

## Project Requirements

<b>INPUTS:</b>	<b>TECHNIQUES:</b>	<b>OUTPUTS:</b>
CHARTER STAKEHOLDER REGISTER	INTERVIEWS BRAINSTORMING	REQUIREMENTS REGISTER REQUIREMENTS TRACEABILITY

**Summary: The key to gathering requirements is avoid the water-torture of new requirements that spring up every week. So instead of trying to bury requirements we do all we can to have them emerge early, during our planning process. Then we can identify the requirements that are necessary to produce the project's deliverables.**

### Overview

A failed project almost always has a project manager who poorly managed the stakeholders and their requirements. PMs often begin work before they have identified all the stakeholders and, as a result, they don't know all the requirements the project has to deliver. Then each week during the course of the project new stakeholders and their requirements spring up. They must be added to the project which causes delays, interruptions and overruns. Despite all the energy expended coping with late arriving requirements, the users/customers are still unhappy with the project because it doesn't meet their expectations.

On successful projects we uncover the identity of all, or most, of the stakeholders before we begin planning the project. Thus we can unearth the vast majority of the requirements at the beginning of project planning. We can evaluate and include or exclude each submitted requirement and proceed with the rest of the plan and pretty much lock it down for the execution phase of the project.

Why do we spend so much time on these steps? Because requirements that we don't know about until the end of the project can cost up to 100 times more than if we'd found out about them during the planning phase. That's why the project management best practice is to invest significant time in this process. Now let's explore the steps in detail.

### Identify stakeholders

The identity of all the people who will be affected by our project is not immediately evident on even small projects. We need to hunt for those people who will be affected by one or more of our project's deliverables. This search is not person by person. Instead, it's deliverable by deliverable.

So we step through the project charter and think about the major deliverables we've identified in that document. The project manager with a team member or two and maybe the sponsor, may look at the major deliverables of the project and talk over coffee about who is going to be affected by each of those deliverables.

The temptation to avoid is the, "Let's keep the planning group small so we can act fast" mindset. What that leads to is a project where we start work and things go fine for a couple of weeks or months, then people who will be affected by our deliverables start springing up out of nowhere. The problem is not that these people have an interest in our project. The problem is they have requirements we have to meet that are not in our plan. That leads to cost overruns and unhappy people who think our project is causing problems in their jobs or departments.

Addressing those late-appearing requirements costs much more time and effort when we find out about them halfway through the project. It's always cheaper to identify stakeholders and deal with their requirements before we start work.

## **Assess requirements**

It is a losing game for project managers to argue the value of the requirements people suggest. Everybody thinks their requirements are a good idea. But we don't control scope on a project by including every "good idea" that people come up with. If we did include all of those requirements, the project would cost more than the national debt and never finish. What makes it particularly difficult to deal with these good ideas that shouldn't be in the project is that the project sponsor very often takes the tactic of saying, "Oh, keep the people from that department happy. Just add their requirement. Squeeze it in."

After we've "squeezed in" a week or two worth of new requirements our sleek project has become a pig. We need a technique to handle people's "good ideas" without having unhappy stakeholders who complain to their bosses.

The only technique that consistently works is to have a project scope and major deliverables that are defined in measurable terms so the acceptance criteria for those deliverables can be objectively measured.

As an example, we can't control the requirements on a project where the scope is to, "improve customer service," or "deliver world-class customer service" or "solve our customer service problems."

None of those scope statements has acceptance criteria and they are not objectively measurable. On the same customer service project with objectively measurable deliverables, we would include: "reduce customer service complaints from 300 per week to 20 or less." That scope definition has clear acceptance criteria and there's no ambiguity or subjectivity about whether the project has succeeded. From that scope definition, we might develop other deliverables that are necessary to reduce the

# The Finest Project Management Learning: Individual Instruction in the Best Practices [Certification](#)   [Courses](#)   [Corporate Programs](#)   [eBooks](#)   [Skill Builder](#)

complaints by 280 per week. Those other deliverables might include, "95% of the customers have a hold time of less than 30 seconds," and "fewer than 5% of the customers have to call in a second time about the same problem."

With the acceptance criteria for the deliverables defined as clearly as the above examples, we have a technique to use to process people's requirements.

The approach we use is to communicate the scope of the project and the major deliverables to everyone. Then when we are presented with the new requirement, we ask the person which of our deliverables need the requirement they're suggesting. In other words we're asking the question, "Why do we have to include your specific requirements to get to our deliverable?"

We're not asking these questions aggressively. What we're saying is "Here are the deliverables we have to produce and I certainly want to identify the things we need to do to produce them. So tell me why your requirement is necessary."

We're still not including good ideas just because they're good ideas. What we're doing is filtering all good ideas against what's necessary to produce the deliverables of the product of the project.

In sum, the best technique is spending time to identify the stakeholders early in the planning process. We want to solicit their requirements, not wait for them to bring them to us, but actively solicit people's requirements. Then we filter them with the deliverables the project has to produce. With this technique we avoid many of the requirements that won't spring up until late in the project and we don't train our stakeholders to believe that we will add all the good ideas they come up with.

Learn all the best practices in project management in our [project management courses and certifications](#)?"

- Study over the web from anywhere 24/7.
- You study when it fits your schedule
- Work individually with your instructor whenever you wish.
- Practice all the techniques in live simulations with your instructor and get instant feedback and coaching.