QUALITY IS NEVER AN ACCIDENT. IT IS ALWAYS THE RESULT OF INTELLIGENT EFFORT. THERE MUST BE THE WILL TO PRODUCE A SUPERIOR THING.

PROJECT MANAGERS’ QUALITY FOCUS PAVES THE WAY FOR HIGH-QUALITY SOFTWARE

Horst Kostal

Software development has the highest requirements of all supporting disciplines due to large dynamics and complex dependencies. Several requirements have to be fulfilled to establish quality at the value added level: established and applied processes are the basics. Additionally, high product quality should not be left to chance, it is an inherent requirement. Part of a project manager’s role is to turn intuitive process actions into controlled and planned protocols.

Quality develops at the value added level

Whether defined quality processes already exist within the organization or not, or of a more informal form, these processes can only be realized if they are highlighted and are part of the company’s management. Implementing quality measures is most important since processes should achieve quality benchmarks. These measures if implemented in the development stages lead projects to overall quality success.

Why are quality issues sometimes arising in software projects? Many still think that exclusively the quality management or test teams are responsible for quality measures and assessments. However, product quality and functions are established by the development team – involving everyone within an organization including the management. Members of the development team are only able to implement these quality measures if they are qualified and authorized and have the tools and management backing to assess quality objectively. This comes at an additional oversight cost as implementing quality measures results in deployment of human assets and time.

Only planned actions are implemented!

Quality assurance measures need the same planning as features, since products which do not meet their quality standards are rejected just as products which fail their functional testing.

When quality functions have to be implemented, time effort and resources have to be planned. If the product development time period is shorter than ideally needed, then quality assurance is almost always the first area to be cut. This will particularly be the case if project members have to use their time for inventing their own quality assurance measures. Standardized work packages for quality assurance measures are critical. Ac-
Activities should be correctly identified, estimated, and planned; when they should be performed and with which resources. These quality measures should then be implemented with the same importance as the features. As previously mentioned, the project manager is responsible for the quality assurance measures within the framework of management oversight.

**Project manager with diplomatic soft skills**

The project manager nowadays has a new recognition of the importance of high product quality. The implementation of quality assurance measures has to become embedded as much as those of functional work packages. The project manager’s communications skills are of great importance to the team: adhering to additional work packages for quality assurance by accurately and timely carrying out his supervisory activities and being a role model for his team. Project managers also have to provide sufficient planning of these measures, embed them in work packages, and give software developers enough time to settle their tasks, including the quality modules. Then project members will realize that quality is part of a product and not resulting from an afterthought.

Company management has to support this holistic quality process. By supporting the project manager overtly and signaling that high quality is paramount, thereby providing sufficient planned personnel and financial resources sufficient to ensure quality practices are included and are transparent.

**Quality provides no self-purpose!**

Quality provides somewhat intangible benefits, but its generation requires effort and cost and thus has implied value. The customers expect quality and hopefully will pay for it. On the contrary, absence of quality can lead to reputation risk that can be far more costly than those quality assurance costs.

An experienced and successful project manager knows the importance of quality assurance measures. They have to communicate that quality processes are not negligible but are ingrained in everyday work life. Having technical and organizational skills, he will earn acceptance and respect from his team to achieve this quality.

Project managers are the connection between team and company management. Their diplomatic and communication skills are particularly required for the implementation of large and expensive quality processes.

If these processes are implemented with necessary support by the organization management, project members will learn about and apply the benefits of a culture of good quality management. The old saying: Customers and not products will come back, if those products have quality. Alternatively said, you can pay for it later in a big way, if you don’t pay for it in small ways during the product development process.

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