The Best Cookie She Ever Had (Part 1)

A while back I was talking to my six-year-old neighbor about cookies, and she went off on some tangent about how her mom's cookies were the best. Of course, as an analyst I had to ask her what made them the "best" and she replied with the following:

"They taste really good."

With this new definition of 'best' and wanting to know more I immediately started an on-the-fly elicitation session with rapid-firing cookie questions like a super soaker squirt gun at a 6-year-old's birthday party.

1. What pan does she use?
2. How big are the cookies?
3. How many chocolate chips does each have; most and least?
4. What was her bake time?

After delivering number two on my list of cookie queries, this smart little human looked at me with a 2000-mile stare and then said, "I dunno". She then walked away to join her brother, who was playing video games in the next room.

Through my overzealous quest for cookie knowledge, I had killed our discussion and created frustration.

After getting kicked to the curb it was time for some self-observation. Although she could clearly state a child-level requirement for the best great cookie ever, she was not interested in discussing how to make it. It was also obvious that her criteria for the best cookie as a consumer were much different from mine as a potential best cookie creator.

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Maybe there was something here I could apply at work in my role as an analyst. I had seen this same 2000-mile stare on some of my client's faces when we would review user story acceptance criteria that had been drafted by the development team instead of by a business representative (BA).

Perhaps reviewing user story acceptance criteria that provided the "how" with businesspeople created confusion? Maybe there was a better way to structure my backlogs for ease of business review and approval while still getting my developers and QA teammates what they need to build and test.

With this dilemma up front and center, I decided I better start my pursuit for improvement by first writing down the challenges I was experiencing.

1.   Stories that include "How" technical content as acceptance criteria are difficult to refine with business stakeholders.

2.   Product demonstrations, when initiated first by review of a user story that is too technical make the demo clumsy and hard to follow for business stakeholders, which can generate false acceptance and missed requirements downstream.

With my top challenges now clearly defined, I then set out to define some possible improvements, but you'll have to tune in next week to learn about the improvements I applied and have used with success since then. Enjoy your week and treat yourself to a cookie, but make sure you grab a "really good" one! 😊