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Week 2 Application: Functional and Non-functional Requirements

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When a system analyst begins the process of gathering information on a new project they are essentially looking for requirements of the proposed system, specifically functional and non-functional requirements. That is, what the system will do and how the system should do it (Satzinger, Jackson, & Burd, 2009, p. 123). This means that the analyst must ask questions, delve into the ins and outs of what the current business processes and systems are, which brought about the need for a new system.

Spring Breaks ‘R’ Us (SBRU) is an imaginary organization wishing to break into the social networking market via its spring break booking platform, online. This leads to some very specific and unique functional and nonfunctional requirements which must be explored. In order to determine these requirements, a business analyst should ask questions, such as the following:

1. Will the system integrate with any college or university systems?

This is important to know as it may require the further development of an entirely new subsystem to manage said connections.

1. Being web based, what international restrictions will be in place?

There may be some locations, languages, or laws which will prohibit the travel and/or sale of bookings online, such knowledge may require the development of modules to handle “no fly zones.”

1. Since the customer will have a site profile, will SBRU be integrating the site with all the latest social networks, or only specific social networks?

Integrating with existing social networking platforms means one of two things, A. SBRU can take advantage of existing integration features, B. SBRU will need to create new connections modules which will require the permissions of the social networks in question.

1. Will resorts and other suppliers have their own specific site separate from the public site to input sales details?

Essentially, will there be a need to create a third site in the process specifically for vendors. This would add a substantial amount of development to the project, which should be addressed as soon as possible.

1. Which credit entity will SBRU be using for the sales subsystem such as Chase or MasterCard?

This falls under two categories, technical and judicial. Depending on the credit entity used on the site, SBRU may need to apply for specific permits or regulations to access credit details online. Not to mention, security risks that such online sales will bring to the site.

1. What browsers will SBRU be supporting?

Older browsers bring with them older users. However, they also bring security loop holes, page rendering faults, and extensive reprogramming to render the site correctly. This will add or detract from the amount of work and security risks the organization is willing to take.

1. What is the longest acceptable lag time?

Certain programmatic features may be offloaded to the client, rather than SBRU servers depending on the acceptable lag time as defined here.

1. Will the site need to follow a graphical design guide?

If the site has to follow a specific guide then there will be a need to hire a graphic artist to ensure that the site looks and acts as intended. While this will likely be a yes, it is good to get it on the agenda as soon as possible because there may not be a graphic artist amongst the company’s staff.

1. What is the sum total acceptable down time for the new system over a one year period?

Having this knowledge prepared from the start means that analysts can budget in appropriate support resources for post development release. Not having this information could lead to overspending in the long run by underestimating the manpower required for support of the new system.

1. Will the system be using two factor authentications for user log in details?

Two factor authentication is where a user must log in to the site with a password, but must also have a secondary security device such as an RSA token or CAPTCHA, Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart (Carnegie Mellon University, 2010).

Asking questions is the first step. The next is verifying that those answers are indeed meeting the criteria that the company wants from the system. The most accurate and time effective manner to do so is through modeling the system. “The process of creating a model helps an analyst clarify and refine the design” (Satzinger, Jackson, & Burd, 2009, p. 124). In other words, models help the analyst organize their thoughts and notes into visual representations of what they believe the system should be.

As SBRU has not set its sights on any one technology, the best path of verifying the requirements of this system, in this author’s opinion, would be to go down the path of creating a logical model (Satzinger, Jackson, & Burd, 2009, p. 120). Once the model is clearly defined, a meeting with appropriate stakeholders should be organized to confirm that the model meets the functional and nonfunctional requirements. If there are any mistakes or areas which need to be expanded upon, the model should be reworked to fix the errors, then another meeting should occur to confirm the model is correct. In a perfect world, this would not occur more than once or twice.

The job description of the systems analyst could read “professional question asker,” because it is one of the largest portions of their job. However, those questions must be succinct and directed in their meanings and uses. Appropriate questions in the appropriate setting can mean the difference between an operational system, and a failure. Not only that, verification of those answer and questions post interview must be done with care. After all, everyone is prone to error.

Reference

Carnegie Mellon University. (2010). *CAPTCHA: Telling Humans and computers Apart Automatically*. Retrieved June 16, 2012, from CAPTCHA: http://www.captcha.net/

Satzinger, J. W., Jackson, R. B., & Burd, S. D. (2009). *Systems Analysis and Design in a Changing World* (5th ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning.