From: Ellen Gottesdiener
To: ellen@ebgconsulting.com;
Subject: [Success with Requirements] Slow Down to Speed Up; Access Free Webinar; Upcoming eLearning and other Resources
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Ellen Gottesdiener, Publisher

Forward to a Colleague

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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Success with Requirements

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Welcome to our Newsletter!

Hi, egott -

I hope all is well with you and yours. Welcome to issue six of EBG Consulting's eNewsletter, *Success with Requirements*. I hope you have a few moments in your busy day to slow down and read my article, Slow Down to Speed Up. ;-)
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Enjoy this issue. As always, please send me any feedback and suggestions!

~ ellen

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P.S. to insure this eNewsletter gets to your inbox, please add ellen@ebgconsulting.com to your address book.

Webinar Access

Access to Ellen's free Webinar *Practical Techniques to Elicit Requirements While Building Trust* is still available. (This webinar was sponsored by Compuware in conjunction with The Requirements Network Group).

Slow Down to Speed Up

"*Evolution is chaos with feedback*"
~ Joseph Ford

As we dig into requirements analysis, driven by looming deadlines and juggling multiple projects, the last thing you want to do is introduce more change. Things are already chaotic enough! You toil to bring clarity in the midst of complex systems of people, organizations, needs, interlocking projects, external forces and so on. The more you explore, the more complex things seem.

Chaos theory tells us that in the midst of these seemly messy and convoluted systems, there are, in nature, universal patterns that arise. These patterns are self-referential. By using these simple patterns to take corrective action, you can help chaotic systems evolve into regulated yet complex systems.

The key is feedback, which means for technical projects, sometimes you have to slow down to speed up with retrospectives.

Retrospectives go beyond "lessons learned, post-partum (my preference over post mortem) or after action reviews. They seek to get feedback on both product and process to adapt your requirements practices and outcomes sooner, rather than later (or really later, when the final product is transitioned to customers). Retrospectives are not blame fests. Their outcomes are not "fileware", but concrete, actionable, and practical change.

Once a week, get your project stakeholders together as a project community for a retrospective. Do NOT wait until the end of your requirements work (or worse, the end of the project). Hold retrospectives iteratively, throughout the project, beginning with requirements. **The goal is learning through feedback. The outcome is a set of specific immediate actions** the team needs to undertake to adjust and improve its work and interactions.

In traditional (e.g. waterfall) requirements discovery, **select key requirements-related milestones and conduct retrospectives after each milestone**. Example milestones are: agreement on product vision or requirements scope, detailed requirements have been drafted, some interim requirements documentation sign-off, your first prototype walkthrough, and so on. **In agile projects, retrospectives occur after each iteration, following the customer demonstration, prototype or release.**

In any of these retrospectives, incorporate examination of requirements processes and deliverables.

A typical requirements retrospective agenda includes:

1. Check-in. Unload distractions and get ready to focus.

2. Share data on requirements work. Evaluate specifics of what was accomplished, including metrics on quantity and quality. Here are a few sample questions to ask: Did we have to go back to customers for clarification? What did we miss or get wrong? How many new scenarios and rules did we acquire when we did our demonstration or prototype walk-through? Did we discover missing use cases or stakeholders? Did we rework a lot of models or prototypes?

3. Evaluate the current state. Explore the "as is" situation on your project by asking: Are we on track? Have we been acquiring just enough requirements information? Are we efficiently finding missing requirements to avoid unpleasant surprises downstream? Do we need more or different user involvement? Do we have the right people working on the requirements?

4. Action plan. List specific corrective actions to take, who will do what by when, and how you will know you are done implementing them.

5. Retrospect your retrospective. Assess the value of your retrospective session and decide what to adjust for the next retrospective.

By making two to four hour retrospectives a regular practice in your requirements efforts, you will discover important requirements patterns that will save days, weeks or even months later.

What are you doing today to evolve your practices?

~ ellen

For more on how to plan and design retrospectives, read my article: "Team Retrospectives for Better Iteration Assessment".

A global community of retrospective workshop facilitators formed and runs a yearly "Gathering" sharing techniques to evolve the practice. We also have a usenet group to share ideas, practices, and support each others retrospective work. Email me if you are interested in more information.

Two books on retrospectives I recommend are: Norm Kerths *Project Retrospectives: A Handbook for Team Reviews* (Dorset House, 2001); and Esther Derby and Diana Larsens *Agile Retrospectives: Making Good Teams Great* (Pragmatic Bookshelf, 2006).

How are your retrospectives going? How are you using retrospectives for your requirements and business analysis work? Send me an email.

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Upcoming Events

1. **Ellen Gottesdiener** will conduct a tutorial **"Requirements-Driven Workshops for Agile Teams: Essentials for Product, Release, and Iteration Workshops"** at Agile 2007 Conference- Washington, D.C. the week of August 13th.

2. Both **Mary Gorman** and **Ellen Gottesdiener** will present tutorials and track sessions at Software Development Best Practices, Boston, September 17-20.

3. **Ellen** will present a public offering of EBG Consulting's new blended eLearning course September 11-12th Indianapolis (see below).

Resources of Interest

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

- Matt Heusser asks, *Are Tests Requirements*? - exploring using acceptance tests to supplement specifications

- Facilitation skills are essential for requirements planning and elicitation. Find numerous facilitation tips and activities here. *Please email me* your *suggested additions!*

New eLearning and Public Course Offerings

We are excited to announce two new offerings - please read our **summary flyer**.

- **New self-paced eLearning:**
  In August we will begin offering ***Roadmap to Success: Foundation for Requirements Development and Management (self-paced eLearning)***.
  For curriculum details, please visit this location on EBG's training and elearning page.

- **Public offerings of our unique blended eLearning:**
  Our new offering, ***Roadmap to Success: Comprehensive Foundation and Analysis Modeling (blended classroom),*** combines our ***Foundation*** self-paced course with two days of instructor-led analysis modeling training.
  Publics will be offered in:
  - Indianapolis (September 11-12th)
  - Philadelphia (November 28th-29th)

  For a complete outline visit this location on EBG's training and elearning page.

We will provide pricing information and discounts (for *Success with Requirements* subscribers and IIBA members) in upcoming eNewsletters. Stay tuned! For immediate questions, email us: elearning@ebgconsulting.com

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