Requirement Specification

This document gives you a guide to the kind of issues that you will need to consider when thinking about a possible solution to your business needs. It also gives you an idea about the type of information we require, to understand your business and your needs, allowing us to develop an appropriate and cost effective solution.

Not all of it is relevant to all situations, nor is it an exhaustive list for the most complex of business needs.

We do not anticipate that you will write a full business case based upon it (although please feel free to), but instead, use it as a starting point to help you think through the business problem and possible IT solution.

We find that our initial consultations run much more productively having considered these points.

This guide is written with a focus very much on the business needs and so is aimed at business personnel, not IT professionals such as developers.

A very important point to consider is that it's very easy to fill up a business specification requirement document with lots of desirable functionality. However, the important point is getting the essential functionality correct. When working through the document, keep in mind what you ***must*** have and what would be ***nice*** to have, and mark these accordingly. There's no point in paying for something you don't really need and that won't add any real value to your business.

Introduction – your company / organisation

- *Who you are*
- *Location*
- *Summary of what your main business functions are.*
- *Who are your customers and what are your main markets?*
- *What is the business problem you are trying to solve and why do you need a new solution?*

System Overview

- *Who is the intended user of the system?*
- *How many users will there be (the total number and the maximum number of concurrent users at any one time)?*
- *Are they likely to be from the same professional disciplines or a selection for example architects and engineers, sales and management?*
- *What level of computer experience do they have (for example, are they familiar with Microsoft Office, Email, CAD etc)?*
- *What are the main problems or issues that you have at present in terms of the business process you are seeking to improve or exploit?*
- *Do you anticipate the system will need to be secured by the use of a user login perhaps? If so, you will need to think about the control and access rights to the various parts of the system and whether this will have to be controlled on a user by user basis, or a team or group basis.*
- *Are there any hardware or environmental constraints that have to be considered? For example will the system have to be capable of running adequately on a Windows NT based PC with only 128Mb RAM.*
- *Is the system to be networked or stand-alone?*

- *Are there any other constraints to be considered, for example, throughput requirements, industry protocols etc?*
- *Roughly how many records or items of data will the system have to hold initially and what is the approximate anticipated growth for example 1,000 customers increasing at 100 per year; 10,000 time sheet records increasing at 1,000/month and so on*
- *Will there be any requirement for remote access to the data/information. If so, will it need to be dynamic 'live' access, or will a 'static' copy that can be copied to a laptop suffice? Will information need to be updated in the field or simply viewed?*
- *Do you anticipate the system will need to integrate with other business processes, workflows and systems and if so, what kind?*
- *Are external communications involved, for example will there be a need for automated emailing, faxing, importing or exporting data from other systems?*
- *Consider any specific business rules that need to be included, for example maximum credit allowed is £5,000.*
- *Consider your backup and resilience needs. Think about how your business would be affected if the system was unavailable for any reason. Would half a day be manageable but any more would pose a major issue? In terms of backup, what would be a manageable scenario – if your hardware failed and it meant that you had to revert to a recovered backup, would recovery from the previous night's backup be acceptable or would you need greater protection for example auto backup every hour?*
- *What sort of technical support is available in-house?*
- *In terms of the history of the business issue, what have you been doing or using up to now? For example, is any data or information stored on paper, in spread sheets, in existing databases or is it a brand new business issue or process you need to manage? Do you have existing information that needs to be loaded into the proposed system and if so, how's it stored and structured? Do you envisage that the information will be uploaded as part of the development of the new solution, or would you be handling that in house?*

Functional Requirements

- *This section should describe what the system is to accomplish rather than how it is to be accomplished. This should consist of a list in order of priority, containing the following information.*
- *A description of the actual requirement. A very brief summary of the function indicating what you want to achieve, for example: Produce a report of spend per Department per year on demand, with the user being able to select the Department and the financial year required*
- *How important is this requirement (essential, preferred, desirable, non essential, etc)?*
- *Does this requirement interact with other requirements and if so, how?*
- *Anything else affecting this requirement (for example only authorised personnel should have access)*

Data to be Held

- *Describe what information you expect to record and how it may be logically grouped or structured. Groups could be customer records, contact details, machine records. Provide detail relating to each group, an example could be customer records holding information such as name, address, telephone number, fax number, mobile number, region, business type, and number of employees etc. Highlight any unique fields such as an order number, job number or contact ID reference etc.*
- *Part of our job during the development process is to guide and advise on the most appropriate way to structure and link information. To facilitate this, we need to understand fully, the business rules, for example: projects are related to Customers through a Customer Number. Each customer can have none, one or many associated Projects. Each Project relates to one or more Jobs. A Job can exist independently of a Project but will still be associated with a Customer. A Project will always have a Customer and cannot have more than one Customer.*
- *The easiest way is to simply think through the business processes involved and sketch them down on paper (yep, we still endorse the use of paper..!)*
- *Examples of the type of information stored for each item would be very useful and also, how codes*

or references relate if relevant. For example, a Job Number could be DT/12345 where DT denotes the department handling the job and the 12345 is the unique job number.

- *If you know the maximum size of any information field then include this as well, example customer order number, maximum size 20 characters.*

Operational Scenario

- *It may be helpful if you could think through the operational aspects of the system and what you envisage individual users or groups of users to actually see and do when they log in. A user interface tailored to the specific requirements of that user, group or function, will have a major impact on their efficient use of the system. For example, if you have a group of users that only ever require access to the latest sales reports, then that's all they should see when they log in.*

Schedule

- *A very brief summary of critical deadlines, milestones etc would be very useful, along with any time constraints affecting the decision making process for example key personnel not available during March.*

Appendices

- *Include any other information here that may be useful to us understanding your business and requirements, for example definitions of industry specific terms, acronyms, abbreviations, etc.*