Documenting Requirements is a Blast! ...Right?

Well, not quite. Defining requirements isn't something you *love* to do – it's something you *need* to do. It's important. No other activity is more critical to the success of your project.

In order to succeed, you need to collaborate with diverse people and interests. You need to track an abundance of ever-changing, interrelated detail. You need to assemble those details into a coherent, unambiguous format. You need to get consensus, buy-in, and sign-off. It's no surprise that defining requirements is usually the hardest part of a project.

No single factor is responsible for more wasted effort, rework, or failed projects than inadequate requirements.
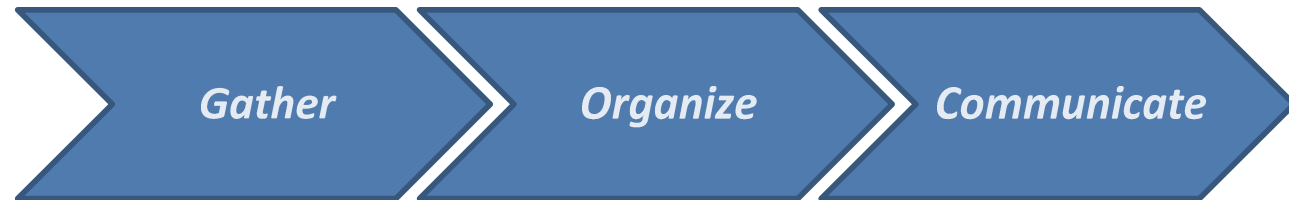
–Carl Zetie, Forrester Research

So, gathering requirements is both important and difficult. Maybe a tool could help. But how can you be sure you're choosing the right one?

Selecting a Requirements Tool

Strip away all the fluff and sales-speak. A requirements tool should make you more effective at performing three primary tasks:

Gather > *Organize* > *Communicate*

- **Gather.** A tool should guide you and help uncover the right information, not just be a place to keep requirements *after* they've been gathered. One of the myths in IT is that stakeholders already know what they want and capturing requirements is simply a matter of writing it down. Yet many requirements tools offer little more than a database of records and fields.
- **Organize**. A tool should organize the information you're gathering and make it easy to search, cross reference, and analyze. Requirements are an evolving set of interconnected details. The tool should also help you understand the impact of the changes you're making.
- **Communicate**. The point is NOT to produce dry, tedious documentation – *the point is to communicate*. A complete and accurate specification does no good if nobody wants to read it. A tool should help you build a shared understanding of your requirements by making them easy to understand and verify.

CaseComplete helps you gather, organize, and communicate your requirements more effectively.

But is it Easy to Use?

In reality, most organizations don't use a specialized tool to define requirements – they get by with a word processor, spreadsheet, and drawing program. Why? Because they already know how. But a toolset like this eventually breaks down under the weight of a growing set of requirements.

A requirements tool should be quick to set up, easy to learn, and *save* more work than it *creates*. Tools that are too complex will not be embraced and therefore fail to deliver the benefits you'd hoped for. It should seamlessly promote best practices and allow you to gather requirements using any of the five most common approaches:
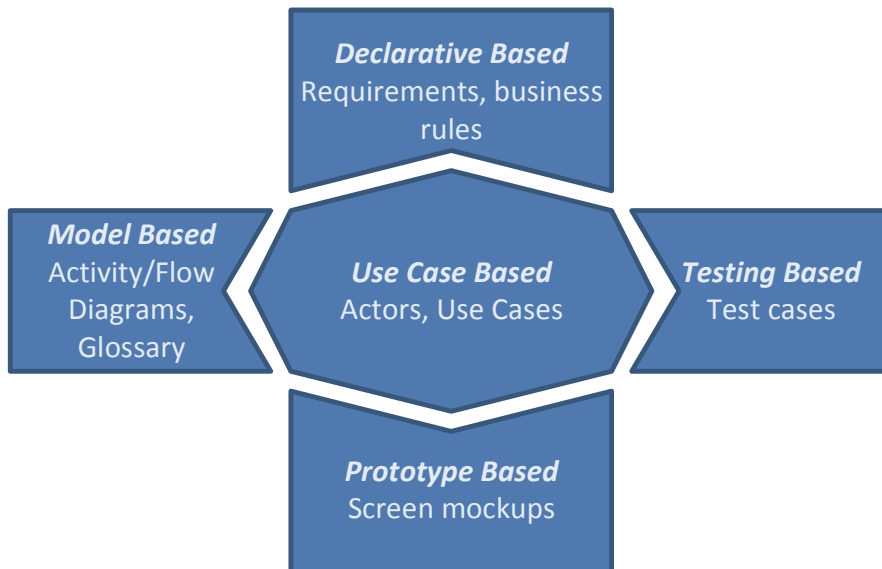
- **Use Case-Based.** Describe requirements by defining who will be using the system and how they will be using it.
- **Declarative-Based.** The "traditional approach" to specifying requirements asserting conditions that the system must adhere to.
- **Model-Based.** Describe requirements by creating various diagrams and glossary terms.
- **Testing-Based.** Define precise behavioral requirements through the creation of scenario-based test cases.
- **Prototype-Based.** Create screen mock-ups that show the user interface related to specific requirements.

CaseComplete supports all of these approaches.

Declarative Based
Requirements, business rules

Model Based
Activity/Flow Diagrams, Glossary

Use Case Based
Actors, Use Cases

Testing Based
Test cases

Prototype Based
Screen mockups

Think About Your ROI

Ultimately, you invest in a requirements tool to save time and money. But how can you be sure it's a smart investment? Take a moment to think about how you might calculate the ROI of your purchase.

