***We will be starting shortly….***

*This session will be recorded and available to view after the webinar.*

*To ask a question during the webinar, be sure to use the Q&A function in Zoom.*

# Eliciting with Interviews and Observations

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# Presentation Abstract

*There are a host of elicitation techniques that the business analyst can use to probe for requirements. But there are two most important ones involving one-on-one interaction with users. An in-depth look at preparing for, and conducting, interviews and observations will be provided. Often other techniques (such as modeling, simulations, storyboards, user task analysis, etc.) may be introduced during interview and observation techniques depending on the scenario encountered. These various scenarios will be introduced for further practice and discussion.*

# Expected Outcomes

As an attendee, you can expect to:

- *Get a quick overview of key concepts for eliciting requirements.*
- *Be exposed to hints and tips for preparing, steps for conducting the techniques, and knowing when to follow-up with stakeholders.*
- *Differentiate between the technique types and when to use each.*
- *Examine various scenarios to better address the challenges that may occur.*

# Gathering vs. Eliciting

| Gathering Requirements (novice) | Eliciting Requirements (expert) |
|---|---|
| Reactive | Proactive |
| Takes down statements | Probes and questions for understanding |
| Assumes correct | Validates |
| Lets conflicts move on to design | Addresses conflicts across stakeholders |
| Gaps are not identified | Ensures coverage |
| Sticks with one known technique | Uses various techniques for analysis and elicitation |
| Assumes the stakeholder can convey what they want | Knows that stakeholders may not know what is needed to build a total solution – they only know their piece |
| Little collaboration with project manager | Great synergy with the project manager. Communicates requirement risks regularly |
| Done when statements are gathered from each identified stakeholder | Full project involvement to ensure requirements have been designed, built, tested and implemented |

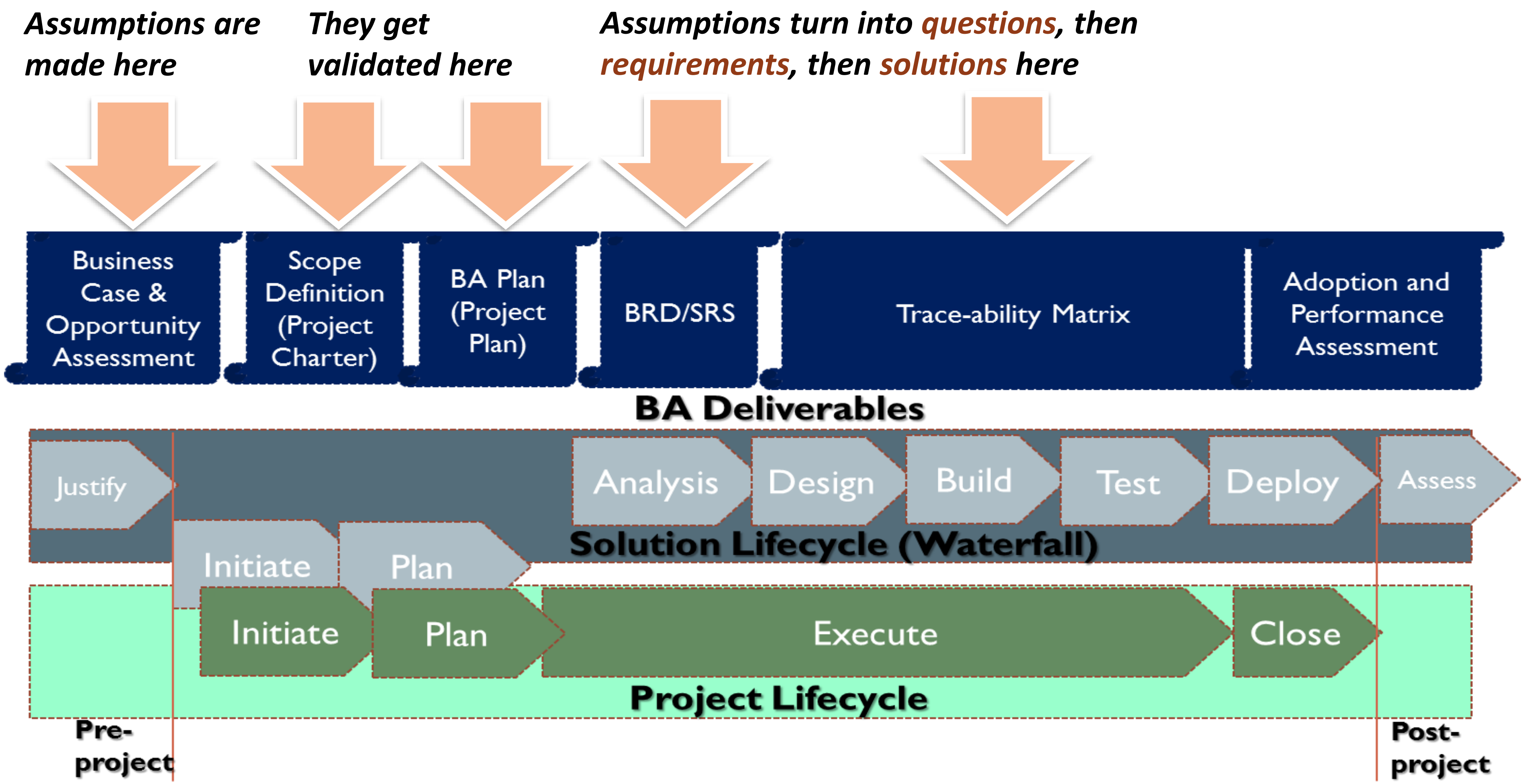
# A Few Techniques and When to Use

| Technique | Use for |
| --- | --- |
| Interview | Understanding requirements from the perspective of each individual stakeholder |
| Observation | Understanding the AS IS operating environment through the eyes of a current user |
| Workshop | Resolving conflicting requirements or getting consensus by bringing together stakeholders |
| Focus Group | Getting the reaction to a product from a subset for a representation of user classes |
| Prototyping | Promoting buy-in, demonstrate usability, or validating requirements with a set of subject matter experts |
| Existing Documentation | Uncovering  or validating current procedures, policies or regulations |

# Regardless of Technique – Ask Good Questions!

- Gaining Understanding
  - Tell me more about the current patient check-in process?
- Probing for Information (leverage checklists)
  - What concerns do you have with the new instant prescription process as defined in the process flow?
- Test Assumptions
  - Does everyone have that same understanding of how that process works?

# Turn Assumptions into Questions and Requirements



# Follow-up Questions: Listen for Ambiguous Words

- All, Everything
- Adequate, Suitable
- Applicable, Relevant
- Approximately
- Appropriate, Reasonable
- Automatically
- Better, Best, Worst
- Clearly
- Compatible
- Completely
- Easy, Simple, Efficient
- Execute
- Fast, Rapid, Quick, Timely
- Fault-tolerant
- Few, Most, Least, Many
- Flexible
- Heavyweight, Lightweight
- Intuitive
- Maximum, Minimum
- Optionally, Sometimes
- Readily
- Robust
- Safely
- Seamless, Transparent
- Several
- User-friendly
- Usually

**Clarify!**

# Elicit Good Answers

- Make sure you have the right person
- Wait! Give them time to think!
- Check the environment, can they talk openly?
- Invite elaboration (tell me more)
- Provide context and stay within scope

# Interviews

***Designed to elicit information from person or group, informal or formal, by talking and asking relevant questions and documenting answers.***

**Pros**

- Encourages participation and builds rapport
- Enables observation of non-verbal cues
- Allows for opinions, clarification, focus
- Can adjust communications to one person’s style

**Cons**

- Not great for building consensus
- Dependent on interviewer skills and knowledge
- Output could be subject to interpretation, bias
- Tendency to lead interviewee to a solution

