



White paper

What are the requirements?

The anatomy of a simple requirements document

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Requirements documents help you focus on the customer. Focusing on the customer reduces introspective development habits and opens your perspective to new thought. It helps you see things through the customer's eyes. The entire thrust of the document should be to accurately document the needs of the customer, as if he were part of your organization. If you build products your customers don't want, you may find it difficult to sell them. After all, these are the customer's requirements. Don't overdo it, but the list below can give you some items to include in your next requirements document. A little planning at this stage can prevent a lot of expensive redesign later.

- 1) **Clearly articulate the need that is being solved**
Products are designed to solve needs. Make sure you identify the pain being relieved. This is the most important aspect of the document because it focuses on the customer, and their needs.

- 2) **Customer usage patterns**
Find out as much about the customer as possible, including why they use your product, and how it can make their operation more efficient.

- 3) **Feature requirements necessary to solve needs**
What features will you be adding to address the needs and how will they be used?

- 4) **Listing of technologies involved**
Identify the technologies you think you'll use to implement the feature, but be open to alternatives. Research them in detail here. This research will give you a head start as you move into the prototyping and design stages.

- 5) **Basic plan for building features**
List the basic tasks necessary to build the features. Don't be too implementation specific, but give the reader some understanding of the approach to take.

6) Optional user interface designs

Implementation-specific details in this document can be dangerous because they can lead the reader to assume that one specific implementation is necessary. Offer several possible design ideas to trigger discussion.

7) Optional architecture changes

You may consider offering some non-specific details about how your current product may be affected by the new features. Again, don't lead the reader to assume a specific implementation is necessary unless it actually is.

8) Optional project schedule

Only include this if you have put implementation-specific designs into the document. If you include a schedule here, make it very high-level and be open to change.

9) Version release number

You may consider suggesting the product version or release that these features will be implemented in.

10) Listing of customers who want it

Identify the customers who want the features.

11) Customer contact info

Give customer contact info for later reference. This document may last for several months, and you'll want ready access to those customers who are stakeholders in the eventual implementation. You may also consider listing beta testers that can help test the new features.

About Us

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Thousands of small to large businesses, in dozens of countries worldwide, trust their mission critical business processes to Scoutwest products. Standard Time® and Standard Issue® work together to offer well-rounded project management solutions.

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