REQUIREMENTS BY COLLABORATION

Workshops for Defining Needs

ELLEN GOTTESDIENER

"I spend much time helping organizations capture requirements and even more time help-ing them recover from not capturing requirements. Many of them have gone through some motions regarding requirements as if they were sleepworking. It's time to wake up and do it right—and this book is going to be their alarm clock."

—Jerry Weinberg, author of numerous books on productivity enhancement

"In today's complex, fast-paced software development environment, collaboration—the in-tense peer-to-peer conversations that result in products, decisions, and knowledge shar-ing—is absolutely essential to success. But all too often, attempts to collaborate degenerate into agonizing meetings or ineffectual bull sessions. Ellen's wonderful book will help you bridge the gap—turning the agony of meetings into the ecstasy of effective collaboration."

—Jim Highsmith, a pioneer in adaptive software development methods

"Requirements by Collaboration *presents a wealth of practical tools and techniques for fa-cilitating requirements development workshops. [It] is suitable—no, essential reading—for requirements workshop facilitators. It will help both technical people and customer repre-sentatives participate in these critical contributions to software success."*

—Karl Wiegers, Principal Consultant, Process Impact, author of *Software Requirements*

"The need for this particular book, at this particular time, is crystal clear. We have entered a new age where software development must be viewed as a form of business problem solv-ing. That means direct user participation in developing 'requirements,' or more accurately, in jointly working the business problem. That, in turn, means facilitated sessions. In this book, Ellen Gottesdiener provides a wealth of practical ideas for ensuring that you have exactly the right stuff for this all-important area of professional art."

—Ronald G. Ross, Principal, Business Rule Solutions, LLC, Executive Editor,
  www.BRCommunity.com

"Gottesdiener's years of software development experience coupled with her straight-for-ward writing style make her book a perfect choice for either a senior developer or a mid-level project manager. In addition to her technical experience, her knowledge of group dynamics balance the book by educating the reader on how to manage conflict and per-sonality differences within a requirements team—something that is missing from most re-quirements textbooks. . . .[It] is a required 'handbook' that will be referred to again and again."

—Kay Christian, ebusiness Consultant, Conifer, Colorado

"Requirements by Collaboration *is a 'must read' for any system stakeholder. End users and system analysts will learn the significant value they can add to the systems development process. Management will learn the tremendous return they may receive from making a modest time/people investment in facilitated sessions. Facilitators will discover ways to glean an amazing amount of high-quality information in a relatively brief time."*

—Russ Schwartz, Computer System Quality Consultant, Global Biotechnology Firm

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PARTICIPANTS: ROLES PEOPLE PLAY

"Listen to see the world others see, not because it is right but because it is theirs."

—Unknown

Participants are the people who play roles in the workshop, from workshop planning to post-workshop follow-up. As you begin to develop the workshop's purpose, you and your planning team will have a better idea who can help to achieve it.
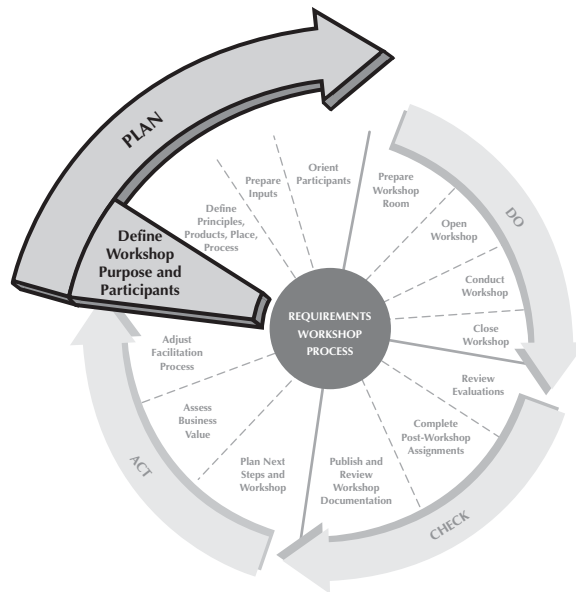
The main people who will participate are those who have the content expertise to define the requirements. Other people, such as sponsors, designers, developers, and stakeholders from related projects, can advise the planning team. These adjunct players can provide you with project and product background information that can help steer you toward particular requirements models and additional participants.

Workshop sponsors and project sponsors have stakes in the process and the outcomes of the workshop, and they should be physically available to the participants at the workshop. Technical staff who transform the workshop deliverables into other products—for example, code, test cases and scripts, user documentation and training, or design models—are also stakeholders who should participate in or observe the workshop, or at least be available to answer questions during planning.

Workshop Roles

Table 5-1 shows the various roles associated with a facilitated workshop as well as the names of generic job roles; people who play these roles may fill particular workshop participant roles.

Note that some of these generic roles appear in several places. A project manager, for example, might be both a workshop sponsor and a content participant or observer, depending on his knowledge about the business domain. Who will play which workshop roles depends on your project and your organization. For example, in one workshop I facilitated, the project manager was the recorder, whereas in another, the project manager was an observer. In another company, the business-savvy software project manager and the business's project manager were both participants because of their deep subject matter expertise.

Some roles are involved only during parts of the workshop process, or not at all.

