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To: ellen@ebgconsulting.com
Subject: [Success with Requirements] "Investing in Interface Analysis"; New Agile Offerings, Upcoming Public Offerings; and other Resources
Date: Thursday, February 21, 2008 6:45:58 AM

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Ellen Gottesdiener, Publisher

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

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Success with Requirements™

Volume 2 :: Number 2 :: 2008

Welcome to our Newsletter!

ISSN: 1936-3583

Published monthly. To manage your subscription, see the end of this message.

Success with Requirements

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Hi, ellen -

Welcome to issue #2, Volume 2 of EBG's eNewsletter, *Success with Requirements*.

A seldom discussed and often overlooked requirements topic is *interface requirements*. Ignoring or delaying understanding these requirements can imperil your efforts.

In this issue, I'm pleased to share this incisive article by [Mary Gorman](#), our Senior Associate. Mary explains why and how you should invest in analyzing your interfaces requirements. I hope you'll find it useful.

As always, I welcome your reactions. Please let me know what topics you'd like to see me address in upcoming eNewsletters, too!

~ ellen

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New Agile Offerings

We're please to announce two new offerings for our clients who are transitioning to or now using agile methods.

1. Our newest course, [Agile Requirements: Collaborating to Define and Confirm Needs](#) builds skills in the agile method of developing requirements, the basis for delivering business value to customers on agile projects. Our training is based on experience with real agile projects. We address iteration, release, and product-level agile requirements. Through practice exercises, you will learn the skills you need to define and confirm customer needs.

2. Our new package of services that we call [Agile Jump-Start](#) is based on our experiences working with agile teams. It is a combination of coaching, mentoring, and workshop facilitation (often preceeding by our [Agile Requirements](#) training course). Agile Jump-Start is effective for launching new teams on a solid footing with an expert coach and is also highly effective for current agile teams that need help transitioning to agile. We help your team collaborate to adopt agile methods, while adapting the practices they need to deliver business value.

[FYI: Ellen Gottesdiener was recently quoted in an article on agile requirements. See "[Agile development spawns requirements, management changes](#)" (registration to the site might be required)].

Investing in Interface Analysis

Are you leaving your interface requirements to chance? Such gambling often contributes to poor quality requirements with accompanying heightened risks, delays, overruns and even project failures.

When I use the term *interface*, I'm including three types:

- ❑ User interfaces, including human-computer interfaces (HCI) and report interfaces
- ❑ System-to-system interfaces
- ❑ Interfaces to external hardware devices

Analysis versus Design

Interface analysis explores, identifies, models, and specifies the user and software requirements needed to support connections between your product and external components. It is the "**what**" and "**why**" of interfaces - things like navigation, data transmission, and general layout.

In contrast, **interface design** focuses on the "**how**" - the juicy implementation details, such as the detailed layout, style guide, widgets, rules for grouping, and timing.

For most people, design is the sexy part of interface work. That's why they want to jump into it with skimpy (or no) analysis. And that's why they often end up with redundant, confusing, or missing interface requirements and dissatisfied customers.

Want to **improve your odds**? Let's look at some key practices in good interface design.

Planning and budgeting

Start your interface analysis by **understanding the system boundaries**. A good scope model is a **context diagram**, which shows interfaces as directed arrows between the system and external components. You can use this model to support discussions with the components' owners, with the goal of setting priorities as well as budgeting and scheduling the needed work.

Diversifying

Another good practice is to use and integrate **multiple views** - such as behavioral, structural (data), and control (business rule) views - to gain different perspectives and discover and cross-verify requirements. For example, data appearing on a customer's UI window may also be sent to another application via a system-to-system interface as well as summarized in an executive report.

Eliciting and defining business and temporal events uncovers triggering interfaces as well as interfaces that relate to system responses. Stories or use cases may be used to understand the behavioral requirements involved with interfaces. Of course prototyping provides 'a picture

that's worth a thousand words'. But make sure to elicit the 'behind the scenes' requirements about data and business rules.

A **logical data model**, a detailed **data dictionary**, and detailed **business rules** speed interface analysis and also improve the quality of your interface requirements.

