

Methods and Tools for Requirements Success in the Federal Government Sector

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Executive Summary

The complexity of a federal government application can lead to the challenge of organizing and documenting hundreds, if not thousands, of functional requirements and business rules. Developing an effective software blueprint means finding a way to effectively solve challenges in the areas of team collaboration with stakeholders, requirements prioritization, requirements traceability, as well as document management.

Requirements Facilitation via a OneSpring Joint Application Modeling® Session

A Joint Application Modeling® (JAM) Session is an innovative way to gather requirements. A OneSpring JAM Session™ pairs a user experience professional, business analyst, and a strong meeting facilitator with your business stakeholders to produce results and featured requirements in a fast-paced environment where ideas are rapidly visualized and documented. The focus is on discovering material and scope, and not stalling on single ideas. Some of the tools used to document the output of these sessions include iRise® and IBM Rational® RequisitePro®. More information on the flow of a JAM Session can be found at <http://www.onespring.net/JAM>.

iRise®

A challenge facing any project, especially projects that are as enormously complex as those that exist in the federal sector is helping business stakeholders rapidly understand and document their requirements. Traditional requirements management sessions can lead to multiple interviews/sessions with disparate stakeholders, then a consolidation and reconciliation process with stakeholders possessing wholly different agendas.

iRise enables a business analyst to quickly address a core question with any software project, namely, “What do my stakeholders want?”. Using tools present in the desktop application iRise Studio, a specialist can document basic process flows, then build out each process flow node into a fully functional screen. These screens can then be annotated with requirements notes, and then functionality and life-like forms and controls can be applied enabling screens to be chained together.

As opposed to a prototype, which is quite often “fire and forget” in the world of software development, an iRise visualization can, and should, become a living part of the requirements management process. An iRise visualization can be gradually, or rapidly, improved to demonstrate the passing of data elements between pages, as well as to demonstrate complex animations and other system behaviors. In addition, unlike a prototype, our Stream Process uses visualization earlier in the software lifecycle and without development resources.

Stakeholders are also afforded the ability to login and view a visualization at anytime and provide feedback which can be captured, validated, and incorporated into the end requirements deliverables.

The business analyst must not be distracted by the power of a tool such as iRise, but instead focus on the core question, “What do my stakeholders want?” Once this question is addressed, it’s time to move on to a deep dive into the documentation of requirements.

IBM Rational RequisitePro

IBM Rational RequisitePro is a powerful tool that enables collaboration between the federal customer and a software requirements team. A component application of the suite, RequisiteWeb, acts as an online portal into the requirements repository allowing your users to start discussion threads on individual requirements, to create views into the repository, to prioritize requirements, and to discover areas where requirements traceability issues may exist.

IBM Rational RequisitePro allows its users to perform a real-time search of one, or multiple projects, requirements repositories. Using this search functionality, a business analyst can quickly identify duplicate requirements, as well as areas of potential traceability impact when requirements change, which is key for managing requirements traceability on any size project. User-created custom views also provide the ability to segment requirements into multiple virtual documents, allowing for the creation of a readily consumable end requirements deliverable for your user base.

Conclusion

These three tools, The Joint Application Modeling session, iRise and IBM Rational RequisitePro provide the foundation for launching a requirements gathering effort in the federal space. iRise provides a means to elicit requirements more effectively, and enables stakeholders ideas to rapidly take shape. IBM Rational RequisitePro provides the repository and the means to view slices of gathered requirements, and enables client stakeholders to effectively collaborate using the RequisiteWeb component. Finally, the Joint Application Modeling session provides the framework tying these two tools together by providing a high-energy environment with a focus of bringing clarity to the often murky nature of complex government sessions.

Complex projects require innovative approaches to bringing users together.

What challenges do you face daily in the requirements management space in your business?

We'd love to [hear from you](#).

About the Author



Chris Staufer is a Sr. Visualization Analyst with OneSpring. When he's not developing innovative ways to document requirements for federal and corporate customers, he enjoys practicing Tae Kwon Do and spending quality time with his wife. Chris lives in Atlanta.

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