

Flexible Information Delivery

Today And Tomorrow

Tim Williams, Information Architect, Abbey

delivered by Simon Riggs, Principal Consultant, 2ndQuadrant Ltd

Sources of Schedule Tension

Usual culprits are people & process issues e.g.

Unmanaged stake-holders

Current state misunderstood

Future vision not clear or not communicated

Inappropriate public statements

Weak project leadership

Distracting arguments

Inconsistent decision-making processes

Unexpected process & team interactions

Lack of experienced interpreters - regulations to IT, IT to business etc.

Missing requirements

Errors in requirements

Technical issues may also contribute e.g.

Data extract quality - not complete, unadjusted, timely, granular

Managing multiple environments: Dev, Test, Training, Live, Support etc.

Limited data profiling and/or metadata management capabilities

Data “sand-pits” not used - or used inappropriately

Sources of Schedule Tension

Usual culprits are people & process issues e.g.

Unmanaged stake-holders

Current state misunderstood

Future vision not clear or not communicated

Inappropriate public statements

Weak project leadership

Distracting arguments

Inconsistent decision-making processes

Unexpected process & team interactions

Lack of experienced interpreters - regulations to IT, IT to business etc.

Missing requirements

Errors in requirements

Technical issues may also contribute e.g.

Data extract quality - not complete, unadjusted, timely, granular

Managing multiple environments: Dev, Test, Training, Live, Support etc.

Limited data profiling and/or metadata management capabilities

Data "sand-pits" not used - or used inappropriately

Sources of Schedule Stability

Information Policies

- Durable statements expressed unambiguously in plain business language
- Provide clarity about context for information architecture & implementation

Generational (Meta-Model Driven) Architectures

- Less focused on current, target & transition states
- More focused on ability to move quickly between states

Contingency Planning

- Preparing, documenting & validating in “proof of concept” approaches for:
 - managing more granular data capture
 - increasing frequency of reporting
 - adapting to mergers & acquisitions

Actively Managing Staff Rotation - into & out of information delivery areas

- Injecting new ideas & energy from business subject matter experts
- Ensuring “BI Team” doesn’t accidentally/intentionally create “jobs for life”
- Regularly testing effectiveness of documentation & sourcing strategies

Almost “Silver Bullets” ...

Data Warehouse Lifecycle Management (DWLM) Tools

- 3rd party tools more appropriate for federated architectures
- Centralised DWLM may be based on single vendor

Data Profiling & Data Quality Tools

- Use to find out current state more quickly & less subjectively
 - to set objective improvement priorities & to track project progress rigorously
 - use limited to granular data - not so good for mgt. overview

Performance & Delivery Accelerators

- Massively parallel ETL Software
- Hardware-based acceleration
- Accelerated BPM & printed outputs from OLAP data

Generic (non BI-specific) Architecture components

- B.I. HelpDesk - should capture change requests as well as break/fix
- Requirements management software
- Schematic & semantic meta-data management tools
- Operational metadata collection - to discover who uses what, when & why

Importance of Delivery Methods

Stakeholder Engagement

- Methods appropriate for Information Delivery must promote ongoing dialogue
- Avoid traditional “waterfall” approaches

Information Delivery Process Lifecycle

- Vital to set accurate expectations about inputs, deliverables & timings
- Budget, activities & involvement required from stakeholders at each stage should be clear up-front

Meaningful End of Phase Reviews

- Pointless if ceremonial/superficial - apply exit criteria defined in advance
- Minimise un-planned re-work

Risk Awareness

- Without defined information project delivery methods, it is unlikely that all stakeholders will:
 - understand information delivery risks
 - fulfil their role in identifying & mitigating risks

Capabilities Worth Nurturing

Data Accounting & K.P.I.'s

- Report regularly on non-financial data cost drivers such as:
 - absolute number of logical & physical data items
 - broken down by business area, application etc
 - high logical items relative to industry may highlight needless complexity
 - ratio of logical to physical data items
 - high physical duplication may indicate inefficiency or planned re-use
- Identifying costs linked to data items: maintenance costs, opportunity costs
- Formally factoring data lifecycle costs into decisions early in projects

Data-Aware Culture

- Scope of data standards should span source systems, middleware & reporting
- Include data responsibilities in job descriptions, performance & training plans
- Involve teams responsible for Buy/Build & Strategic Sourcing decisions
- By policy, BI team rep. included in every transaction system project
 - promote awareness of existing data items - minimise creation of new/variant data
 - maintain stability of reporting - provide BI team with early visibility of changes
- Promote principle of complete source extracts with minimal transformation

Discussion and questions