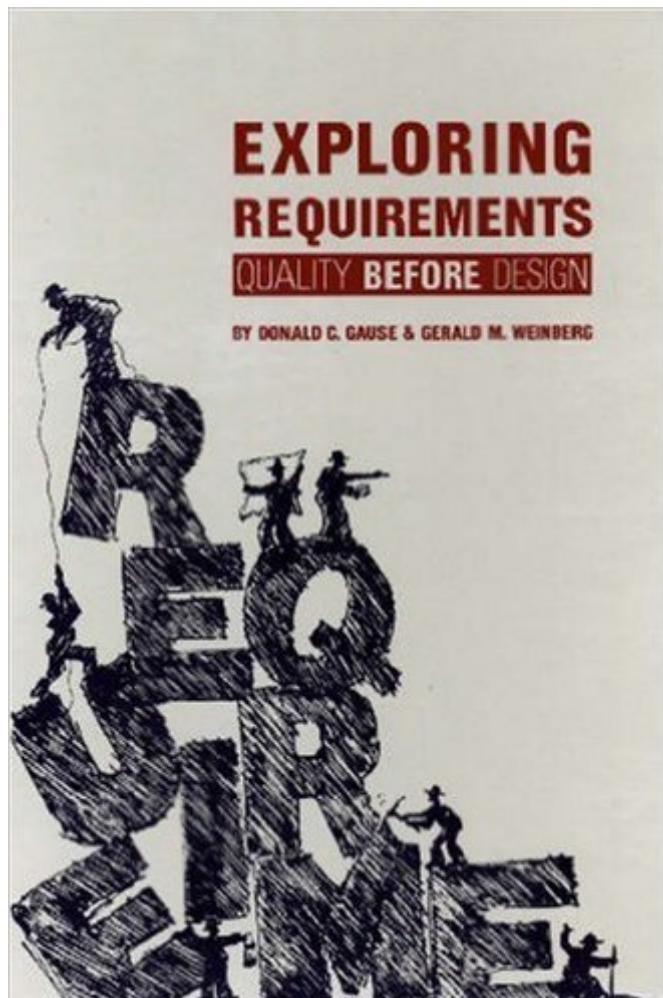


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Exploring Requirements: Quality Before Design



Synopsis

The scholar John von Neumann once said, "There's no sense being exact about something if you don't even know what you're talking about." In a world that is growing increasingly dependent on highly complex, computer-based systems, the importance of defining what you want to make before making it -- that is, knowing what you're talking about -- cannot be stressed enough. Here's an innovative book that gives you the understanding you need to give people the solutions they want. The collaborative team of Gause and Weinberg tells how you can assure the requirements are right -- before the product is designed. Written by two recognized authorities in the field, this book is a collection of ideas developed, refined, and tested during their more than sixty combined years of work with both large and small organizations. The techniques formulated in Exploring Requirements are not confined to software development; they have been used effectively to develop a wide range of products and systems -- from computer software to furniture, books, and buildings. Systems analysts and anyone involved with the challenges of the requirements process will greatly benefit from this book. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

In the decade since I last read this book I've gained a wealth of experience in requirements elicitation and management. So why bother re-reading the book and taking the time to write a review? Because I strongly believe that this is one of the classics and should be *required* reading by anyone in the IT profession (it also crosses over into just about any profession). What makes this

book a classic? After all, we practitioners have software tools such as DOORS and Requisite Pro, advanced techniques such as quality function deployment, specialized modeling languages such as UML, and a keener understanding of the importance in business rules. All of these innovations and advances are technical in nature. The authors address something much deeper and more fundamental that will apply a decade from now: human nature and critical thinking. They lead you to an understanding of these keys to exploring requirements, and they do so in with subtle humor, common sense and clear writing. One example of how they delve into the deeper subjects of human nature and critical thinking is a true story about an advertisement for a "cockroach killer" that is guaranteed to be 100% effective. After your initial chuckles die down you begin to see things in a different way. The authors lead you from this humorous story into one discussion or example after another and how they apply to requirements. By the time you finish this book you will begin looking at the requirements process in a different way, and perhaps, the world around you as well.

"So, what do you want it to do?" It looks like such a simple question. But this query - posed every day about Web sites, other software, indeed about buildings and cars and furniture and all sorts of designed objects - is one of the toughest questions that can be asked of an organisation. It triggers the requirements process. A thirteen-year-old book by Donald Gause and Gerald Weinberg, "Exploring Requirements" shows how to manage that process. Most Web developers and managers haven't read it, and should. Like the man startled to find he had been speaking prose all his life, most of us have taken part in a requirements process, and many of us don't know it. Requirements analysis is actually a life skill that can be applied particularly often in your working life. If you've had an architect design renovations, or a friend build you a PC, or a large consulting firm build you a business reporting system, then you've been on the end of a requirement process, formal or informal. If you've ever designed or built something, and seen a disappointed look on the recipient's face, you've experienced requirements failure. If you've ever had a client rave about how great a Web site is, you've achieved requirements success. Like that other classic, DeMarco and Lister's "Peopleware", "Exploring Requirements" makes ample use of large numbers of measurements collected over many years - like the numbers showing that programmers are quite good at producing what they are actually asked to produce, if only they are asked to produce it. This data allows Gause and Weinberg to enunciate a simple principle: you'll quite likely get what you want, as long as you say what it is. Saying what you want, though, takes surprising amounts of both discipline and technique.

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