



Success story NS with IREB

Dutch Railways (NS) benefits greatly from the professionalization of requirement engineering that is supported by the various certification modules of IREB. The role of IT is still increasing within NS. Expressing clearly the demand for IT products that do the right thing and with the right quality is challenging. With the growing number of analysts that help business and IT with expressing requirements and sharing their understanding, it has been very useful to get a common reference framework for this area of work. Some examples can clarify in what ways the knowledge and skills acquired through the CPRE (Certified Professional for Requirements Engineering) modules have brought advantages to Dutch Railways.

The first example is a large IT program that has been running for some years with the aim of improving the flow of travel information with a new chain of applications. In this program four analysts have been working on requirements for different subsystems and applications with slightly different requirements techniques. They each have their own preferences in their ways of working and their own style in documenting requirements. After participating in the training program with CPRE Foundation Level the four analysts noticed that they could help each other much better by sharing a common language and by applying general practices (like quality criteria) on their various requirements. By doing so the quality of the requirements has risen and this has led to shorter lead times in the overall development process.

Another example is a project providing innovative solutions in the daily control of rolling stock by a new IT system. One of the two analysts that work on this project mentioned the challenges she had in getting the requirements out of the business. After doing the CPRE Advanced Level Elicitation and Consolidation module she has increased her repertoire of requirements techniques. The analyst became more aware of the kind of field observation she used to do in order to gather basic factors (requirements). She extended her elicitation work with contextual inquiry to enhance the initial set of requirements. In addition to observing tasks, processes and problems, it worked very well to discuss her observations directly with the end users. Another gain was that IREB stimulated her to use more supporting techniques than before. The project already had some mock-ups, but she was inspired to actively use these mock-ups in the requirements process: “During visits to the control centers I also used prototyping (clickable mock-ups). I asked stakeholders to identify new or missing requirements by using the clickable mock-up. This supporting technique was very helpful in clarifying and detailing the already elicited requirements”. So with the help of the insights and deeper understanding gained through the IREB training, she was able to apply a richer combination of elicitation techniques that resulted in an improved set of requirements. More important still was her new skill to systematically evaluate the suitability of all possible requirements techniques: “When using the techniques for elicitation we were already aware of the Kano-model, but we weren’t aware of all the other factors that influence the choice of the most suitable technique for the elicitation of requirements in our situation. Now we are!”. Her project team and the stakeholders are very happy with the boost in requirements information this has generated.