

End User and Project manager

Both end user and project manager are assumed to play very critical roles in any successful project.

Discuss and highlight your own views.

The end user is definitely a critical role. A project cannot be successful without bringing the end user's perspective into the process. Before a system goes into production, it is crucial to bring the end user in to review the system. In fact, the end user should be brought in to play with a demo of the system, a mock up, before coding even begins on it. Failure to do this could result in a system that makes life harder on the end user, hurting their productivity and giving you low scores on your metrics.

An end user is critical in the sense that they can look at your product a week before it goes into production and point out that you missed some critical requirement, without which the system will fail. This will happen on projects with even the best requirements gathering and controls.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that, in my experience, Project Managers are not critical. A software project can muddle along and achieve its goals without a plan and no more of a deadline than "three months." Coders will code to the deadline, and, so long as they are working with systems, everything can make it into production by the deadline. It's a miserable way to operate, but it can be done.

That's not to say having a Project Manager isn't extremely important. The PM makes sure milestones are being met by all teams and improves the project success rate dramatically. It's foolish not to have a Project Manager, but I know many software development projects that operate either without one or with one that lacks a proactive attitude, which is just like not having one.

Very interesting. Your Amazon.com example has made me do some thinking on this, Robert. I think you have a point that Amazon is not in a position to include their hundreds of thousands of end users in the development process; however, it is still crucial for Amazon to keep their end users happy.

I think in order to mitigate this, Amazon would probably need to operate like Yahoo Mail did, when upgrading their e-mail services. Yahoo had a very dramatic change to their E-Mail interface, and didn't want to scare all their users away by pushing it on them. So they put a "Beta" link in the original Yahoo Mail, which allowed users to take the new mail for a test drive. When enough users had switched to the new mail. Yahoo was able to make it the default, providing an easy way for users to go back to the old mail if they preferred it. That's a strategy for including end users in an iterative development process.