

# SOFTWARE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

CUSTOMERS ROLE IN SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

*A software solution generally needs to effectively support your customer's business, it should get ready to be involved in several months of literally co-working with the vendor team, which demands a significant amount of time and engagement from the start*



Understanding the basics and processes of the customer's business is not enough to specify and agree the requirements. Even if you are a software company that works with cutting-edge technologies and had previously created solutions of the same type, you can't take things for granted. We will examine the aspects of the customer's participation.

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graph TD; A[Provide enough requirements] --> B[Answer clarifying questions]; B --> C[Review deliverables]; C --> D[Monitor the progress and budget]; D --> E[Manage risks];
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Provide enough  
requirements

Answer clarifying  
questions

Review  
deliverables

Monitor the  
progress and  
budget

Manage risks



*The project outcome significantly depends on the customer's constant involvement, which includes providing business and technical requirements, answering the questions, reviewing interim user-related and technical deliverables, checking the project progress and budget, as well as anticipating and addressing risks*

# Provide enough requirements

Requirement definition is a complex phase focusing in achieving the common understanding of 'enough' by the customer and your company

The main challenge is to agree on how detailed the requirements will be and then to make sure all the project participants keep to it

There are the following customer engagement options:



## **Option 1: Unstructured business requirements**

In this case, information is gathered at interviews with the customer's project stakeholders or at requirements workshops. This process is normally led by your business analysts responsible to understand, document and submit a detailed requirements specification document for the customer's approval. The customer has to react actively after the submission of the requirement document.

## **Option 1: Unstructured business requirements**

If the quality of his/her reaction is poor this may result in a badly outlined project scope

Priorities may be also wrongly defined

Mistakes, missing/forgotten requirements or lack of information at the early stage mean further change requests

Change requests cause delays in the project timeline and costs or even the project failure



## **Option 2: Structured business requirements**

In this case, information is gathered at interviews with the customer's project stakeholders or at requirements workshops. This process is normally led by your business analysts responsible to understand, document and submit a detailed requirements specification document for the customer's approval. The customer has to react actively after the submission of the requirement document.

### **Option 3: Structured business requirements, supplemented with detailed ones**

In this case, the customer adds more details to structured business requirements

Business requirements reflect the organization's goals

Details are all about software end users' preferences

To do that all types of end users must be involved

This type of the customer's engagement is the most time-consuming one

On the other hand you get the best requirement definition



# **Answer clarifying questions**

Questions should be raised at any stage of the project both by the development company and the customer

Answers should be provided as soon as possible and as clearly as possible to avoid issues during the project execution

Relevant stakeholders for the answers on both sides should be identified (possibly before the project start)

# Review deliverables

At different project stages, the vendor will provide

- **user-related deliverables** (mock-ups, prototypes, intermediate software versions)
- **technical deliverables** (high-level and low-level design architecture documents, user stories with definition of done, test documentation,...)

These deliverables, as well as further corrections made by the vendor in response to the provided feedback, should be checked and approved by the customer



# Review deliverables

The point is that the customer's involvement and feedback motivate the project team

Sometimes the project team realizes and proves that some bugs found by the external reviewer are not bugs as such most importantly, if the customer accepts inappropriate or low-quality deliverables, it misleads you as a vendor and is likely to impact the contractual terms and conditions

It isn't rare that software needs to be reworked at additional costs after the intermediate deliverables have already been accepted

# **Monitor project progress and budget**

Deviations in time and costs occur quite often in projects  
Although the monitoring function is normally assumed by the vendor's project manager, the customer should check the progress and control the budget regularly  
Especially when there can be changes made to the software requirements and scope in the course of the project



# Manage risks

Risk identification and management performed together with the customer is a crucial task in projects

This type of activity seems to be even more important than reviewing project progress and budget

In fact software developers tend to be too optimistic and underestimate project risks

In addition, risks can arise on the customer's side

For example, local industry regulations may change or key managers required as project consultants may become unavailable or customer related activities can be delayed and slowed down

*The more engaged the customer is in the project activities, the more chances are that the solution will finally fit its business needs*