Costs

- The cost to setup and install
- The cost of lost productivity getting up to speed
- The cost of additional work created by using the tool
- The actual purchase price

Savings

- The time saved gathering, organizing, and communicating requirements
- The time saved 'downstream' by having complete and accurate requirements that everyone can understand

To get a positive return on your investment, the tool needs to install quickly and have a short learning curve. It should be enjoyable to use (otherwise you won't use it) and must *eliminate* more work than it creates. It also helps if it isn't incredibly expensive to buy. In the end, it must increase the quality of the requirements you're gathering.

With CaseComplete, you'll be more productive *today*.

Putting it All Together

You have choices. There are a variety of tools that address requirements in different ways – each has its strengths and weaknesses. So ask yourself what you really need in a requirements tool. Consider how you intend to earn a return on your investment. Let the chart below guide you.

	CaseComplete	Database-Centric Tools (DOORS, CaliberRM)	Document-Centric Tools (ReqPro)	Design Tools (Enterprise Architect)	Prototyping Tools (Axure, I-Rise)
Is it easy to get started?	Install and start gathering requirements in minutes ● Great	Server administration required ○ Not so good	Complex installation ○ Not so good	For requirements, it's a bit tricky ○ Not so good	Relatively easy ● Great
How easy it is to use?	Saves time on tasks you're already doing ● Great	Training required to be productive ○ Not so good	Not so much ○ Not so good	Complex UML tool for designers and architects ○ Not so good	Relatively easy ● Great
Is it more than a database repository?	An intuitive user interface guides you each step of the way ● Great	No, it's mostly grids and fields ○ Not so good	No, it's mostly a blank slate ○ Not so good	Yes, but primarily a drawing tool ◉ Good	Yes, but primarily a prototyping tool ◉ Good
Built in support for all five approaches to requirements?	Yes: Use cases, requirements, models, tests, prototypes ● Great	No ○ Not so good	Possible, with help from other tools ◉ Good	Focuses on technical designs only ○ Not so good	Focuses on prototypes only ○ Not so good
Does it make requirements easier to communicate?	Requirements are broken down into consumable 'stories' ● Great	No ○ Not so good	No ○ Not so good	Makes technical designs easier to communicate ◉ Good	Makes prototypes easier to communicate ◉ Good

● Great   ◉ Good   ○ Not so good

Get Started Today – For Free

Here's the pitch: With CaseComplete you can specify a complete and accurate set of requirements in less time – with better results. Join over 500 organizations around the world using CaseComplete to gather and communicate requirements.
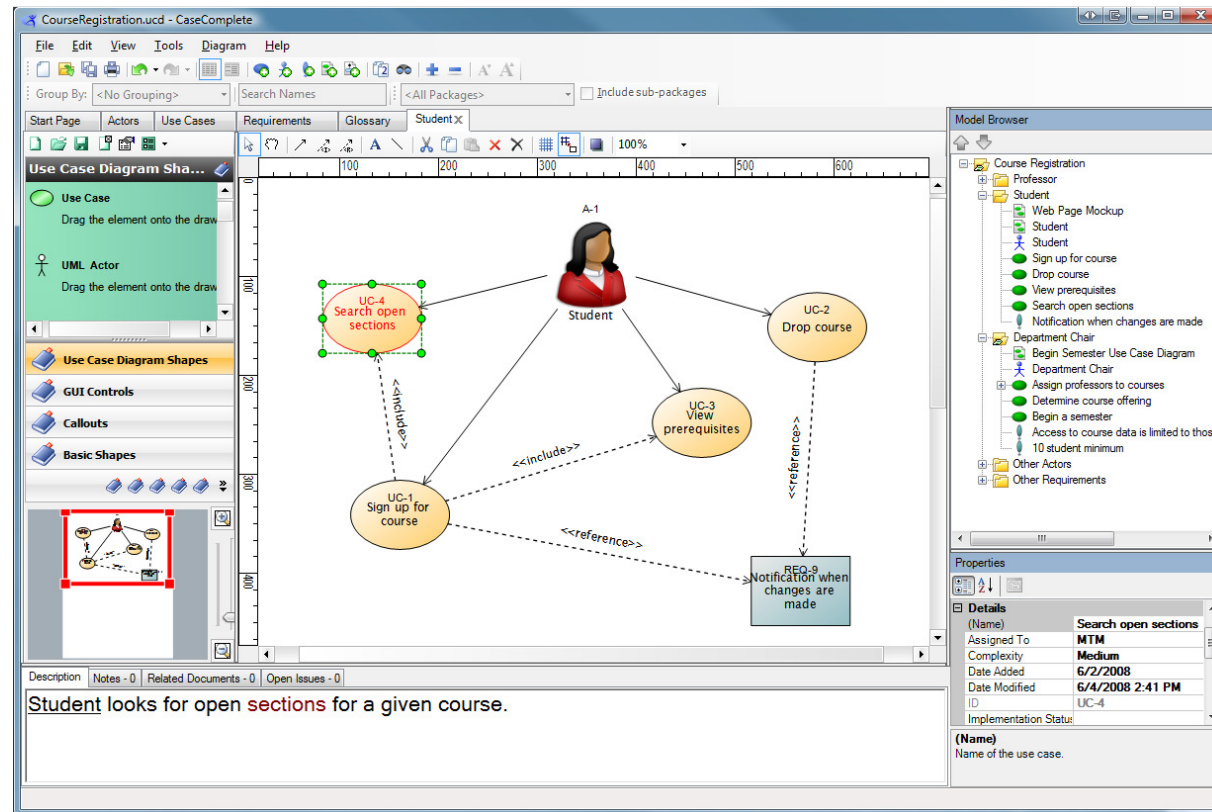
30-day Free Trial

No risk. No commitment. Try out a fully functional copy of CaseComplete for 30-days. Get yours at http://www.casecomplete.com.