Problem Solver – Quality Management

Problem

An Australian association representing a primary industry has developed a unique piece of technology that will enhance the grading and classification of the industry's prime product. Your role is to project manage a go-to-market strategy. During the course of the project you discover a number of quality issues with the technology. How would you go about implementing quality management without impacting project timeframes?

Solution

In formulating the solution I have assumed that the grading of the industry's prime product has a direct relationship to the price paid/received for that product. Accordingly, any quality issue that impacts the accuracy of the results produced by the technology is significant and could undermine the adoption of the technology. Therefore the technology can't be allowed to go to market.

All effort should be directed at resolving a quality issue of this type, even if this requires additional expenditure to maintain the project timeframes, before the technology goes to market. The first step the project manager should take should be to arrange early conversation with the project sponsor and the industry association as a whole to build a common understanding of the quality issue and its impact on the delivery of the desired project outcomes. This conversation should also canvass potential solutions including:

- additional resources to investigate and address the root causes of the quality issues if the project time frame is to be maintained;
- revision of the go-to-market strategy that would enable either a 'pilot' deployment or staged roll-out to buy more time to resolve the quality issues;
- changes in the supplier of any components that have proved particularly problematic; and/or
- re-engagement of the industry top reset quality expectations to something that can be realistically achieved by the technology.

However, if the quality issues do not relate to the underlying technology per se but have only become evident during the installation and/or in-situ use of the technology, then there is a wider range of options available that can be implemented without affecting the project's timeframes.

For example:

- poor performance in adverse environments (eg. high dust/temperature) could be addressed by:
  - the provision of protective casings;
  - regular inspection and cleaning procedures; and/or
  - a process of rotating the measuring devices according to fixed schedules.

  All of these options would reduce the likelihood of technology failure.
- poor performance due to lower than expected throughput could be addressed by the provision of multiple devices working on parallel processing lines;
- uncertainty over whether the results produced by the technology could be tampered with before the measurement produced is used as the basis for a transaction could be addressed by:
  - implementing encrypted data traffic direct from the devices to the central clearing house;
  - installing a private network connecting the measuring devices to the central clearing house;
  - including tamper evident labels or closures on the measuring devices;
  - including remote monitoring (eg. CCTV) of the physical areas in which the measurements are conducted; and/or
  - reducing, to the maximum possible, the potential for human interference in the process of collection and use of measurement outcomes.

NOTE: This solution was provided based on the limited information provided in the problem statement. The more specific the information provided, the more comprehensive and relevant the solution.

This Problem Solver was summarised and published in the August/September 2011 edition of the *Project Manager* magazine

PO Box 36
Jerrabomberra NSW 2619
AUSTRALIA

t: 0413 591762
e: admin@p3m.com.au
w: www.p3m.com.au