

On-Demand Software Estimates (ODSEs)

Purpose:

Inaccurate software project estimates are the cause of a lot of waste in IT departments. For example, the consequences of trying to work to an inaccurate estimate can be:

- initial estimate was too high - low productivity or missed opportunities;
- initial estimate was too low - inefficient resource allocation at the end of the project, budget overruns and late deliveries .

There are some very good estimating tools available to help solve this problem but they require expertise and regular use to deliver benefits. If our clients are ready to invest in in-house expertise and they have the estimate volume to ensure regular use then we may recommend that they buy a tool. If clients don't have sufficient volume to maintain in-house expertise, we recommend that they take advantage of our On-Demand Software Estimates (ODSEs). ODSE's provide an expert, third party (credible) estimate. This is a cost effective (< 2% of total project costs) option for an organization periodically seeking accurate estimates on major projects. The ODSE service utilizes a commercially available estimating tool as part of its knowledge capital.

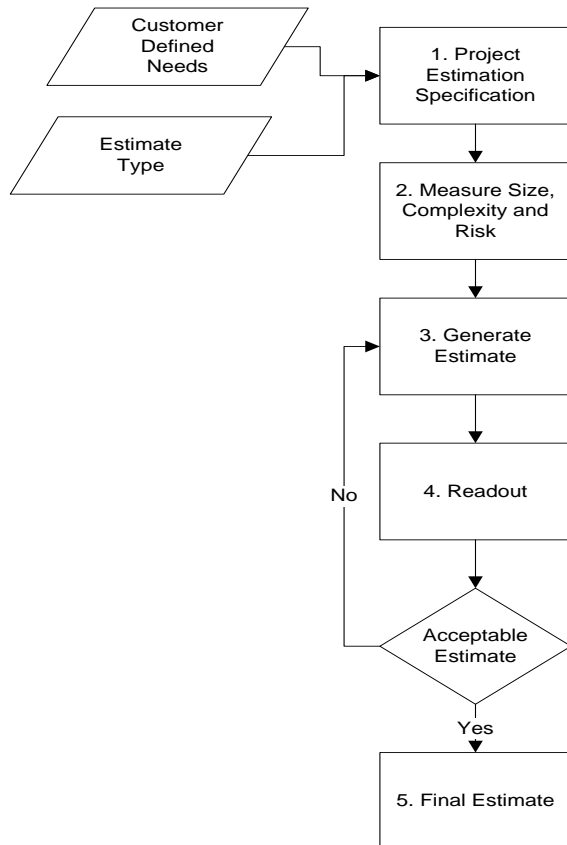


On-Demand Software Estimates (ODSE) Service Offering (3 calendar days full cycle time)

The Need:

Scenarios vary, but typically this offering is for the organization that has a specific need for a detailed estimate on a very large, and often times, critical project. When the estimate needs to be accurate and realistic it helps to have a third party objective view. The estimate process is performed in a collaborative process setting with full disclosure as to how the estimate is being developed. The results are reviewed and any adjustments that may be required are completed. Subsequent estimates are often requested throughout the lifecycle.

The Process:



Step 1 - Project Estimate Specification

This initial step includes developing an understanding of the clients needs and expectations and the availability of critical data required to produce a reasonable estimate. During this step we: gain an understanding as to the nature of the project (e.g., new development, enhancement, maintenance); define what is being estimated (e.g., level of effort, duration, resources, defects); identify the audience for the estimate (e.g., project manager, customer); identify the level and quality of data available to perform the estimate.

Participants: Project manager, business and systems analyst, stakeholders

Techniques: Group or individual interviews

Output: Project Estimate Specification/Agreement
Level of Effort: 1 day

Step 2 - Measuring Size, Complexity and Risk

A key input to an accurate estimate is an evaluation of the size and the complexity of the project being estimated. Function Point analysis will be performed where feasible. Alternative sizing techniques such as Monte Carlo and Delphi will be considered as necessary. Complexity factors are evaluated, weighted and assigned to the estimating model.

In addition, numerous variables known to influence quality and productivity performance are collected and analyzed. This information is often subjective in nature and therefore requires interviews with project team members to gain consensus as to the most likely responses on key variables.

Participants: Project manager, business and/or systems analyst, DBA, project team members

Techniques: Function Point Analysis, Questionnaire, Interviews

Output: Detailed Function Point Count, Risk Analysis

Level of Effort: 16 hours

Step 3 - Generate Estimate

All data and project variables are used as input to the estimating model. Initial estimates are produced and examined by an estimating expert. Fine tuning to ensure a proper fit with the expected outcomes and a detailed analysis of the cause and effect of key variables completes the initial (Level 1) estimate.

Participants: Project manager, analyst

Techniques: Software tool

Output: Estimates (level of effort, duration, risk, and quality)

Level of Effort: 4 hours

Step 4 - Readout

Generated estimates are presented to the project manager. As necessary, details are provided that support the estimates. It is important that the Project Manager understands the basis for the estimated deliverables and is comfortable with the accuracy of the estimate.

Based on feedback during the readout, certain adjustments to the input data may be necessary. These adjustments are clearly defined and another, second level, estimate is generated for review by the project manager. This cycle may repeat several times until all parties understand and agree with the results.

Participants: Project manager, analyst

Techniques: Hands-on meeting

Output: Agree to estimate / identified revisions
Level of Effort: 2 hours

Step 5 - Final Estimate

The final estimate produces a series of charts, graphs and data points that can be displayed on-line or through printed reports. The data is stored and made available to the project team for subsequent estimates as may be necessary. Electronic files are generated and provided to the project team for possible feeds to other project management tools.

