



Title: New look at software product documents

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Editorial label ECORFAN: 607-8695
BCNMES Control Number: 2020-02
BCNMES Classification (2020): 110820-0009

Pages: 13
RNA: 03-2010-032610115700-14

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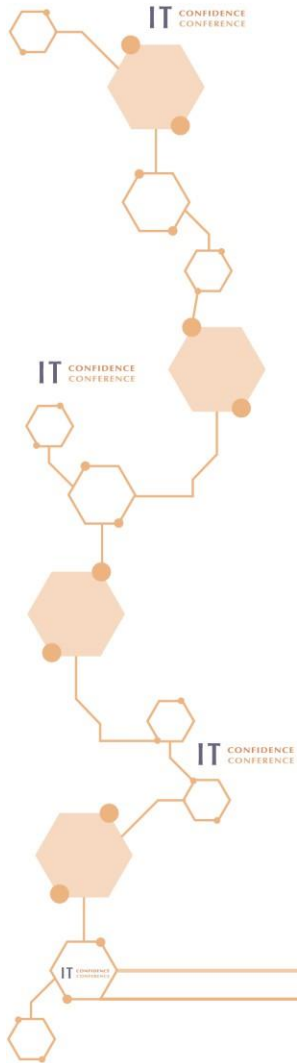
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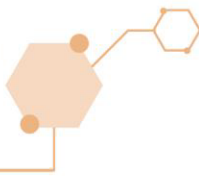
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Software

all or part of the programs, procedures, rules, and
associated documentation *of an*
information processing system.

Poor or missing specifications (= documentation) are the most common reason for wasted time and money in software development projects. Poor or missing documents make software maintenance slow, expensive and vulnerable. They make also project estimation and productivity measurement almost impossible.





Software size measurement:



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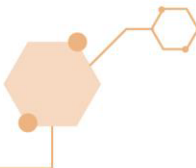


As a Scpe Manager, this was my starting point to begin re-thinking the importance of a PRD. Why is such a simple task as software size measurement so often so difficult? My 30+ years of experience tell that it's not because of poor or inapplicable size measurement methods (i.e. the five ISO/IEC standards). Usually it's because of poor documents.

Scope Manager



Based on the PRD, and the method I used, the size of this software is...



Audience: The users of Product Document?

- Product owner –person or group making business decisions related to specifications
- Sponsor – person accepting business decisions
- Business analyst – author and reviewer of specifications
- IT architect – supporting and guiding business analysts and product owner
- Developer team member – programmer and unit-tester, reader and reviewer of specifications
- Tester – checking the compatibility of the system against the specifications
- End-user – learning how and when to use the system
- Experienced end-user – requesting changes to functions of the system
- Scope manager – a measurement expert supporting product owner and sponsor
- Maintainer – keeping the system and its environment working and up-to-date

