

Sponsor Questions for Better Estimates & Plans

Questions to ask yourself

1. What am I doing to encourage quality estimates (credible & review-able versus optimistic or pessimistic)?
2. Are project teams and project managers telling me what they think is true, or what they think I want to hear?
3. When and how will I know if there are schedule problems?
4. When and how will I know if there are resource problems?
5. When and how will I know if there are quality problems?
6. Have scope priorities (“musts” versus “wants” versus “nice to have”) been discussed?
7. When & how will decisions about scope changes be made?
8. Are the relative priorities of schedule, scope, and resources clear?
9. Are teams keeping histories of actual performance versus estimates to improve the estimation process?
10. What have been the consequences of under-estimates and over-estimates in the past?
11. Is timely information flowing regarding changes to schedule dependencies?
12. What are the biggest risks I can imagine for this project?

Questions to ask the Project Manager & Team Leaders

1. Are estimates based upon detailed work plans?
2. Do task level plans exist for the upcoming phase?
3. Does the plan for the next phase include creation/revision of the plans and estimates for the following phase?
4. Do tasks produce clearly described deliverables?
5. Have individuals been allocated/assigned to perform all tasks?
6. Has resource availability and skill level been considered?
7. Are the assumptions that went into the estimates written down?
8. Have assumptions & estimates been reviewed?
9. How many productive hours are assumed per week for human resources?
10. Does the plan have tasks for reviews, walkthroughs and rework?
11. Who created the task level estimates?
12. Have key dependencies between work groups been clearly defined?
13. Where would a little extra time be beneficial?
14. Where would a little extra resource be beneficial?
15. If you could defer one requirement to the next release, which would it be and why?
16. Does the duration of any task in the plan exceed 2 weeks? Why?
17. Which tasks in the plan monitor the quality of the work products?
18. Has the critical path been identified?
19. What is the likelihood that this project or phase will finish 10% earlier than scheduled?
20. What is the likelihood that this project or phase will finish 10% later than scheduled?

21. What is the likelihood that people will have to work more than 40 hours per week to meet this schedule?
22. If we had the time and resources, where would prototyping reduce risk?
23. What risks have been identified and are remediation plans reasonable?
24. Does instrumentation exist to detect risk events early?
25. Where are natural “kill points” to stop the project or reduce scope?