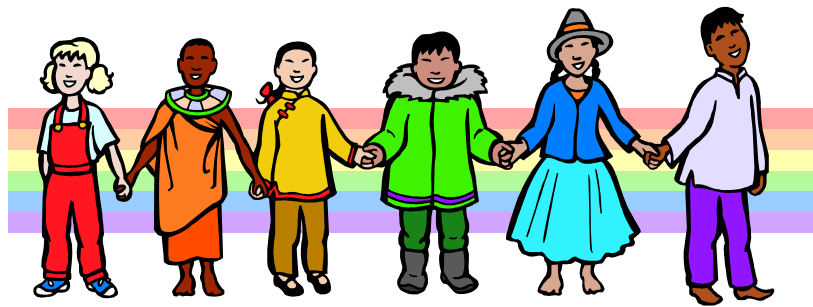


HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS THROUGH COLLABORATION



*Do your software projects tend to slide into cost and time overruns?
May this be due to poor communication between IT users and software specialists?*

If this is the case, then it might be time to find a way to increase team effectiveness and reduce development costs.

Identifying the real issue

According to some experts 95% of all software projects slide into cost and time overruns, 93% of which are due to poor communication. While developers tend to focus on software technology, IT users may misinterpret business goals defined by top management or encounter difficulties in conveying their real needs to IT people.


Fixing wrong, missing, inconsistent or even conflicting requirements can consume up to one third of total software development costs, and reworking inaccuracies after software delivery is often 100 times more expensive than in the design phase. Collaborative Workshops is a technique that helps organization determine real users' requirements better and faster.

What are Collaborative Workshops?

In 1977 IBM developed a workshop technique called JAD (IBM trademark - Joint Application Design) that is applicable across the entire software development life cycle. Originally, JAD was designed to help groups achieve high-quality requirements and design deliverables, while including business users in the process.

Based on JAD, the Collaborative Workshops technique has been adapted to meet the needs of modern development methodologies (e.g. Object Oriented Analysis & Design, Rapid Application Design, Extreme Programming). It reemerges today as an approach to improve communication and increase team performance.


Identified as best practice to gather business requirements, Collaborative Workshops are structured and highly interactive meetings in which carefully selected customers, users and IT people with decision-making authority work together to define, develop and reach closure on agreed deliverables. This method consists of series of facilitated sessions in which participants develop mutual understanding, commitment and a real sense of ownership.

 **The management case**
The use of Collaborative Workshops has proven to be an effective way to significantly reduce IT development costs by:


- ✓ Increasing communication among participants
- ✓ Avoiding rework wrong, missing, inconsistent or conflicting requirements
- ✓ Boosting users' participation and ownership
- ✓ Accelerating delivery of requirements
- ✓ Increasing end users' satisfaction
- ✓ Reducing the risk of scope creep
- ✓ Improving system quality
- ✓ Reducing project failure

 **Critical success factors**
To ensure the success of the Collaborative Workshops technique, the following activities are essential:

- ✓ Define the real purpose of the workshops
- ✓ Identify the sponsors
- ✓ Prepare and plan carefully the sessions
- ✓ Determine high-quality participants with decision-making authority
- ✓ Hire a neutral facilitator
- ✓ Develop and establish rules of conduct


 **What else Collaborative Workshops can do?**
Collaborative Workshops are not only beneficial for gathering requirements. They are generally applicable to any situation where a group of people needs to solve issues, make quality group decisions and deal with conflicts. Examples are:

- ✓ Strategic planning
- ✓ Program review
- ✓ Product evaluation and selection
- ✓ Negotiation of roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Business re-engineering
- ✓ Process modeling
- ✓ Data modeling and design

 **The facilitator's role**
In Collaborative Workshops the choice of the facilitator is one of the most critical success factor. The facilitator's role is to encourage communication among participants and guide the group through a process that will help them achieve their goals more effectively. Their main tasks are:

- ✓ Plan and design workshops
- ✓ Create a non-threatening environment
- ✓ Lead the group through activities
- ✓ Ensure that everyone participate equally
- ✓ Encourage the generation of ideas and share of information
- ✓ Keep the group focused on the objectives
- ✓ Assist the group in conflict resolution
- ✓ Guide the group to make quality decisions and reach consensus

Facilitators focus on the process of the workshop and do not influence its content. They hold group dynamics expertise and use a range of techniques to manage group participation. They have no personal agenda and avoid sharing their opinion with the group, unless they are specifically asked.

 **Why hire an external facilitator?**
An external workshop facilitator is unbiased and can therefore entirely focus on the process of the session without interfering in its content. External facilitators are specially trained and have the expertise to deal with a variety of groups. With an outsider leading the workshop, group members tend to participate more openly and negative attitudes can be neutralized more easily.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information or a free appointment. We are eager to discuss with you how we, as facilitators, can help you increase the performance of your team.

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