The Waterfall Product Delivery Process

Waterfall

The "Waterfall model was introduced by Winston W. Royce in1970."[1] This model was adopted by various businesses and products were developed using the waterfall project delivery process.

Waterfall is a linear and sequential process with the requirements gathering at the beginning of the project. Each phase of the project is completed and verified before the next phase begins. Everything is planned out by milestones and "phases are never repeated, unless there is a massive failure that comes to light in the verification or maintenance phase."[2]

There are five to seven phases, or steps, in a traditional waterfall process. In the five-step process, the phases are:

1. **Requirements gathering and analysis**– This is perhaps the most important step in Waterfall, since it determines the overall trajectory of the project. Requirements are

gathered from the stakeholder and customer in this first phase. It's assumed that there is no further need for customer involvement until the project is completed.

2. **Design** – This phase is usually broken down into two subphases, logical design and physical design.
   a. **Logical** design is more of a brainstorming or theoretical design phase.
   b. **Physical** design is when the theoretical thoughts and schemes are made into actual specifications.
3. **Implementation** – The requirements and specifications that were developed in the first two phases are now made into an actual building, product, software program or deliverable.
4. **Verification** – The customer gets to review the final outcome of the project and see how close the outcome is to the requirements they shared in the beginning phase. The completed building, product, software program or deliverable is released to the customer to enable this review.
5. **Maintenance** – After the customer uses the project regularly, they may find all sorts of issues with the product or improvements that they would like made. Fixes are applied to the product until the customer is satisfied with it.

If you would like to learn more about using the Waterfall method to launch your products or services, please contact me at Projects Accomplished! Next month we will explore the Agile methodology of product development and compare it to Waterfall.

About the Author

Sandra Glanton is the owner and managing consultant of Projects Accomplished! She spent 23 years working in various phases of product development at a local multinational corporation. She also was a cross-services project manager for 11 years in an organization that specialized in documentation and translation services. She can be reached at sglanton34@gmail.com or (585) 230-0649.

[1] Project Manager, Waterfall Methodology – Tools and Strategies, "Waterfall Methodology in Project Management," https://www.projectmanager.com/software/use-cases/waterfall-methodology

[2] Project Manager, Waterfall Methodology – Tools and Strategies, "Waterfall Methodology in Project Management," https://www.projectmanager.com/software/use-cases/waterfall-methodology