

Reviewing Size Estimates

A SECoE Customer experience

Company Overview

A Global systems integration and business transformation consulting firm focused on the communications industry. Chosen transformation partners for wireless and wire-line, and broadband operators in Europe, Asia-Pacific and North America. Enjoy more than 60% of business from British Telecom plc (BT), world leaders in communication service providers

Key Application Metric
 Cost per FP Defects per FP

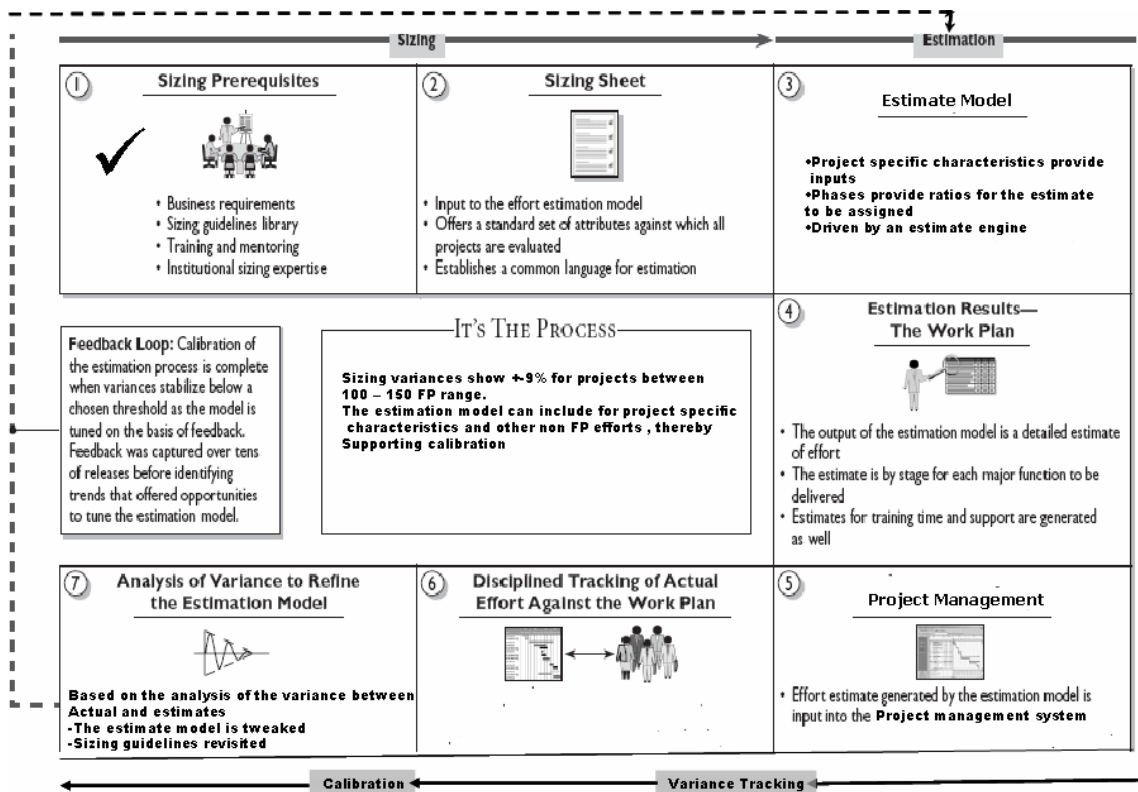


Fig 1

British Telecom over the last couple of years has been moving towards an IT environment which is transparent and standardized in terms of its cost estimations and associated quality attributes. Standardization of all vendor estimates using the IFPUG based counting practices (4.2.1) was the first step. The final goal is to help establish the total cost to deliver projects using the size based FP measures, thereby creating a standardized metric to benchmark across all vendors and consolidate productivity measures.

Scope

QAI India Ltd. was approached for providing a third party review on the FP sizing methodology being adopted (as a vendor) specific to development and COTS product customizations. While this was the first step the overall scope was to calibrate the estimation model and help reduce cost per FP.

What is Function Point Method?

A function point is a unit of measurement to express the amount of business functionality an information system provides to user.

Consulting Methodology

Assess-Review –Report mode of consulting was followed. Initially the skills of the project managers in the organization were assessed specific to the sizing techniques. A set of Development projects and COTS products were reviewed for compliance to the Counting Practices.

Compliance to FP counting practices was ascertained using the following broad headers:

- (a) Valuation –The objective deals with whether items included in the function point count should have been included. Perhaps the original count included additional transactions or files that should not have been included.
- (b) Completeness – The objective deals with verifying or inclusion of all transactions and files in the final function point.
- (c) Classification The objective deals with determining whether all transactions have been classified appropriately as Low, Medium and High.
- (d) Mechanical accuracy In case automated tools are not used, to check if accuracy of calculations exist.

An independent count report was also provided as a deliverable.

Next Steps

The process of progressively refining estimation accuracy consists of seven steps in sequence. (Fig 1).

Step 1: Review Sizing Requisites

The existing practices being used for sizing projects and enhancements were reviewed for compliance. This task will help codify and institutionalize the sizing expertise. Currently a 9% variance (+ or -) in the sizing counts is observed.

Step 2: Standardize Sizing Sheets

Standardize sizing sheets, which contain a handful of attributes against which projects may be measured. Non-FP effort can be converted and acts as an input to the Estimation Model

Step 3- Step 6: Review and Recalibrate

Review the estimate model for effort estimations by each stage of the life cycle. Review time logs for accuracy. Without accurate effort data, it becomes impossible to reliably tune the estimation model

Step 7: Analyze Variances

The differences between the predicted effort and the actual effort hold the key to improving the accuracy of the estimated model. The estimated model is calibrated based on these variances. Once the variances are stable and below an accepted threshold (say 5%) the attributes of the sizing sheet and the project efforts are reliably correlated. The sizing sheet can thus be used as a reliable predictor for project effort and associated cost