- The workshop sponsor may be present only at the beginning and end of the session; she might also stop by to observe the session. (See my caveat on this in "Having Sponsors in the Workshop" later in this chapter.)
- Observers, with the group's permission, might come and go.
- You may choose not to fill the recorder role during the session, opting instead to have someone do the recording afterward. In that case, you need low-tech recording tools, such as sticky notes or sticky walls (adhesive applied to pa-

Table 5-1 Workshop Roles

Role	Responsibilities	Sample Roles
Workshop sponsor	Authorizes and legitimizes workshop	Project manager, requirements analyst, business analyst, business manager, product manager
Project sponsor	Authorizes and legitimizes project	Product manager, business manager, project manager, vice president, marketing manager
Facilitator	Plans and designs workshop; recommends appropriate requirements deliverables; leads process	Requirements analyst, business analyst, human resource consultant, project leader, data or rule analyst, developer, external facilitator
Content participant	Creates workshop products	Business user, product development specialist, business analyst, business technical specialist, data or rule analyst, business-knowledgeable developer or tester
Recorder (scribe, documenter, or technographer)	Records the group's work	Requirements analyst, administrative assistant, test analyst
Observer	Listens and learns	Project sponsor, workshop sponsor, any new software or business team member
On-call subject matter expert	Is available to answer or clarify spontaneous questions	Business analyst or user, business project manager

per or cards; see "Creating Sticky Walls" in Chapter 8). You'll also need a camera to photograph the workshop room walls, an infrared whiteboard, or a poster device that allows real-time capture of handwritten content.

Identifying the individuals who will fill each workshop role is a crucial early step. Actually, you're doing this as you're simultaneously defining the workshop purpose (see Chapter 4), principles (see Chapter 6), and products (see Chapter 7). Asking the right questions of different stakeholders gives you clues about who should be consulted during planning and who should be present during the actual session. (For good questions to ask, see "Questions to Ask Stakeholders About Participant Roles" at the end of this chapter.) Interviewing participants also helps to prepare them for the event.

The following sections describe these workshop participants.

The Workshop Sponsor

The *workshop sponsor* champions the use of collaborative workshops, validates the workshop's purpose, ensures that the right people attend, engages the facilitator and recorder from inside or outside the organization, and provides guidance to the planning team on how it should make group decisions. In other words, the workshop sponsor legitimizes the requirements workshop.

A business manager or software manager often plays the role of the workshop sponsor, even if he did not initiate or champion the idea of conducting a requirements workshop. On one project, the business analyst contacted me to facilitate a workshop. The analyst was a vocal advocate of using requirements workshops and a key member of the planning team. However, she didn't have the authority to pay for the facilitator or for food, nor did she have the organizational influence to summon the right subject matter experts (SMEs) to the session. In that case, the software project manager acted as the workshop sponsor.

Occasionally, an involved project sponsor (see the next section) or product manager will also be the workshop sponsor. On another of my projects, the project manager both initiated the idea to use a requirements workshop and sponsored the workshop because she had the financial authority and organizational influence to make the workshop happen.

The Project Sponsor

Whereas the workshop sponsor has the authority and legitimacy to make the workshop happen, the *project sponsor* has those same responsibilities for the overall project. You—and the entire project team—should know, without question, who this person is. In some organizations, the project sponsor and the workshop sponsor are one and the same; in others, the workshop sponsor may be far removed organizationally from the project sponsor.

You may need your project sponsor to line up the right participants by spreading the word to colleagues that they should let their people go to a workshop. Using the project sponsor's special influence and organizational clout is sometimes the only way that certain key participants will attend. This is why I recommend that you interview the project sponsor during your workshop planning.

The sponsor's unique, high-level perspective may help you to understand the context of the project and may also shape both the workshop design and workshop decision making.

In one of my workshops, the planning team was pleasantly surprised to learn that the project sponsor was delegating decision making about detailed requirements to the workshop participants. In another, the project sponsor decided to be a full participant in order to be the final decision maker about requirements scope (see "Decision Rules" in Chapter 6).

Who Sponsors Your Project?

Be practical about which person you deem project sponsor for the purposes of planning your requirements workshop. This can get complicated, especially in large organizations. There can be different types of project sponsors.

Executive sponsors are far removed from day-to-day project work, but they control the money. *Steering committees* act as advisers for projects with cross-functional impact. *Business project managers* work with the project on a daily basis; they may report to the executive sponsor or steering committee. *Product managers* or *marketing managers* are closely involved in the project, especially for commercial software projects.

You need the sponsors to ensure that appropriate people participate in the workshop. To identify the best level of sponsors, follow this guideline: *Go as high as necessary but as low as possible*.

In one company I worked with, the executive project sponsor had no contact with the project team except for status reports from the business project manager and occasional meetings with him. Because this manager was involved in the project almost daily and was responsible for managing the project's budget, we worked with him rather than the executive sponsor to ensure that the right participants were identified and lined up for the workshop.

Your project sponsor often must make decisions about scope and thus should be present in a scope-level requirements workshop. In some organizations, though, the project sponsor is far removed from the day-today project and won't attend the workshop. This is especially true for workshops delivering detailed requirements. In those cases, I recommend that the project sponsor kick off the workshop and then return for a show-and-tell activity (discussed later in this chapter). Simply showing up demonstrates sponsorship to participants and legitimizes the workshop purpose.