

# Myth busting: Top Requirements Myths



## **Myth 1: Use Cases are requirements**

Use Cases only describe process flow and are not ideal for capturing data flow and business rules. Two other critical elements of information are still needed to develop requirements. Secondly, Use Cases are ambiguous. They do not explicitly define system capabilities, since a business Use Case may have one or more manual steps. Finally, the requirements are the GAP between the current state and the future state, whereas Use Cases are either the current state or future state. Use cases are a technique of analysis that helps lead to well framed requirements.

## **Myth 2: Requirements are not required for Agile Development**

In fact, in most versions of agile development (except XP) even structured analysis techniques like Use Cases might be used, however, in deference to IAG's agile practice team, let's talk user stories and epics for written requirements. Agile, like any other development methodology, is reliant on building up an understanding of backlog. The techniques of user requirements elicitation are different, as are the role definition, and the process of requirements elaboration. In fact, a true agilest (using Scrum methods for example) would use terms like Scrum meeting, Scrum team, Sprint 0, Sprint plan, walking skeleton, and epics to refer to these plan driven concepts. Agile strategies typically fail in the absence of techniques for eliciting needs and having improved approaches to elaborating these needs as sprints progress.

## **Myth 3: Business Analyst are not needed in an Agile Development environment**

Agile uses different role definitions and preaches the concept of 'self-managing teams' with high functional interaction between expertise areas on an ongoing basis. Plan-driven development, on the other hand, is typically more hierarchical, with more functionally independent activity followed by managed hand-off points between functional groups.

The role of the analyst morphs since it is more interdependent and decision oriented – you might even say 'empowering' – to an analyst that ends up as the Product Owner or (less likely) the Scrum Master. A central tenet of Agile/Scrum, for example, is that a single point of decision making (called the Product Owner) exists which can guide understanding of needs including defining features, deciding on release dates, ensuring profitability, prioritizing features and outcomes, accepting or rejecting work. Given the heavy cross-functional nature of business, extremely senior analysts that are able to objectively represent the needs of the business often end up being a superior fit for this role as opposed to an executive which represents only one lens on business need.

## **Myth 4: Requirements meetings are not practical in our organization**

This is an excuse to cover up lousy elicitation skills and techniques. Any complex application has many interdependent business processes and functions. It is simply not possible to get managers to decide how these processes are going to work without bringing these functional teams together. The process ends up taking 4 times as long if you run a series of serial meetings.

**Myth 5: Business Analysts need to have specific domain knowledge in the projects they ‘reassigned**

It’s often counterproductive to be a domain expert. People that are subject experts often make assumptions, or are perceived to be dictating needs to the business. However, the aptitude to elicit domain expertise from the business and be able to critically analyze it is extremely important. It is often impossible to find an analyst that has both domain expertise and strong business analysis skills. It is better to hire strong business analysts and help them develop the necessary expertise.

**Myth 6: You have to model the current state before you can define the desired (to-be) state**

Doing the as-is, then to-be takes far too much time and will simply wear out your stakeholders. It is important to model both states concurrently since people usually do not have the patience to do it separately. Further, the techniques used for each are different. People that require the ‘As is ‘are often using this as a crutch for analysts because they do not have the skills needed to go directly to the ‘to -be.’ This thinking also locks stakeholders into old-mode thinking that is not healthy or helpful.

**Myth 7: If I am doing requirements for modifications to an existing system, data definitions and any data modeling is not necessary because it already exists**

Ignoring data modeling, even for an existing system radically increases failure rate. For any process flow there are a number of critical points of information that are needed and key questions that must be asked. Without detailed data descriptions and data models, you will miss critical information, interdependencies, and business needs; all of which must be communicated to developers.

**Myth 8: As long as we hire, train, certify and assign high quality Business Analysts to our projects, we’ll be OK**

Hiring and training good analysts is an important part of achieving requirements excellence. However, there are several other components that will impede an organization from progressing in its requirements practice. Other factors such as process, deliverables, tools, techniques, and organization are crucial to overall success. In fact, high skilled analysts that work in organizations with limited capability in the other areas are traditionally outperformed by their lower skilled counterparts that are part of a more mature requirements organization.



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