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Book Review

Customer-Centered Products, by Ivy F. Hooks and Kristin A. Farry

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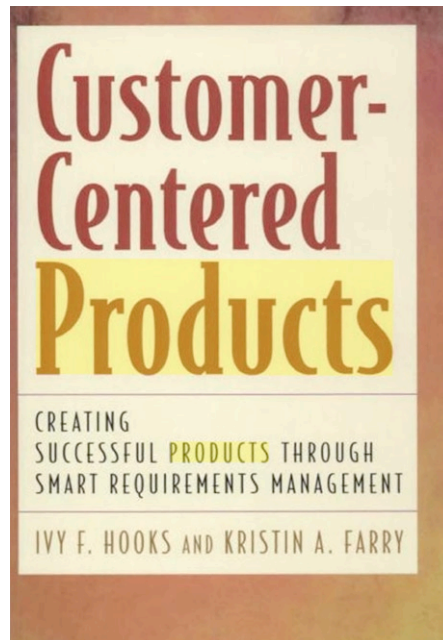
Every user has been frustrated when they've specified a product or change to a product and had something else delivered, or nothing at all delivered, or a product that cost so much that it wasn't worth the work put into it, or a product that was so late that there was no longer any point to the work. Users suffer through requirements meetings they don't understand, work through processes that don't have a clear outcome, and review pounds of paperwork without seeing what the purpose is.

But there IS a reason, and Ivy Hooks and Kristin Farry explain it to you, as well as spelling out what good requirements processes contribute to your project, what you can expect your role to be, and what you should expect from your product developers.

This book is written as a manager's and user's view into the requirements process. Each chapter explores a phase or product of the requirements process, providing an overview of why the process is required, what it adds to the project, and what the risks are if the process isn't included. Each chapter concludes with a section that summarizes why you should care, and what you can expect your contribution to be.

Each process is explored in appropriate detail—enough to give you insight into the process, but not enough to bore you with unnecessary technical detail. By the end of the book, you'll be prepared to discuss what your development team should be doing to prepare for your product, and to contribute your requirements at the appropriate level of detail. You'll understand why scope control is so critical. Most importantly, you'll understand that requirements defects—requirements that are missed or not recorded correctly—become exponentially more expensive to correct the further the development process has progressed. In addition, you will learn how to spot missing or ambiguous requirements that result in developers making decisions for you.

I strongly recommend this book for users involved in any kind of product development, and it is particularly valuable to the software development process. It is by far the best explanation of requirements processes and products that I've seen, and it's written at an appropriate level for business users and managers. ■



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