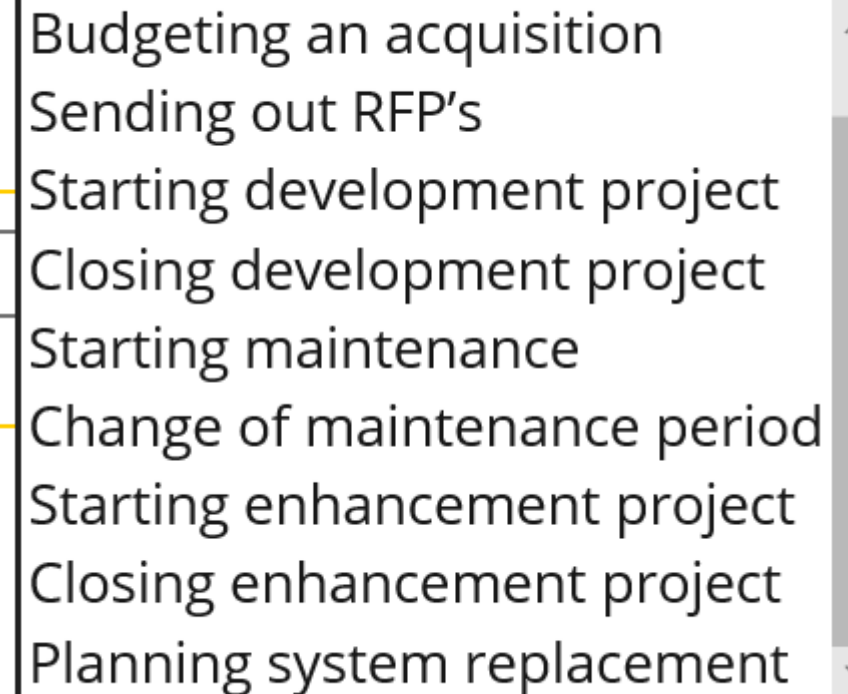


Product life-cycle: when are the documents needed?

During a software intensive system life-cycle **major use cases of Product Document** occur various times.

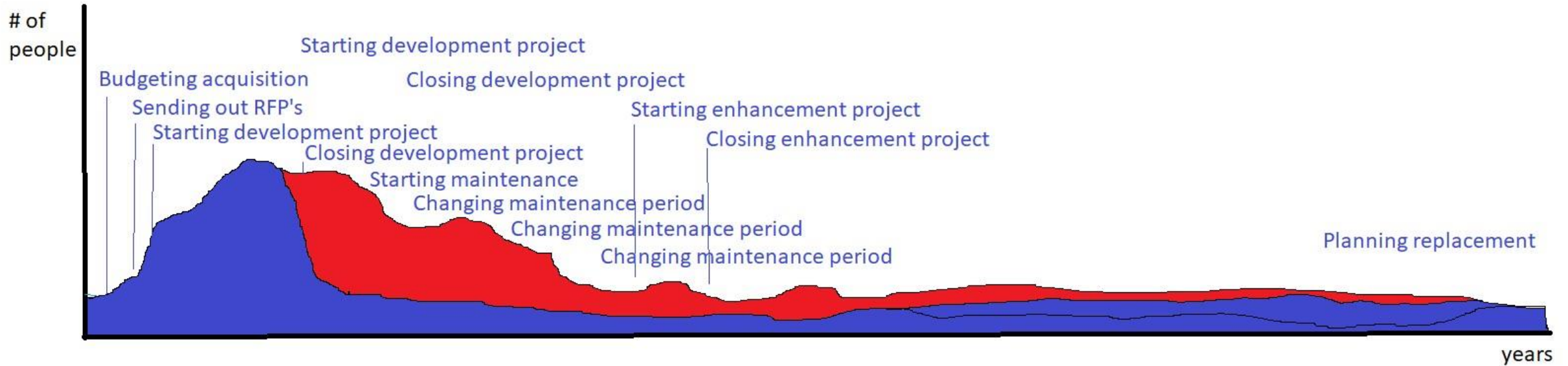
Budgeting the system acquisition and sending out the requests for proposals to potential vendors happen usually just once. Same in the end of life-cycle, when the product owner starts to plan replacing the whole system with another.

The larger the system, the more different development and enhancement projects occur during the product life-cycle.



- Budgeting an acquisition
- Sending out RFP's
- Starting development project
- Closing development project
- Starting maintenance
- Change of maintenance period
- Starting enhancement project
- Closing enhancement project
- Planning system replacement

Product life-cycle: Major use cases of Product Document?



Other use cases during the product life-cycle are e.g. acceptance testing, change request, starting to implement a new feature, measuring the achieved productivity of a project or a sprint, changing a developer or maintainer or the whole team.

Impact of development approach: what should be defined to ensure success?

This is relevant only for development and enhancement projects during the product life-cycle. Interesting combinations are:

- Agile time and material based
- Agile unit based price/FP
- Agile fixed price
- Traditional time and material based
- Traditional unit based price/FP
- Traditional fixed price
- Package software acquisition
- Other

Different development approaches allow different maturity for the available specifications. Some of the combinations look insane (i.e. agile fixed price), but they still exist. SCRUM brings into the picture more events to check documents: Starting a new sprint and Retrospective.



What is in a Good Product Document?

