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# Demanding Clients. Challenges and Best Practices

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# Are there demanding clients?

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- Objectives of an IT project
  - produce software that meets requirements, time and budget  
AND
  - make client happy
- 5% of our clients are “too demanding”\*

*Don't confuse poor management on your side with client being too demanding!*

\*all clients are good 😊

# Why is a client too “demanding”?

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- No experience with remote vendors
- Distance factor
- Human factors (personality specific)
- Budget constraints
- Business driven planning

# Problems

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- Distance factor
  - Lack of transparency, Lack/ Insufficiency of communication
  - Client suspiciousness
- Human factors
  - Exceeded level of communication
  - Endless loops
    - Floating scope of Development
    - No exit criteria for QA making project an endless loop of QA-BF (perfectionism)
- Business driven planning
  - Policy of releases to the end users is not coordinated with project team
  - Unplanned releases => low quality
- Budget constraints
  - Invisible work
  - CR, not a bug – financial and/or image factor

# Communication

## Use reasonable balance in transparency

- **Increase communication frequency**

- Verbal and written
- Make him feel close / part of the team

- **Organize effective reporting**

- **Clearly state issues**

-> **Client should always feel project is under his full control**

- **Certain details should stay internal**

- Internal misunderstandings within the team
- Clients are jealous to non-project activities

# Communication

## Transparent Traceable Financial Reporting



**Project Plan**

Attach File X Delete Item \* indicates a required field

Task Name \* Secure project sponsorship

% Complete 50 %

Assigned To Steve Masters  
Enter users separated with semicolons.

Start 11/30/2006

Finish 12/1/2006

Actual Start 11/30/2006

Actual Finish

Notes

**Task Assignment**

Date	Name	File Downloaded	Tasks	Hours	Status
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
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11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started
11/30/06	Steve Masters		Secure project sponsorship	1.0	Not Started

**Daily Status Reports from the Team**

Accumulating

Cost	Project Name	Hours	Expense	Status
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started
11/30/06	Secure project sponsorship	1.0	100.00	Not Started

**Project Financial Report**



# Communication

## psychological tricks

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- Always react on each mail or idea
- Disagree softly, provide good arguments
- Make him “invent” the idea from your options
- Choose proper timing for important discussions
- Manifest sincere interest communicating with client, finally his success is your success.

# Communication

## Virtual vs Personal

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- Invite client onboard periodically
  - Faces behind the names
- Have constant or regular presence on client site
  - Communication channel

# Customer support

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- Provide maximum availability of your people to support the client
  - Dedicated support person
- Quickly act on issues raised by client
- Divide your work environment in:
  - Official (visible for the client)
  - Working (for intermediate results not ready to be shown / not-available for the client)
- Make sure client has rapid, robust access to the information he needs without your involvement

# Budget constraints

## “Invisible work”

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- Convince client in the necessity
- Disperse “invisible” activities among tasks
  - Include the effort into tasks estimates to avoid ‘disputable’ tasks

# Budget constraints

## Change Request is not a Bug

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- Clear project documentation stating what is OUT OF the scope
- Dedicated storage for all informal requests

NB: Argue only when it's worth

# Process

## Deliverables management

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- Have written description of scope and dates and maintain it updated
- Do not deliver uninstallable or crashing software (define QA lag)
- Manage the scope to prevent endless loop of development
- Fix the exit criteria of QA to prevent endless loop of QA

# Process Improvements make client happier

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- Dedicated project for Process Improvement
- Do improvements (even minor one) to your processes or infrastructure regularly
  - Remember: minor but visible things might make client happier than megabytes of useful code
- Report on process/infrastructure enhancements weekly
- Have Lessons Learned sessions after key projects

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Management is not a hell, it just  
has its own specific 😊

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# Thank you!

## Questions and Answers

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