B2T Training

19 Ways to Leverage the Context Data Flow Diagram

1. Show the big picture. It provides you and other project team members a visual of what is in and out of scope.
2. It gets everyone on the project "on the same page". It's a great artifact to use when describing your project.
3. It can help generate good discussion points used in conjunction with the "What if?" technique.
4. Work with your stakeholders to identify any missing external agents. Doing that upfront can save you a lot of money and rework by reducing scope changes.
5. Prioritize and plan. Once you have the big picture you can start thinking about which area you need to address first, which area might be at risk, which external agent is the primary stakeholder, and which interface might take the longest to define.
6. Identify overlap or duplication. Siloed teams can draw and use the context data flow diagram from various parts of the project to compare external agents, data requirements, and high level processes. They can then drill down as needed.
7. Scale the project. If you start out with 20 external agents, you can prioritize or narrow your scope. It may be clear you are not going to be able to do 20 agents/interfaces based on your timeline or budget and may have to reduce your scope.
8. Generate discussion around the external agents and see if bundling or lumping a group of external agents may cause the team to miss unique business rules or data requirements.
9. The context diagram components such as external agents are important entries for the project glossary.
10. Do high-level resource planning. For example, if you have 20 external agents/interfaces, you may need more than one BA. You might bring in several BAs and divide up the external agents.
11. Build a requirements approach. During your requirements planning you can ensure your elicitation addresses all the external agents and interfaces (user or data).
12. Validate your requirements and find missing requirements. After you've defined your processes, user stories, and/or use cases, you should be able to check off each data flow on the context diagram.
13. Look upstream and downstream for impacts. Allows you to reconcile the "supplier" and "consumers" of the data flows in line with the SIPOC model.
14. Understand the scope of interfaces. Each data flow represents at least one existing or new interface, either an electronic data exchange or a user interface.
15. Identify things that are out of scope. If an external agent is identified but has no data flow directly touching the Area of Analysis, it is out of scope.
16. Assess and document risks associated with various external agents during stakeholder analysis. For example, if you know that an external agent is hard to work with or has significant time constraints, you can identify and communicate a potential project risk.
17. It's a reusable requirement – an excellent artifact to help those who come along after the project who need to understand its scope and interactions.
18. Perform impact planning and sizing during maintenance. The context diagram can help people understand that making a seemingly "small change" to the center of the diagram can affect lots of other parties and systems.
19. Visually compare current state context with future state context to confirm future state interfaces, data, and external agents.