

Analyst Influence

SPECIFY. POOR REQUIREMENTS.¹

Details Flo Wellner had been working in the same ICT group for a number of years and had gained a reputation for insightful but cautious analysis.

Recently the following events took place. A new group in the organization, *We Keep Secrets*, was formed to analyze a backlog of five years of data so that strategy managers could make more insightful decisions for the benefit of the organization.

Galit Appel was assigned the task of being the domain expert to assist Wellner with getting the requirements right. Appel had been with the strategy policy group for only six months but was confident that they had a sufficient grasp of the task to guide Wellner: It was not a complicated problem after all.

Appel drafted the first requirements document and passed it on to Wellner. As it turned out, Wellner had a greater understanding than Appel of the nature of the data and the sorts of things that the strategy policy group wanted: they have been asking for similar reports for a number of years.

Wellner approached Appel with concerns about the requirements document showing them data structure maps to demonstrate that some functionality of the requirements document could not possibly be implemented and other parts were contradictory.

Appel thanked Wellner for the feedback and said that they would get onto it as soon as possible but could not promise when as they has several other projects on the go.²

A few weeks later Appel handed back the document and instructed Wellner to put it into the approved organizational template to be passed onto the developers.³

Wellner did not doubt their own analysis of the document but did as they were told. As these things happen it was passed onto a new programmer, Sissela Moore, that Wellner had not worked with before. Being aware of Wellner's reputation for exactitude and precision, Moore did not question the document.

The rest of the story is a bit of a mess. Much time was wasted by Moore and a new tester, G.E. Bok⁴, before they went way beyond reasonable doubt over their own competence and pressed Wellner on the matter. Wellner confessed to what they had done (which was done simply to avoid confrontation).

The project came in over time and over budget.⁵

¹ The ICT professional who reported this incident asked that the details be disguised so that neither they nor their organization could be identified. Hello and thanks for being brave Flo.

Cast	Role
Galit Appel	Domain Expert
G.E. Bok	Tester
Sissela Moore	Programmer
Flo Wellner	Senior analyst

Table 1: A_2 Cast

² Appel did have a quick look at Wellner's comments a few weeks later and came to the conclusion that the comments were simply a misunderstanding; clearly Wellner did not have a sufficient grasp of the domain to realize this.

³ After a quick fix of a clear typing problem which made one part of the requirements document unworkable.

⁴ Who simply assumed that both Moore and Wellner had done their job properly.

⁵ As the whole process had to be restarted.