

# Be Satisfied With What I Give You - It's Better Than What You Asked For

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My husband and I usually stay in hotels on vacation and sometimes our expectations, those unspecified requirements, are not met. This blog deals with two aspects of unmet expectations: unwanted features and making changes.

**Unwanted features.** How many of us are universally delighted with every room assigned to us? Recently, despite asking for a quiet room with a king-size bed (my husband is 6'3"), we were assigned a room with a double bed facing a busy, noisy street. When we asked to change rooms, the front desk clerk sighed with disgust and said, "But we gave you a suite." We didn't ask for a suite. We asked for a quiet room with a king-sized bed. We got features we neither wanted nor asked for and didn't get features that were important to us. Clearly in the clerk's mind the suite was more valuable than the features we requested.

I suspect many of our sponsors and other stakeholders end up with features they don't want without getting the features that are important to them. Years ago I was a banking officer implementing a new teller system. I provided my requirements during a series of meetings with IT. When the design was done I was presented with a series of "wouldn't it be great if the system could do..." "Yes," I responded, "it would be great as long as it allowed automated teller balancing." "Well, no," I was told. Tellers would still need to follow their current, cumbersome process.

More recently I spoke with an executive involved in a project where she had only one requirement—new information, currently captured, on a current report. When the requirements package was presented, the report was missing. When she questioned what happened to the report, she was told about all the wonderful features and functions the system would provide. But her report was still missing, despite assurances from the sponsor that it would be included.

I'm sympathetic to the business analysts and project managers who want nothing more than to provide outstanding customer service to their stakeholders. I totally encourage project professionals to recommend new direction, new features and functions, new processes, etc. as long as these recommendations include an analysis of the problem, a recommendation to solve the problem, and the benefit of solving it.

Where we get into trouble is by presenting solutions that the sponsor and other stakeholders don't ask for. During business analysis we sometimes ask leading questions which are less questions and more presenting solutions to unidentified problems. Questions such as "Have you ever thought about..." or "Would you ever consider..." are examples. Even worse is when we think we know more than our stakeholders. We add features that we think are cool or even necessary and include them as requirements, without first checking with the business stakeholders to make sure the business values and is willing to pay for them.

**Making changes.** My Uncle Bill used to tell us that no matter what type of hotel or where it was located, no matter how many of the hotel staff he talked to in advance of their arrival, Aunt Roslyn would look at the assigned hotel room, find it inadequate, and request a change of rooms. When we were younger, we always felt sorry for Uncle Bill. How patient, how long-suffering he was to put up with the inevitable bother of changing hotel rooms.

However, as we've aged, my husband and I find ourselves changing rooms more frequently. After the above-mentioned front-desk clerk tried unsuccessfully to convince us to stay in the suite, he told us respectfully but firmly that no other rooms were available and change was not possible. In desperation we agreed to pay a fortune to upgrade to get what we originally asked for. Nevertheless, the clerk appeared unhappy. Clearly, the change request was an anomaly and upset his process.

I suspect that many of our sponsors and other business stakeholders are reluctant to request changes because of our body language, because of a burdensome change process, or because they are used to being told "you can't have that change. It's out-of-scope."

In looking back, it seems that we've been less likely to change rooms when we've taken a virtual tour of the hotel prior to booking a room. Unlike photos taken at just the right angle to make a tiny, bare room look cozy and comfortable, a virtual tour provides a broader perspective of the room in relationship to the rest of the hotel. Pictures provide a structure for us to help the stakeholders discover their requirements, and one of the best ways to provide pictures is prototyping. Unlike static screen shots or wire frames, prototypes that allow our business stakeholders to "use" the end product help elicit not only their requirements, but also those hidden expectations. Even when the prototypes are low tech rough drafts drawn in PowerPoint or on easel pads, they are an effective elicitation technique.

I'm not sure much will change on future vacations. But that's OK. Few hotel clerks are as crabby as the one above. We have generally found them to be friendly and flexible, like most of the project professionals we worked with as well.

### About Watermark Learning

Watermark Learning helps improve project success with outstanding project management and business analysis training and mentoring. We foster results through our unique blend of industry best practices, a practical approach, and an engaging delivery. We convey retainable real-world skills, to motivate and enhance performance, adding up to enduring results. With our academic partner, Auburn University, Watermark Learning provides [Masters Certificate Programs](#) to help organizations be more productive, and assist individuals in their professional growth. Watermark Learning is an IIBA Endorsed Education Provider and a PMI Global Registered Education Provider. Our book entitled [Practitioner's Guide to Requirements Management, Part I: Requirements Planning](#) is available through Amazon.com. For more information, contact us at 800-646-9362, or visit us at [www.WatermarkLearning.com](http://www.WatermarkLearning.com).