This is strong recommendation from FiSMA Scope Manager Forum. Each chapter of the Product Document has great importance for at least one important stakeholder group of the system (users, developers, product owner,...).

Overview

User groups

User stories

Business processes

Use cases

Data functions

Service functions

You can always challenge this recommendation: E.g. “We don’t need overview chapter, because everybody knows what is this system about”, or “We don’t write user stories, because there will be no new users ever, and the testers know how and what to test”.

How to evaluate the “goodness” of Product Document?

FiSMA Scope Manager Forum has agreed about set of best practices, that should be applied to provide good enough system and software specifications, i.e. a Good Product Document.

Overview

User groups

User stories

Business processes

Use cases

Data functions

Service functions

We have collected 50 statements, that are either true or false to all Product Documents. They are divided to all seven chapters: Overview 5, User groups 4, User stories 3, Business processes 8, Use cases 8, Data functions 7, and Service functions 15.

Number of positive answers tells the quality of Product Document (e.g. 23/50)



How does the self-assessment tool work?

Overview with its 5 statements is here the example chapter:

Statements by Product Document chapter

Overview	Yes	Points
1. Overview picture of the system exists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
2. A verbal, less than two page overview text exists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
3. Technical environment of the system is defined	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
4. System structure and architecture are defined	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
5. All responsible persons find the newest versions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1

User groups	Yes	Points
6. All user groups of the system are defined	<input type="checkbox"/>	0
7. All user groups of the system are defined	<input type="checkbox"/>	0

Number of positive answers is 4/5, telling that there is still some work to do, but not bad at all. However, many people in the “audience” need to get the system structure and architecture definition before they can continue their tasks.



Other examples of best practice statements 1

User stories

- 10. User stories are written
- 11. There are stories for each user group
- 12. All responsible persons find the newest versions

Business processes

- 13. All pertinent business processes are defined
- 14. Every user group can be found at least in one process chart
- 15. The system is one of the actors in every process chart
- 16. Every activity is allocated to only one actor in a process chart
- 17. The action chains are unbroken from start to end in every process chart

Use cases

- 21. All use cases are defined
- 22. The use cases to be implemented in two next months are defined
- 23. All use cases are easy to pinpoint in business process charts
- 24. In most of the use cases there is only one user
- 25. User and system activities alternate systematically in use case dialogs
- 26. The dialog chains describe uninterrupted actions
- 27. Use case definitions point out exceptional quality requirements



Other examples of best practice statements 2

Data functions

- 29. All data entities are defined
- 30. The data entities to be implemented in next two months are defined
- 31. All important business terms are defined and introduced to responsible persons
- 32. Up-to-date list of implemented entities with their attributes exists
- 33. All system parameters and their known values are defined
- 34. Data management plan including all entities exists
- 35. All responsible persons find the newest versions

Service functions

- 36. All screens are defined
- 37. The screens to be implemented in next four weeks are defined
- 38. All implemented screens are easy to pinpoint in use cases
- 39. The latest drafts or screenshots are easy to find
- 40. Menu hierarchy including all the implemented screens exists
- 41. All different type of printouts are defined
- 42. The printouts to be implemented in next four weeks are defined
- 43. The implemented printouts are easy to pinpoint in business process charts
- 44. All interface services to and from other systems are defined



Conclusions

- Product Document self assessment helps the Product Owner to improve specifications instantly, and gives ideas for process improvement to succeed in long-term.
- A good Product Document allows
 - Effective development
 - Reliable testing
 - Effective user training
 - Effective maintenance
 - Easy functional size measurement
- Through all above, a good Product Document helps Sponsor to
 - Save money
 - Save time-to-market
 - Improve quality
- Note! No documents are written only for measurement purposes, but if you cannot measure functional size of software from documents, no one can develop software from them.



Thank you!

and my apologies that I cannot give you the web-address of the free self-assessment tool now. That's because of minor technical problems with WP, javascript, new security updates and lack of technical skills. The problems should be solved on next Monday. If you are really interested in trying the tool, please send me an email and I'll send you the link.

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