



Increase Project Success through Emphasis on Discovery

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Abstract

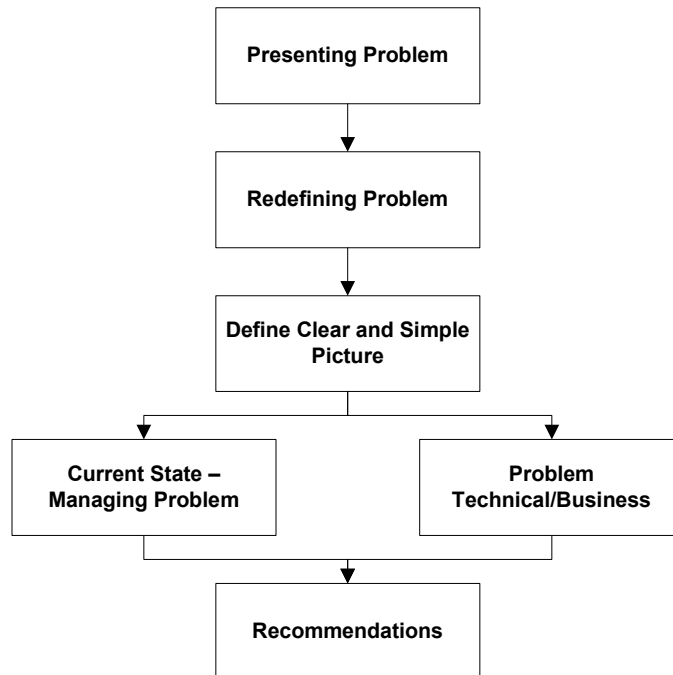
Increase Project Success through Emphasis on Discovery provides the reader an overview of the necessary components to increase project success when analyzing the problem and providing recommendations in the discovery phase of a project lifecycle. It is outlined in paragraph and table form in order to help the reader better understand the components which comprise a successful discovery phase, but at the same time can be used as a check list and reference guide for project managers, project leads, project resources and consultants on a current or future projects in explaining how to step through the action approach to discovery. The white paper can also be used to help build a framework around a project lifecycle for an acute or non-acute setting. The paper is broken down into the following categories:

1. Increase Project Success Through Emphasis on Discovery
2. Table One: Discovery Model
3. Action of Discovery
4. Table Two: Research versus Action Approach
5. Presenting the Problem
6. Table Three: Presenting the Problem Overview
7. How is the Problem Being Managed?
8. Table Four: Technical Business Problems versus Problem Management
9. Summarization

INCREASE PROJECT SUCCESS THROUGH EMPHASIS ON DISCOVERY

Once the contract had been negotiated with the customer, the work of uncovering the underlying issues to the reported problem become the main focus. The discovery phase, also known as diagnosing, is critical to the success of the project. With the move towards a more robust project approach, the focus turned from, defining a problem and offering a diagnosis, to discovering. Through the discovery phase, the consultant delves deeper into the reported problem in order to find the root cause and provide recommendations for long term solutions. Through an optimal approach, the consultant will act as a guide for the client through discovery, engagement, and communication in which the client will find the answers to their questions, taking on an ownership of the project solution. The sequence of the discovery becomes the foundation of success.

Table One: Discovery Model



ACTION OF DISCOVERY

The main focus of the discovery phase is action on a problem. Attention to dealing with resistance; building the clients' commitment to all phases of the project; understanding management styles and organizational politics; and assisting the client to objectively look at the data are all key areas of concern. An "action" systematic approach and not "research" approach is imperative if the end result is to provide a long-term solution to the problem.

Table Two: Research versus Action Approach

<i>Research Approach</i>	<i>Action Approach</i>
Identify all components that impact the problem reported	Identify all components that are within the client control and impact the reported problem.
Providing comprehensive and complete details	Realizing comprehensive and complete details that hinder the project and overwhelm the decision makers.
Researching the issue without involving the client	Realizing the client's involvement is critical in each phase of the project
Eliminate personal bias and intuition from the researcher	Realizing the consultant's bias and intuition is key for the project.

Through action of the discovery phase, the consultant should consider several aspects for the process. Four areas need to be of concern beyond any technical considerations.

