**Benefits** **Realization Planning**

Why Are There So Many Unused Software Features?

* Come in with a solution and force it to fit
* Business has determined solution based on limited research and understanding of the problem
* Project budget and an inability to prioritize features
* Inability to clear your own personal beliefs, biases, expectations and assumptions
* Inability to identify the reader and put yourself in their position
* Don’t know what the business is looking for
* Inability to translate what the reader is looking for into the written document
* Inability to align the solution back to the business needs, objectives, goals and drivers

***Notes:***

***7 Steps to Building an Effective and Achievable Benefits Realization Plan:***

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| **Step 1: Identify the Problem the Business is trying to Address with the Solution** |
| * What is the main problem or set of related problems that the business wants to address with this project or find a solution for?
* How is it impacting the business FINANCIALLY?
* How is it impacting the SERVICES being offered by the business?
* How is it impacting the CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE being offered by the business?
* How is it impacting the overall QUALITY of products being offered by the business?
* How is it impacting the PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS being utilized by the business?
* How is it impacting the overall COMPETENCY of the team allocated within the business?
* How is it impacting the overall EMOTIONAL HEALTH of the team, culture or environment within the business?
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| **Step 2: Define the Benefits the Business Needs, Wants to Gain or Expects to See** |
| * What (if any) are the FINANCIAL benefits the business NEEDS to gain?
* What (if any) are the QUALITY benefits the business NEEDS to gain?
* What (if any) are the SERVICE benefits the business NEEDS to gain?
* What (if any) are the PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS benefits the business NEEDS to gain?
* What (if any) are the TEAM COMPETENCY benefits the business NEEDS to gain?
* What (if any) are the EMOTIONAL benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the FINANCIAL benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the QUALITY benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the SERVICE benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the TEAM COMPETENCY benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the EMOTIONAL benefits the business WANTS to gain?
* What (if any) are the FINANCIAL benefits the business EXPECTS to SEE?
* What (if any) are the QUALITY benefits the business EXPECTS to SEE?
* What (if any) are the SERVICE benefits the business EXPECTS to SEE?
* What (if any) are the PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS benefits the business EXPECTS to SEE?
* What (if any) are the TEAM COMPETENCY benefits the business EXPECTS to SEE?
* What (if any) are the EMOTIONAL benefits the business EXPECTS to SEE?
* What DON’T they NEED, WANT or EXPECT to see for each one of these (FINANCIAL, QUALITY, SERVICE, PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, TEAM COMPETENCY, and EMOTIONAL) benefits?
* Can any of the “don’t expect to see” benefits be considered value added items?
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| **Step 3: Determine the Priority of Each of the Benefits** |
| * How important is each item to the business?
* How does each item align to the business strategic plans, objectives, goals and drivers?
* How will each of these benefits positively impact the business?
* Will any of these benefits negatively impact any aspect of the business?
* How will these benefits negatively impact the business?
* How can these negative impacts be mitigated?
* What MUST be in place for each of these benefits to be realized?
* Who is responsible for ensuring that these conditions are met in order to realize the benefits (Project team, stakeholders, business units, external vendors, or external resources)?
* Has this been scheduled?
* What is the schedule or timeline for these conditions to be met?
* What is the cost or budgetary impacts for these conditions to be met?
* What is the resource allocation plan for these conditions to be met?
* Who (by role or business unit) will take over responsibility for ensuring that these conditions are met after the project has been implemented?
* How will they report back to the business on the status of these conditions?
* Who will they report to?
* What will they report?
* How will issues be addressed and escalated to ensure that the conditions are met on time?
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| **Step 4: Create the Benefits Realization Plan** |
| * Write the plan in plain language at the 8th grade level.
* DON’T use jargon or techie nick-names.
* Use the SAME kinds of words that the business used.
* Ensure the plan contains the following basic elements: Problem Statement, Prioritized Needs, Wants and Expectations, Risks and Impacts Table, Mitigation Strategies, Schedule or Timeline, Responsibility and Accountability Matrix and Escalation Plan
* Create a new plan for EVERY new project regardless of how similar it is to another one you have done in the past.
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| **Step 5: Communicate the Plan to the Project Team, the Stakeholders and the Business** |
| * Meet with the project team, stakeholders, sponsors and business to review the plan.
* Clearly define the RESULTS within the plan.
* What can each business unit, stakeholder or sponsor or individual business team member PERSONALLY do to support the plan?
* Let them know EXACTLY HOW they can support the plan.
* What is in it for each business unit, stakeholder or sponsor, or individual business team member PERSONALLY and EMOTIONALLY to support the plan?
* Let them know what’s in it for them at an EMOTIONAL level.
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| **Step 6: Listen to WHAT the Business is Saying During the Project** |
| * Ensure that just because you may not be in a meeting, you are still listening to what is being said by the business.
* What is being said before, during and after regular project meetings or coffee breaks with the business?
* Never write off grumbling or complaints as someone just being negative.
* Never write off their concerns, address them.
* Approach individual business team members for feedback and comments.
* Use what is being said to tailor your approach and the plan.
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| **Step 7: Constantly Review and Update the Plan** |
| * Every time you uncover a new NEED, WANT or EXPECTATION, update the plan.
* Every time you discover a new issue that will positively or negatively impact the benefits realization plan, update it.
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