

▶ Consulting Services

▶ Business Requirements Analysis

Getting requirements right: the essence of project success

It's an all too familiar story. Major delays, blown budgets or a solution that doesn't properly solve the problem it needed to. The cost of failed IT projects can run into millions of dollars, without taking into account customer dissatisfaction or competitors 'stealing a march'.

A January 2006 *BRW* article by Kath Walters, "Another fine mess", quoted a Standish study that found that only 29% of IT projects were deemed successful (that is, on-time, on-budget, with the required features and functions).

Now, there are many reasons for project failure, but requirements issues are near the top of the list¹.

Those issues may include situations where the business seeks to include all the possible requirements that the customer may ever need, thus increasing complexity, cost and impacting upon time to market. At the other extreme, there may have been too little thought and effort put into defining the business requirements. This can lead to the challenge of managing scope-creep, where there's pressure to expand functionality *after* the project is underway and budgets and deadline have been signed off.

Thus, it's vital to strike the right balance, which includes prioritising business requirements, assessing which functionality is 'must have now' versus 'may be developed later'.

What's the answer to requirements issues?

Our view is that in addition to a strong and experienced project manager; you need a robust requirement analysis² and modelling approach, and a highly skilled Business Analyst (BA) – the BA is usually responsible for gathering, analysing and documenting business requirements.



Plan & Scope: Define objectives, identify stakeholders and determine what's in & out of scope.
Analyse & Design: Create a requirements model through detailed analysis.
Review & Validate: Test model for accuracy & consistency with stakeholders - revise if necessary.
Baseline & Publish: Finalise requirements documentation so solution options can be considered.

Characteristics of effective requirements analysis

Effective requirements analysis *is not* just an ad-hoc listing, with simple functional descriptions of what the business thinks it needs.

It requires a systematic approach and formal methodology that should include a review and definition of current and desired business processes in order to identify the business areas affected; the benefits; risks; constraints and change management issues. Subsequently, the problem can be conceptualised so that a robust requirements model can be built, which incorporates functionality, usability, workflow, business objects, interfaces and non-functional or performance requirements.

1. An SEI Research Report (2004) stated that "requirements issues are the #1 cause of cancelled or over-budget projects", while Gartner Research has revealed that 'train wrecks' were caused by "changes the business made to projects midway through..."
2. Requirements analysis is also known as "business analysis".

It's difficult to find Business Analysts with the necessary skills, but there is a solution...

A recent glance at online job advertisements suggests that there is a huge demand for Business Analysts. And those ads reveal that a wide range of skills, experience and capabilities are expected. Organisations want their BA's to have:

- Industry and consulting experience
- The ability to liaise with, and manage multiple stakeholders, and to conduct interviews and facilitate workshops
- The ability to capture and document business requirements, then have the technical knowledge necessary to allow those requirements to be readily translated for systems or software design purposes
- An understanding of "the financials", including being able to estimate effort required and other cost implications
- A strong knowledge of the necessary methodologies and processes, for example, a formal framework or methodology for requirements analysis
- Architectural or technical skills that require an understanding of the solution domain to help bridge the gap between the business and IT, for instance, an understanding of testing so that requirements are expressed in a testable format

So, the challenge is to find someone who can properly define the business problem while understanding IT related constraints.

The implications of not being able to find the right "someone" is that your project is delayed, or not done at all; or resources are used that don't have the necessary skills, experience and tools which puts at risk the success of the project.

4LOOP can help you address this problem because we have the right PEOPLE and PROCESSES to make your project a success.

We have expert and highly skilled resources available, who can not only undertake requirements analysis of the highest quality, they're focused on delivering fast.

And with 4LOOP you obtain the benefit of a team at around the cost of a single resource. Working with 4LOOP you're able to access the right skill at the right time, as our team members work collaboratively and interchangeably. For instance, the person who facilitates a workshop may not be the best person to document requirements.

Also, a member of our team can then provide project continuity by maintaining a role throughout the project, say as a Requirements Manager.

4LOOP's Requirements Analysis Toolkit includes:

- ✓ **Facilitation of stakeholder interviews & workshops**
- ✓ **Business Process Modelling**
"As Is" and "To Be", gap analysis and assessments
- ✓ **Context Diagramming**
The system landscape, the users and any other external systems
- ✓ **Business Use Case Modelling**
Functional requirements analysis
- ✓ **Business Domain Modelling**
Identify business objects and their lifecycles
- ✓ **Interface Requirements Modelling**
User and system interfaces, workflows and visual mockups
- ✓ **User Profile & Authorisation Matrix**
Definition and validation of accessibility rules
- ✓ **Requirements Traceability Matrix**
Ensures all impacts of changes are considered and addressed throughout the application lifecycle
- ✓ **Non-Functional Requirements Checklist**
Analysis of requirements to determine system usability, performance, availability, security and compliance

Our requirements analysis experience

4LOOP doesn't sell products; we provide IT consulting services and solve business problems.

As such, we seek to work closely and collaboratively with clients, and prospective clients, to understand their business challenges to determine how we can best add value. In most cases, the first piece of work we do for a client is to conduct a requirements analysis exercise. Through interviews and workshops, using our proven processes, we clarify requirements, translate them for the purposes of system design and provide solution alternatives.

We've been working with major Australian businesses and multinational corporations since 1999.

Bombardier Transportation, Hewlett-Packard, Toyota, Hanson Australia (formerly Pioneer Concrete), Australia Post, and the CSIRO (and its spin-off company, XRT) are just some of those that have worked with 4LOOP to make their initiatives a success, and been delighted with the results.

As further evidence of the quality of our work, we've been granted Government Endorsed Supplier status from the Australian Government, and been appointed to a Victorian Government Specialist Advisory Services Panel for Public Transport.

About 4LOOP

4LOOP is a Melbourne based e-business and IT services company that has a "better way" to run IT projects. We use a staged development approach to delivering e-business initiatives and IT projects. An approach that not only saves time and money, it produces better results.

Our approach breaks a problem down to its essence with a clear focus on delivering the most important customer and business requirements first. And it allows the delivery of a commercial application in a very short time frame, while being underpinned by strict project governance and change management principles. The initial release provides an architectural foundation for future releases, if they're needed. Any subsequent releases can incorporate actual market feedback about suggested improvements and enhanced functionality.

Other services

As well as developing end-to-end solutions and offering business requirements analysis, 4LOOP also provides IT consulting services for all of the individual elements of the solution delivery cycle; including:

- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Project assessment - technical quality assurance and reviews
- ✓ Architecture design - solution, system & deployment
- ✓ Solution design & development
- ✓ Integration
- ✓ Testing - validation and verification
- ✓ Operation, maintenance & support

4LOOP delivers value-for-money, commercially robust IT software solutions, fast.

Shouldn't you find out more?

To arrange a discussion about how we can help your business achieve more from your e-business initiatives and IT projects, you can contact us on **03 8686 9966** or via our website, www.4LOOP.com.au

There is a better way.

