Consensus on Requirements

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The administrative personnel and the contractors involved in the HeathCare.gov project did not agree on the time requirements or even the individual requirements involved in constructing the site. A mutual satisfaction on requirements and their feasibility was never reached throughout the design process. This disagreement which created a haphazard design process for the site resulted in the disaster witnessed in October 2013. [1][3][4]

Administrative personnel should listen to recommendations of technical experts. At least three technical experts independent reviews of the time requirements and feasibility issues involved in a project should be contrasted. A consensus on time requirements and feasibility issues should then be reached. Using at least three technical experts' independent reviews allows for arriving at an accurate estimate. Each technical expert has their own reputation as such to maintain. Thus with independent reviews each review can be trusted to be as accurate as possible in accordance with the technical experts background. The arriving at mutually agreed upon requirements by the customer, administrators, and technical experts should be conducted prior to any work on a project. [3][4][5]

Changes may be required throughout the design process but should be kept to a minimal and be within feasibility limits for time sensitive projects. The addition of more personnel during the design process can only complicate and extend the deadline of a project. Men and months are not interchangeable. The subtraction of original design personnel can only be detrimental to the projects projected completion time. Along with the ambiguity over individual requirements and features the HealthCare.gov project suffered from the loss of original design personnel when several software engineers left the project. [1][2][3][4]

The rigidity of government administrators on requirements that were not feasible within the required time and their insistence on not listening to the recommendations of their available technical experts resulted in the fiasco of the debut of the HealthCare.gov site. The lack of a consensus on requirements and their feasibility between the administration and CGI Federal is the prime contributor to this public software engineering blunder. This even led to the loss of CGI software engineers on the project. [1]

References:

1 Tension and Flaws Before Health Website Crash - NYTimes.com – 20130405
2 Frederick P. Brooks Jr, *The Mythical Man Months*, Addison-Wesley, 1975.
3 https://design.eecs.utk.edu/_media/401fall2013site/uploadedfiles/ececosc401-lecture-02.pdf
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