rules and data. Remember to associate quality attributes with functional requirements. Be sure to separate out requirements

allocated to the business from those allocated to software.

If you don't do these things, **you impede your flexibility for developing requirements and obscure hidden complexities**. Building or ignoring the hairball hurts the business by leaving you less able to adapt requirements to changing market and project circumstances.

During requirements analysis, developing and playing with multiple related models gives all stakeholders (business and technical) a more complete view of the entire tapestry of user needs. It allows you to look at one thread or concern at a time within the context of the whole tapestry.

So next time you review your requirements, untangle the hairball by asking ***what doesn't belong***?

~ ellen

If you'd like to know the origins of the concept of *separation of concerns*, read famed computer scientist Edsger W. Dijkstra's 1974 essay On the role of scientific thought in which he discussed the value of tackling various viewpoints simultaneously. A viewable transcription is here.

If you want to learn more about multiple interconnected models for exploring user workshops, you can try Chapter 4 of my book *The Software Requirements Memory Jogger*.

What are your thoughts on using multiple, interweaving models to explore requirements? Send me an email: (ellen@ebgconsulting.com).

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Upcoming Events

1. **Both Mary Gorman and Ellen Gottesdiener will present** workshops and track sessions at ProjectWorld/World Congress for Business Analysts-Boston, the week of June 18th. For a speaker discount from EBG Consulting, register using Discount Code SPKRM1910EG.

2. Ellen Gottesdiener will conduct a tutorial on **requirements-driven workshops for agile projects** at Agile 2007 Conference-Washington, D.C. the week of August 13th.

Resources of Interest

Each month well provide a few resources we think are worthwhile. We welcome you comments and suggestions for future issues!

- Naomi Karten, who is keynoting at ProjectWorld/World Congress for Business Analysts, writes on types of questions to ask when customers don't know what they want
- Al Davis' bibliography of over 4000 requirements-related books and articles
- My framework of multiple separate yet interrelated models (as I discuss in this issues main article). In my inaugural issue, I reference playing around with multiple models when discussing serious play.

Public Course Offerings

We are pleased to inform you that we are solidifying details for offering our new blended eLearning course, ***Roadmap to Successful Requirements*** (Blended = self-paced + instructor-led) in September (Indianapolis) and November (Philadelphia). Stay tuned for details.

For a quick glance at all our training, direct project help, and consulting offerings, view this matrix. For immediate questions, email us: training@ebgconsulting.com

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