Make sure that **all three types of interfaces** – user interfaces, system-to-system and external hardware device interfaces are studied during analysis. Waiting until design to understand the basics of system-to-system and hardware device requirements creates unnecessary risk.

Collaborating with Experts

Knowing when to call in experts can save you time and money. For example, an expert data modeler can analyze the interface data requirements across all interfaces. For user interface expertise, you can enlist a specialist to study tasks and support usability needs.

The earlier you recognize the need, the more likely it is that you can schedule experts just when they're needed. It's also important to agree on how the parties will collaborate, who will take which roles and responsibilities, and what the work products will be.

Tally up the Returns

Allocating limited assets to analyze interfaces early in a project may be difficult. Yet creating a balanced portfolio of analysis-level artifacts, including interface needs, can yield more accurate planning and better quality requirements. You get an immediate return on the investment and that value continues to grow throughout the project.

~ Mary

Standard citation for this article: Mary Gorman, "Investing in Interface Analysis," *Success with Requirements*, Vol. 2, No. 2(2008).

For More Information:

Hooks, Ivy F and Kristin A. Farry, *Customer-Centered Products: Creating Successful Products through Requirements Management*, Amacom, 2001.

Gorman, Mary, [Event Modeling to the Rescue](#), October 2006: StickyMinds.com.

Gottesdiener, Ellen, [Software Requirements Memory Jogger: A Pocket Guide to Help Software and Business Teams Develop and Manage Requirements](#), GOAL/QPC, 2005.

Upcoming Public Offerings

Blended Classroom: **Roadmap to Success: Comprehensive**. We are offering this unique, blended training publicly in two locations:

- 📍 March 26-27, 2008: Indianapolis, Indiana
- 📍 April 16-17, 2008: Orlando, Florida

This unique experience includes a content-rich self-paced training curriculum *and* two days of instructor-led Analysis Modeling training. [Click here to learn more or register](#). **"Success with Requirements" eNewsletter subscribers use DISCOUNT CODE: RCRTS05S**

As always, you can take our self-paced eLearning course **Roadmap to Success: Foundation for Requirements Development and Management** as a stand-alone offering, or optionally combine it with our expert instructor-led training for our unique "blended classroom"

offering (publicly, as listed above, or on-site).

This engaging training includes: Long-term access (45 days) to curriculum; a copy of the industry "go to" book, [The Software Requirements Memory Jogger](#); and downloadable templates and printable tips. [Click here to learn more or register](#). **"Success with Requirements" eNewsletter subscribers use DISCOUNT CODE: RFRTS05**

Upcoming Events

1. [Ellen Gottesdiener](#) will be teaching the instructor-led portion of our blended classroom (self-paced combined with instructor-led) offering, [Roadmap to Success: Comprehensive](#) in Indianapolis (March 26-27, 2008). [Register early](#) to reserve your spot, class size is limited!
2. [Mary Gorman](#) will be delivering two full-day workshops and a presentation at [Business Analyst World/Project World, Toronto](#) (April 14-19, 2008).
3. Ellen will present the instructor-led portion of our blended classroom offering, [Roadmap to Success: Comprehensive](#) in Orlando (April 16-17). See more info above on reader discounts. [Register early](#) to reserve your spot!
4. Mary will be presenting two full-day workshops and a presentation at [Business Analyst World/Project Summit](#), Philadelphia, PA (April 28-May 1, 2008).

Resources of Interest

Each month we'll provide a few resources we think are worthwhile. The resources below are related to Mary's topic of interface analysis.

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future issues!

- User, system-to-system, and external hardware device interfaces are crucial elements used in function point analysis to estimate a development effort. To learn more, read Vijay Shankar's article, ["Estimation of Effort Using Function Points."](#)
- In [this interview](#) with usability expert and author Indi Young, you'll learn how mental models are created to facilitate user interface design.
- As Mary discusses in her article above, models that provide multiple views help uncover needs. [In this article](#), Ellen discusses how multiple models help you understand users' needs.
- The OPEN (Object-oriented Process, Environment, and Notation) Process Framework describes a recommended outline for an [external interface specification](#).

Archive Issues

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