# Interview Process Steps and Checklists That Can Help

1. Prepare for the interview
2. Conduct the interview
3. Post interview follow-up and confirmation

# Interview Step 1: Prepare for the Interview

- ❑ Identify potential interviewees (perform stakeholder analysis)
- ❑ Know their communication style, business and language
- ❑ Understand their stake (current or future state?)
- ❑ Determine relative importance of information
- ❑ Sell participants on why their input is critical
- ❑ **Provide context**
- ❑ Identify types of questions to ask
- ❑ Go from paper to people – do your homework.
- ❑ Assess logistics (where, when?). Limit to 90 minutes
- ❑ Determine if a BA partner is needed
- ❑ Determine if anything should be sent out in advance

# Interview Step 2: Conduct the Interview

- ❑ State purpose, address concerns, ask to take notes
- ❑ Clarify your role and confirm their role
- ❑ Focus on established goals
- ❑ Practice active listening
- ❑ Listen for and probe when you hear solutions,  ambiguous words, and concerns
- ❑ Address all concerns during or after
- ❑ Close by asking if anything overlooked
- ❑ **Summarize at key checkpoints and at the end**
- ❑ Ask if any other stakeholders should be involved
- ❑ Thank them and set a follow-up review date

# Interview Step 3: Follow-up and Confirm

- ❑ Send out “thank you’s” and contact information
- ❑ Send out captured requirement statements ASAP to review accuracy (not approval) and follow-up questions
- ❑ **Analyze requirement statements across multiple interviews to uncover conflicts**
- ❑ Schedule and conduct any follow-up review meetings
- ❑ Don’t be afraid to create models to confirm understanding

# Address Stakeholder Challenges

## Conflicting Priorities

- Negotiate
- Find out “What is in it for them?”
- Schedule around non-busy times
- Use another stakeholder to influence
- Find a different resource
- Escalate

## Getting What You Need

- Be prepared
- Communicate roles & responsibilities
- Ensure processes are clear for decisions and approvals
- Manage expectations with turnaround time
- Communicate impacts of missed dates or reduced quality

# Interview Scenario 1:  Too Busy

U.R. Ferst is the customer service manager for DenverDawg's, a pet store retailer.  You are in a meeting with him to discuss his customer service metrics and how they might transition for the online store.

He seems to ignore you while taking calls.  You ask him about it and he says:  "Now that we have decided to open the fourth store in Colorado Springs, I am too busy to work with you on the new online store you are building."

**How should you respond, and why respond that way?**

# Interview Scenario 2:  Complainer

Run M. Well is manager of operations for DenverDawgs.  You are having a lunch meeting with Run to find out about the current system he uses for tracking inventory.  The whole time he has been complaining about everything that is wrong in his department and with some of the people he works with.

You try to get him back, and then he starts complaining about the interfaces and other applications he is responsible for.   You haven't been able to get any understanding of how the tracking inventory system works today.  It has been an hour now.

**What should you do?**

# Observation Elicitation Technique

***Watching Individuals or groups, processes and events,, to determine the facts surrounding a particular process or the culture within a business environment***

**Pros**

- Useful for discovering what happens and how
- Provides objective measure of nature of activity
- Can provide information that could be missed

**Cons**

- Requires a high level of structure and planning
- Only get a snapshot, may be biased
- Time-consuming
- Not good for knowledge-based work

# Types of Observation

## Active/Noticeable

- Interruptions allowed
- Can ask questions
- Real time
- Allows inspection of work environment
- May influence outcomes

## Passive/Unnoticeable

- No interruptions allowed
- Can be recorded over lengthy period of times (but laws may prohibit this)
- Less impact on flow of work
- Less influence on outcomes

