
Chapter 8: The Challenge of Requirements Elicitation

Objectives

- To understand the barriers to requirements elicitation.

Barriers to Requirements Elicitation

- The "Yes, But" Syndrome
- The "Undiscovered Ruins" Syndrome
- The "User and the Developer" Syndrome

The "Yes, But" Syndrome

- For whatever reason, we always see two immediate, distinct, and separate reactions when the users see the system implementation for the first time.
 1. "Wow, this is so cool; we can really use this, what a neat job" and so on.
 2. "Yes, but, hmmm, now that I see it, what about this ... ? Wouldn't it be nice if ... ? Whatever happened to ... ?"

The "Yes, But" Syndrome *(Cont'd)*

- The "Yes, But" syndrome is human nature and is an integral part of application development.
 - We should plan for it.
- We can significantly reduce this syndrome by applying techniques that get the "Buts" out early.
 - In so doing, we elicit the "Yes, But" response early, and we then can begin to invest the majority of our development efforts in software that has already passed the "Yes, But" test.

The "Undiscovered Ruins" Syndrome

- In many ways, the search for requirements is like a search for undiscovered ruins.
 - The more you find, the more you know remain.
 - You never really feel as though you have found them all, and perhaps you never will.
- Indeed, software development teams everywhere continually struggle to determine when they are done with requirements elicitation, that is, when have they found all the requirements that are material or when have they found at least enough?

The "User and the Developer" Syndrome

- Communication gap between the user and the developer.
- Users and developers are typically from different worlds, may even speak different languages, and have different backgrounds, motivations, and objectives.

The "User and the Developer" Syndrome *(Cont'd)*

- Reasons for this problem and some suggested solutions.

Problem	Solution
Users do not know what they want, or they know what they want but cannot articulate it.	Recognize and appreciate the user as domain expert; try alternative communication and elicitation techniques.
Users think they know what they want until developers give them what they said they wanted.	Provide alternative elicitation techniques earlier: storyboarding, role playing, throwaway prototypes, and so on.
Analysts think they understand user problems better than users do.	Put the analyst in the user's place. Try role playing for an hour or a day.
Everybody believes everybody else is politically motivated.	Yes, its part of human nature, so let's get on with the program.

Key Points

- Requirements elicitation is complicated by three endemic syndromes.
- The "Yes, But" syndrome stems from human nature and the users' inability to experience the software as they might a physical device.
- Searching for requirements is like searching for "Undiscovered Ruins"; the more you find, the more you know remain.
- The "User and the Developer" syndrome reflects the profound differences between these two, making communication difficult.