

WBS 2.4 PM Crosstalk

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Quality Standards for WBS

For this PM Crosstalk, address the following topic:

If there are 10 different project managers in a room, there are probably 10 different ideas on what a good WBS should look like. Go to the source, the Project Management Institute (PMI)[®] Practice Standard for Work Breakdown Structures, and review the established quality standards for a good WBS. Based on what you read, describe WBS quality issues that stand out to you.

It is true that 10 different project managers would probably come up with 10 different ideas on what a good Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) should look like, but that's because each is equipped with differing levels of experience, knowledge, and understanding of WBS quality. Project Management Institute (PMI) Practice Standard for Work Breakdown Structures (2006) defines a quality WBS as a WBS constructed in such a way that it satisfies all the requirements for its use in a project, and that quality characteristics apply at all levels of scope definition.

In studying the quality standards for a WBS, two issues stand out to me the most. One, that the WBS be constructed with technical input from subject matter experts (SME's), and two, that the WBS capture internal, external, and interim deliverables in terms of work to be completed (PMI, 2006, p. 20). The issue of quality, as it relates to the WBS, requires input from SME's in order to be considered to have quality at its core. The original statement of getting 10 different ideas on a good WBS really begins to shine here. Failure to include input from SME's and key stakeholders will expose a WBS of poor quality and a process that becomes reactive to issues rather than proactive. The second issue really brought to light all of the deliverables in

terms of work to be complete. When I think of a WBS, I think of an activity meant to support the ultimate deliverable, and not necessarily the internal, external, and interim deliverables. A clearly defines set of activities, in support of the WBS, is critical to ensure project fluidity and the delivery of a quality product or service.

References

Project Management Institute (PMI) (2006), *Practice Standard for Work Breakdown Structures* (Second Ed.), Newtown Square, PA, Project Management Institute