**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? |
| **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? |
| **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? |
| **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. |
| **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. |
| **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. |
| **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. |