Specifying **Business Requirements** for an Application System

Phase 2 in our sample SDLC
Central to project justification
Often overlooked *Why?*

Examples
- Given a new system we need to be able to:
  - a. ship 90% of orders within 2 days
  - b. respond *during* a telephone inquiry about the status of an order
  - c. limit defects to 0.5% of products
  - d. increase our market share to 30%
  - e. Others?

Laying a foundation
- In phase 3 we shall specify exactly **what** the proposed new system will do.
- In phase 4 we shall specify **how** it will do it.
- But here in phase 2 what we care about is what we hope the **user organization(s) will be able to do**, given a suitable system.

What will our project do with that information?
- In phase 3, our external system design must support those business requirements.
  - What if it can't?
- In phase 7, we shall assess how well the new system satisfies those requirements, and then:
  - Plan corrective follow-up action
  - Learn from our experience and try to do better on our next project
A too-common omission

- Phase 2 is often overlooked, either:
  - because systems analysts, especially former programmers, are eager to get on to things they know how to do.
  - because the sponsoring user considers it a waste of time--"Everyone knows all that! Let's just get on with it"

- Some versions of the SDLC don't even call for such a phase!

Consequences of omitting or bypassing this phase

- Before implementing it we can't make a rational assessment of the project's justification. Is it worth doing?

- After implementing it we can't fairly judge whether the project was successful. Was it worth doing?

Don't worry

- Phase 2 doesn't take long and rarely costs much.
- It's not always just about money.
  - Saving lives.
  - Complying with law.
  - Beating the Russians!
- But we always need to know why we're doing this project.

Complying with the law

- Sometimes we discover that we have to comply with some regulation that:
  - We didn't know about when we began.
  - or didn't even exist then, but enforcement is retroactive!
  
- What if we can't afford it, i.e. complying will cost more than it's worth to us?
  - It's always possible to assess whether a project is justified.
  - In an extreme case, the cost may be going out of business!