# Observation Process Steps and Checklists That Can Help

1. Prepare for the observation
2. Conduct the observation session
3. Conclude the observation

# Observation Step 1: Prepare of the Observation

- ❑ Select users and how they will be observed
- ❑ Understand the organizational culture
- ❑ Determine willingness to be observed
- ❑ **Determine objectives and scope of observation**
  ***(triggers, # of processes, handoffs, breadth vs. depth, etc.)***
- ❑ Review any existing documentation
- ❑ Install any tools or equipment needed
  *(such as tools capturing keystrokes or video)*
- ❑ Create necessary observation sheets
- ❑ Limit to 3 hours

# Observation Step 2: Conduct the Observation

- ❑ Explain reason for observation and manage expectations
  *“I am looking for areas where the software may be difficult to use”*
  *“If you have some problems, it’s likely the products fault, not yours. That is why I am here.”*
- ❑ Explain any rules of engagement
  *(can stop at any time, personal performance is not judged, etc.)*
- ❑ Ask user if they could “think aloud” as they perform tasks
- ❑ **Resist providing any assistance or advice**
- ❑ Ask if you can photograph their work area, tools they use, etc.

# Observation Step 3: Conclude the Observation

- ❑ Answer their questions
- ❑ Summarize any observations you want to share
- ❑ Wrap up with any of your questions
- ❑ **Compare to any existing documentation**
- ❑ Create models or use cases ASAP for validation
- ❑ Send a note of “thanks” to their supervisor and copy them
- ❑ You may follow-up with other elicitation techniques (interviews, workshops, prototypes, etc.)

# Scenario 3: The Observation

Hugh Sir volunteered to be observed.   He works for Run M. Well, manager of operations for DenverDawgs.  Hugh uses the current tracking system that Run was supposed to explain to you, but did a poor job doing it.  This will be a great opportunity for you, but you haven't done this before.

You had a quick call with Hugh and found out that the best place would be to observe him at his desk in the warehouse.  You need to find out how the manual processes work so you can identify areas of automation.

**What things would you have to do to prepare?  What information would be important for you to capture?**

# Observation:  Things You Might Capture

- Triggering Events
- Process Steps
- Variations
- Exceptions
- Timing
- Quality Issues
- Work-arounds
- Delays
- Use of Aids
- Space Availability
- Equipment Issues
- Overall Environment (such as lighting)
- Access to Information
- Navigation Issues
- Productivity Issues

*How might you use this information in your analysis?*

# My final thoughts!

- Be an elicitor not a gatherer
- Know who the source and the owner is of the information you are obtaining (current or future state)
- Know your stakeholder, perform stakeholder analysis first
- Always SUMMARIZE before concluding any elicitation technique
- Identify triggers for follow-up questions (such as ambiguous words) which will avoid having to revisit topics over again
- Coordinate interview schedules with other team members and share captured information

# Resources

- Business Analysis Body of Knowledge V3, by the International Institute of Business Analysis (www.iiba.org)
  - Techniques 10.25 and 10.31
- The Software Requirements Memory Jogger by Ellen Gottesdiener

# Thank you for joining us today. Questions?

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# Appendix

You won’t leave without some additional tools to use!

