

Volere

Volere – the Evolution of Successful Requirements Techniques

The Volere Requirements Techniques are a language used for the discovery, communication and management of requirements, and to design solutions for those requirements. The Volere language enables the business analyst to communicate with all the appropriate stakeholders, and the developers of solutions. Volere techniques are socio-technical; technical ways of defining requirements and connecting them to solutions, and sociological approaches to working with stakeholders who have different interests and roles.

Improving the Solution

From the 1960's to the 1990's the software development industry was concerned with techniques for improving software. Techniques emerged for structuring code, along with design principles. These techniques were formalised and written about by pioneers like Edsger Dijkstra, Glenford Myers, Larry Constantine, Michael Jackson, and others, and had the effect of improving the structure and readability of code. This consistent way of writing code made it easier to maintain and to share. But these improvements raised some new questions.

The code being produced was more communicable between technical specialists, but the people who used the software products complained that much of the software did not do what was needed. In other words, it was good code but it did not solve the real business problem.

Communicating the Problem

In the 1980's Gane & Sarson, Tom DeMarco, Peter Chen and others introduced ways of building models to make the business processes and data more visible. The products of systems analysis were becoming more communicable. But even then, there was little formal traceability between the people who did the analysis of the problem and the people who did the development of the solution.

In 1990 your authors were working as Analyst/Designer/Programmers – yes, the roles were deeply intertwined – and we kept on hearing this from business stakeholders: “Why can't you build systems that help us to do our work?” It became clear that what we understood to be the business requirements were not what the stakeholders thought they had asked for. Admittedly, a lot of the time, the stakeholders' requirements were vague and ambiguous. Additionally, there was little formal connection between the business requirements and the implemented software.

Volere as a Common Language

Those that came before us had defined ways of modelling business systems and specifying software systems. We could see that what was needed was a way of connecting systems models and specifications so that stakeholders with different interests and different outlooks could communicate with each other. We needed a common language to bridge the problem-solution gap. This marked the birth of what we called the *Volere Requirements Techniques*.

The first thing was to develop a checklist to use as a guide for identifying, specifying and connecting the business requirements from the problem scope all the way down to the atomic functional and non-functional requirements. Thus the Volere Requirements Specification Template was born. The template is supported by a rigorous Requirements Knowledge Model that provides a traceable definition of each level of requirements from the business problem all the way through to the implemented solution and its testing.

The Volere Requirements Specification Template has been downloaded about 30,000 times. It first appeared in 1995, and has become something of a standard in requirements work. We use the techniques on a wide range of projects and we regularly add new ideas to the template. We recently published the 18th edition of the template.

Since it first appeared, the template has been joined by training courses, consulting services, videos, webinars and books on the subject of business analysis and requirements. The techniques have expanded to include the useful Brown Cow model of system viewpoints, the context or scope model, business use case and product use case (BUC and PUC) scenarios to model responses and provide a basis for both story writing and implementation strategy. The techniques include ways of writing agile stories so that they better portray the real business problem.

To date we have trained more than fifteen thousand people in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, not counting people who have crossed borders to attend our courses.

The Volere techniques are used in numerous industries – aerospace, automotive, construction, entertainment, government, insurance, pharmaceutical, banking, retail, telecommunications, human resources, and many more including a zoo.

The first edition of the book *Mastering the Requirements Process* was published in 1999. It is currently in its third edition, and to date has sold more than 60,000 copies. It too has become something of a standard.

Ongoing Practice and Development

The Volere requirements techniques are alive – they are being used and enhanced by the skill and experience of business analysts and requirements specialists worldwide. They are continuously evolving to meet – and often lead – trends and

discoveries in our industry. *Business Analysis Agility: Solve the Real Problem* was published in 2019 to focus on how to integrate effective requirements practices with agile development techniques.

We have been able to maintain our standards by meticulous selection of our instructors and consultants. Your Volere instructor/consultant is a business analyst with the right combination of practical, successful experience, and the communication skills to impart their knowledge.

You can find more – events, articles, videos – on our web site www.volere.org.