UiO : University of Oslo

By: Jasmina Hodzic
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Improving an improvement process

Summary: context, issues and goals

- Context
  - Improvement and enhancement process for a complex software system used by several organizations (by suggestions and requests from diverse user groups)

- Issues
  - Multiple issues related to response to, and management of improvement suggestions and requests

- Goals
  - Improving the delivery, reception and handling process for improvement and enhancement suggestions and requests

Context

- Context
    - A small software development and system administration group: 5 people both developing and running a complex identity and access management system and integration hub for several higher education institutions in Norway. The group is a part UiOs IT organization (Center for Information Technology and services)
    - Demand-driven development, plans allowing for quite a degree of "unassigned developer time" due to system administration requirements and "last minute order"-projects
    - Many services and interfaces with very different target (and user) groups
    - Request and suggestions for functionality improvements and enhancements by technically skilled "expert users" as well as other user groups may be by phone, by e-mail to several different mailing lists, through a ticketing system or even to other parts of the Center for Information Technology and Services

Issues

- Issues
  - Improvement suggestions and request not reaching the development team (getting "stuck somewhere in the system")
  - Suggestions and request being lost from sight/forgotten about either due to delivery mode (verbal request) or due to lack of resources to handle them at the time of arrival
  - Suggestions and request not being properly answered (the quality of answer, and even if an answer will be given depends on who is responding to the inquiry in question)
  - Poor follow-up/little contact with the requestee after initial call and inquiry: a request may be implemented without the requestee being told about the implementation (sometimes implementation may cover a different issue due to misunderstandings)

Goals

- Goals
  - Streamlining the delivery of suggestions and request
    - Improvement suggestion: creating a clear registration process for suggestions and request and spreading information about it to potential requesters
  - Creating a "gathering and storing" procedure for suggestions and request to make sure that they are handled in the future, if not immediately solvable
    - Improvement suggestion: establishing a ticketing system queue or a request tracker, preferably coupled to the delivery process
  - Making sure that all inquiries are answered in a timely and appropriate fashion
    - Improvement suggestion: define standards and deadlines for inquiry reception and initial handling
  - Securing requestee involvement
    - Improvement suggestion: incorporate routines for "sanity checking" and communication with the requestee into the design and implementation process