# Scenario 1: Too Busy Sample Solutions

- Send out questions via email to answer without distractions
- Accommodate the stakeholder as much as possible until nonparticipation becomes a risk to the project.
- Empathize with how busy. Stress the importance of his involvement.
  - Communicate time constraints and possible impacts of missed implementation dates etc.
  - Try to understand the time limitations, ask if better time to meet
- Work to schedule a better time for requirements interview.
  - Set up face to face time with pre-determined agenda to make sure conversation moves along and stays on track
  - Ask what would be the best time for him and schedule an interview then--someplace other than in his office and hear his phone
  - Ask if the online stores are going to be reproductions of the first three stores? In effect, will there be any special functionality required other than the previous sites. If yes, customization is required, then that may not be such an easy answer. If no, then you could ask if there could be times to meet for deliverable reviews. It gives the person a little less time required but doesn't let them leave completely. If they are still hesitant than maybe an escalation to someone with more clout may need to be carried out.
  - Ask probing questions about Mr. Ferst's schedule and find out if there are days and/or times of day when he is freer; if he continues to insist that he is too busy, explain how important this online store is to the overall business, including how it may directly affect his interests.
- Explain the benefits and impacts to their customer service area and the importance of his involvement in the process to see the value of the meeting.
  - Restate your purpose for meeting with him - Customer Support metrics, not online store.
  - Sell the project to him (review benefits)
  - How important are these metrics to his group and to DenverDawg? Can these metrics be obtained a different way?  Can we use the same metrics that exist for the brick-and-mortar stores? What might be different? (gets him talking even though he doesn’t want to).
- Ask for another stakeholder familiar with CS metrics to ensure that the online store is successful.
  - Ask if there is someone else you should speak with first so that you can be prepared to use his time efficiently.
  - Ask him if he is the right Stakeholder for CS metrics, If yes, restate the importance of his role (and restate your roll), and ask if you can set up a meeting to discuss. If NO, or he doesn't have time, ask him who is responsible so that you can interview them.
  - If he can think of no-one, you're in a tough spot. Go to the sponsor and let them know that you need someone with time who is responsible for CS. The sponsor should either be an exec or have the ear of an exec to choose the person.

# Scenario 2: Complainer Sample Solutions

- Acknowledge the frustration to getting things done in organizations, but refocus to “can you SHOW ME how the tracking inventory system works today or find some time when you are available to do so?”
- Set up a separate time and clarify what will be discussed in that meeting with time limitations clearly established (so he doesn't have time to continue to complain). Send out the questions ahead of time.
- Ask direct questions (not open) about the system regarding what works well or what is easiest to operate/use etc.  Keep questions about facts, not opinions.
- Instead of questions, convey your assumptions and have him correct you.
- Explain that you cannot do much with personnel and other interfaces (or make connection to those concerns), but if you can get understanding of the inventory TS, you can identify opportunities for improvements when integrating with the new system.
    - Have list set down between you to visibly check off and go through.
    - Use a parking lot to just list everything out, then go through and see what is relevant.
- Guide you to a different or better person to help. Ask for names of additional users that would understand the system and for the purpose of getting all unknown issues identified.
- Set up time to observe a user.  Take notes and set up second meeting based on specific observation questions with Mr. Well.
- Continue active listening, despite the urge to ignore the off-topic comments. Repeat back what he has shared about the difficulties of the other applications, but frame within the context of the inventory tracking system. Ask for clarification on whether he is encountering the same difficulties with the tracking system and use his answers to segue into more probing questions about how the inventory tracking system works.
- Ask him to draw a diagram of the current process for tracking inventory on a piece of paper or whiteboard.
- Ask for any supporting materials as to how the current system runs. Try to glean as much information from it as possible, if a meeting with a person/user who works on the system regularly is available, get them to provide a tutorial/run through of basic processes they deal with daily. have another meeting later with Mr. Well to identify possible current and future system issues to be addressed.

# Scenario 3: The Observation Sample Solutions

- Set expectations with Hugh before hand and let him know what the process is and the time frame of the observation.
- Ask him about his communication style and if he would be comfortable going through his process out loud so you could capture everything.
- Ask if there is any documentation to review in advance.
- List out some of your assumptions as to how a tracking system should work, how doc states it, and build up details.
- Prep on business language that would be used.
- Prep for the space we will be in and the culture (what dress code?).
- Identify processes of the tracking system you want to observe and determine when the best time is to see them.
  - Determine where the *manual processes* fits into the user workflow
  - Ask about the *triggers* and if any are based on time, how often.
- Create observation sheets.
- Be transparent and tell him that I might stop something he is doing and ask additional questions as well as take notes. Review existing documentation (make a list of *information accessed*).
- Confirm any time constraints and purpose for the visit as well as understand Hugh as a stakeholder and perform a stakeholder review with him before hand.
- See issues with systems, user thoughts, roadblocks and ease of use items. What is liked and why automation would or would not help with the current process.
- Capture: Current state and suggested solution ideas for areas for improvement (see slide on what to capture)