UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
University College

Learning Resource

Developing a System Proposal

This course has taken you from analyzing a business strategy to identifying opportunities for strategic advantages and ways to increase the organization's competitive position; identifying process improvement opportunities where a technology solution can increase efficiency and effectiveness; defining stakeholder system requirements; evaluating solutions, and steps to effectively implementing an IT solution.

This is a lot of information, and often the role of a business analyst is to create or help create a proposal or presentation to inform key stakeholders of the findings above and "sell" the potential solution. Presenting the information in a clear, logical sequence to your audience is important.

Different organizations use their own formats and components in system proposals, but there are several common areas that a business analyst will address:

1. **Strategic Analysis**—What are the key strategic goals and objectives of the organization, and what is the current business problem or opportunity being addressed? How might a technology solution help the organization achieve its strategy and where can a technology solution help?

2. **Process Analysis**—A process is a series of steps to perform a task. Many organizational processes can be very complex and include many sub-processes and steps. It is important to know what work needs to be done, how it is currently being done, where opportunities for improvements exist, and how technology can support the improved process.

3. **Requirements**—The requirements identification is critical to defining exactly what key stakeholders need the system to do; what tasks they expect the system to complete or support; what overall performance is required and what processes need improvement; how a technology solution can help achieve the organizational strategy and improve processes; and what specific requirements the system needs to meet based on stakeholder information. Defining these requirements enables potential solutions to be clearly evaluated to ascertain whether they will fulfill the organization's needs.

4. **Solution Building**—A critical part of any proposals is identifying the specific system that will effectively support and/or improve the business process and clearly meet the stated user and system performance requirements. This may include "build vs. buy" analysis to determine whether the best solution should be developed internally or purchased as a COTS or SaaS solution. An organization's IT Plan and architecture may help inform those decisions. Also the degree of specialty of the software is a factor: Is this a common business process used by multiple companies, such as Human Resources, Logistics, Accounting and Finance, or something very unique to the organization that may not be commercially available? Sometimes, alternative solutions may be presented along with the pros and cons of each option.

5. **Implementation Planning**—Equally important to identifying the best fit solution is implementation planning. What has to happen (how and when) to help ensure a successful installation of the technology solution? What supporting activities are required to ensure users are prepared to be successful using the new system including communication, training, and ongoing support? The data to be migrated to the new system must be identified and any data integrity or compatibility issues noted. Also it is important to ensure appropriate maintenance and technical support are in place: Is the IT staff trained to provide Help Desk Support? Do users have a point of contact for issues? Should a website be established with frequently asked questions (FAQs) to help users especially in the early days of implementation?

Without getting into the details of writing the proposal, understand it is important to convey the information clearly and concisely. At this point, significant work has been done to identify the information above, and you want to present it as effectively as possible. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Identify if there is a specific format or template that the organization uses.

- Is there a preference for a written report, oral presentation, PowerPoint slides, etc.?

- Who is your audience and what information do they already know?

- What is the key information that you need your audience to pay attention to?

- Identify specific next steps to keep the initiative moving forward.