

From Behind the Bench

Turning Project Failure into Success

Laszlo A. Retfalvi P.Eng. PMP www.retfalviandassociates.com

Effective project management requires a clear understanding of project requirements, schedule, cost, and risks. The ability to effectively manage these significantly improves the chances of successful project execution. One of the key lessons learned from past failed projects is the need for up front established requirement definition guidelines and protocols.

Referred to as the **Requirement Crown Jewels**, project requirements must be realistic, clearly articulated, understood by all stakeholders, prioritized, and verifiable. The benefits to project execution include:

- **Enhanced Scope Definition.** Success is achieved through understanding.
- **Improved Project Baseline.** The success of any project is highly dependent on a complete, accurate and feasible set of requirements.
- **Enhanced Cost and Schedule Performance.** Minimize delays due to disagreements and rework.
- **Risk reduction.** Better understanding of the “known unknowns”.
- **Enhanced Communications.** Focus is on developing the solution, not arguing on what the solution should be. Focus on this important element.
- **Stakeholder Satisfaction.** At all times, the aim of the project manager is to operate with no surprises.

It is important that the project manager be able to recognize and understand the key characteristics of a proper requirement. The project manager should not be concerned in challenging an improper requirement and is encouraged to do so. This is a form of project risk management. The result is increased credibility of the project manager in the eyes of the Customer and Executive Management, and an increased probability of project success. The pain is worth the gain.