- Simplify, narrow, and reduce the study to its lowest level so that the focus is upon the clients' next steps.
- Keep communication at the lowest level with everyday language in order to ensure the proper translation is received.
- Build a client relationship to include the client in decision making for proceeding at every opportunity in order to reduce resistance and increase buy-in.
- Look at client organization functionality as valid and relevant and consider current management of problems when finished with the analysis.

PRESENTING THE PROBLEM

The initial contracting phase is developed based upon the perceived "Presenting Problem". In the majority of the projects in which consultants have been brought in to evaluate problems, the internal management's attempts to diagnose and solve the problem have been unsuccessful. Largely this unsuccessful attempt to solve the issue is due to inaccurate or incomplete reporting of the problem. The consultant should use the "Presenting Problem" as the basis to begin the discovery phase, but should never accept it as the "Real Problem". The "Presenting Problem" needs to be redefined, a clear picture developed, technical/business problems described, current management of the problems documented, and recommendations derived.

Table Three: Presenting the Problem Overview

Presenting Problem	Client provides you the problem identified by management.
Redefine the Problem	The consultant redefines the problem through action approach of data collection, interviews, and analysis
Clear and Simple Picture	The goal of the consultant is to provide a clear and simple picture of the cause of the problem and the maintenance of the problem. This includes both the technical/business problem and how the problem is being managed.
Recommendations	Recommendations will include both technical solutions and managerial solutions.

HOW IS THE PROBLEM BEING MANAGED?

This is the critical area for the action-oriented data collection. It is not enough to define the technical problem and ignore the management of the problem. Although this area is critical, it is most overlooked or ignored as "personalities", "politics", or "relationships" that are difficult to deal with. By overlooking this critical area of the problem, the consultant is excluding organizational problems from the inquiry and therefore only providing a partial or distorted solution to the problem. Each assessment of the problem should have a section devoted to the management of the problem.

Table Four: Technical Business Problems versus Problem Management

Technical/Business Problem	Problem Management
Problem identified in the Financial System includes: 1. Inadequate control procedures/practices 2. Abundance of reports in some areas 3. Not enough reports in other areas	Problem is being managed 1. Defensive attitude 2. Information is being withheld 3. Little on no communication outside of main group.
Problem identified in Engineering Department 1. Cost-Reduction project 2. Develop new process/equipment 3. Construction 4. Equipment Failure	Problem is being managed 1. Operators show negative attitude towards management/supervisors 2. Inexperienced supervisors 3. Pressure reduces new equipment testing dedications 4. Executives involved in micro-managing causing serious lags
Project – Corporate Planning 1. Increase long range planning 2. Obtain information from line managers	Project is being managed 1. Plan is viewed as exercise with little commitment from top management 2. Strained relationships and distrust.

SUMMARIZATION

In order to ensure the success of the projects outcome, the discovery phase is a critical part of the project. The focus of this phase must be approached with both Technical and Management of problems. The old school way of diagnosing a problem needs to be replaced with the action approach of the problem. Several key questions need to be part of each project in the discovery phase.

- What is the client’s personal role in causing/maintaining the problem?
- What are other members of the organization doing to cause/maintain the problem?
- Collect data jointly with the client to include participation and ownership.
- Involve client in data interpretation.
- Condense data into manageable number of issues.
- Simplify language to ensure delivery of message.
- Identify the difference between the “Presenting Problem” and the “Redefined Problem”.
- Elicit and describe both the technical problem and the management of problems.

For additional information on project discovery and project management, please call us at 610-444-1233 or visit our website at www.getvitalized.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sheryl Isenbart possesses over 20 years experience working with Meditech in the Client Server® and Magic® environments. Sheryl is a certified Microsoft Access®, Excel®, Project®, Visio®, and Word® trainer. Currently working today as a Senior Meditech Consultant where BAR, Admissions, Revenue Cycle Enhancements, Medical Records, General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Material Management, PCS, and Payroll/Personnel Optimization projects have been a main focus. Received a Master's Degree in "Business Administration/Healthcare Management" in 2001, her studies were focused heavily upon Healthcare.