Direction

The Newsletter of the STC Policies & Procedures Special Interest Group

4th Quarter 2005

Manager's Report: Prolific Period for P&P SIG

By Raymond E. Urgo

During the past few months, the P&P SIG's productive volunteers have shown the fruits of their labor for the benefit of the SIG, STC, and the business community at large.

We had two major goals during these months. One goal was to sponsor the first themed issue on policies and procedures for the November issue of STC's Intercom magazine. A second goal was to revamp the SIG's Web site and in time for the anticipated publicity stemming from the release of this Intercom issue.

Activity toward achieving our Web site goal was dormant until early October when Jeana Hines, a SIG member from Portland, Oregon, courageously and generously volunteered to be our Web master. In barely three weeks, Jeana revamped our site and helped us meet our goal for completion by November 1. She readily understood our needs and challenges, administratively and technically. She demonstrated tremendous patience and a pleasant personality in working with our volunteers along the way, while sharing creativity and inspiration to her design of the site.

Our new Web site features our mission (revised since we re-chartered earlier this year), our timeline of milestones since 1993 (compiled by volunteer member Barbara Zeller), a page of P&P resources compiled by me, an enhanced page dedicated to our current and past newsletters, and lots more with even more planned to come.

I hope you will not only visit our new site at http://www.stcsig.org/pp/, but will take the time to thank and congratulate Jeana at *jvhcom@comcast.net* on her truly outstanding and timely work.

The November issue of Intercom features eight articles, including a guest editorial by me, on policies and procedures. Half the authors represent members of our SIG. This first-themed issue should prove to be a collector's item for the P&P career enthusiast. You can read it online at http://www.stc.org/intercom/.

The past few months were also fruitful thanks to our newsletter editor, Lois Marsh, and her team who published our third quarter of Direction and helped with the revamping of our Web site.

And speaking of productive, in November, our membership increased with 66 members to **949**. This is a seven percent increase since October. During the previous six months, membership has been increasing by three to four percent per month.

Please join us now in playing a productive role with our prolific SIG.

How to Write Procedures to Increase Control

By Chris Anderson, Bizmanualz, Inc.

Why are you developing policies and procedures in the first place? Common answers include to:

- Decrease training time
- Increase consistency
- Fulfill compliance requirements
- Present risks, hazards, and lessons learned
- Communicate effectiveness measures
- Document improvement and change
- Decrease error rate

Procedures and Management Control

Aren't procedures really about decreasing variability? As we decrease process variability we increase process control. Management wants control: process controls, internal controls, or controlled outputs. Policies and procedures provide the foundation for control that management wants and that regulators or auditors demand. Only now, the importance of management control has increased due to the attention being given to corporate governance, of which internal control is considered to be a critical element.

Compliance Drives Procedures

Compliance only increases, it never decreases. Recently we've seen accounting procedures required by Sarbanes-Oxley legislation to combat fraud or misrepresentation. In manufacturing, procedures are needed for ISO 9000 Quality conformance. The FDA requires Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) or Good Laboratory Practices (GLP). But compliance is a symptom not a cause. To get to the root cause for procedures we need to look at what needs to be in control in the first place.

Processes, Procedures and Control

There are three types of processes that exhibit varying levels of control: ballistic process, controlled process and adaptive process. A ballistic process is the most common. Anytime you feel frustration with a process and you have no way to provide any feedback to correct the problem you are encountering a ballistic process. Notice how we talk about process versus a procedure. That is because a process consists of one or more procedures. In the simple case a process may consist of only one procedure.

Ballistic Process

The dictionary defines ballistic as "characteristic of the motion of objects moving under their own momentum". When used to describe a procedure or process it means that the procedure only cares about getting its own work accomplished and it is not interested in your input.

Perhaps you have seen this in school in the educational process. The teacher presents the material anyway they want. If you don't understand it then it's your problem. Typical symptoms of this behavior include the need for tutoring, students falling behind, failing, studying harder or loosing interest and leaving the class. There is a better way…

Controlled Process

When we talk about control we do not mean as in dominance or power. Process control comes from systems theory "where the inputs of the system are manipulated or transformed to realize an expected output of the system". The key here is to monitor the inputs and outputs and make corrective changes to the process in order to achieve the desired output or transformation of those inputs. How would this work for our classroom teacher?

In this case, the teacher would present their material and then check the students understanding. If the student was not absorbing the material as expected (expectations based on statistical modeling of past student behavior) then the teacher would take corrective action to fix the process, not the student.

An important concept was just introduced regarding a controlled process. Note that a controlled process adjusts the process to compensate for the variance of student behavior, while a ballistic process requires that the student adjust their behavior to compensate for their learning problem.

Obviously a ballistic process is easier to create and use. It requires a lot less work on the part of the teacher. All the teacher has to do is present their material and if the student doesn't learn then it's the student's fault, not the teacher. With a controlled process, the teacher has to figure out why the student is not learning as expected. The key is understanding what is expected by the system. Therefore, we need data on past student performance in order to understand what changes to make to the process or system.

I know some of you might be thinking that the student is not ready for this class. Ok, then the system change is the student should acquire the appropriate prerequisites to pass the class. This is not the same as attending tutoring or studying harder. Both of these are in process rework measures. Adding prerequisites change the input specifications.

So if we are responsive to our students needs and the process is changing, are we done? Not yet, there is one more level to the evolution of control: the need to adapt.

Adaptive Process

The ultimate process is one that learns. We call this an adaptive process that "can change over time to improve effectiveness". The idea is to review all the changes being made to the process required to compensate for the student learning variance. Are the right changes being made? Are enough changes being made? How has the environment changed? One must step back and look beyond the process.

Perhaps the learning methods employed are 20 years old and new methods have been invented or new technology has come out. Overtime, with enough input data and enough process changes we will eventually reach a limit to the process' effectiveness. The changes will become so incremental that they may not be worth the effort to change. In this case it is time to adapt or evolve to a new state.

We need to look at methods and technology that can improve the process. This may include an entire course redesign. One must be open to new ideas and not cling to the old ways if you can demonstrate the new ideas are more effective. As you might expect, an adaptive process is the hardest.

Management Systems Control

Sure procedures provide control, but what kind? Organizations are systems that require systems controls. But if you don't understand systems theory then you might be inclined to interpret management control as dominance or power. But, this is not really control at all. A ballistic process is about dominance. A controlled process is about achieving an expected outcome. But the adaptive process is about the future, achieving an expected vision for your organization, and delivering the ultimate control management is really seeking. Which kind of processes are you building when you write your procedures?

Chris Anderson is Managing Director of bizmanualz, a provider of policy and procedure solutions. Check out their website at www.bizmanualz.com or email Chris at chris@bizmanualz.com.

Member Profile – Paul Lockwood

So you think the average P&P specialist isn't too exciting a character? Check out Paul's alter ego (he's on the left in this photo). His most recent role was as the Boris Karloff-like serial killer Jonathan Brewster in "Arsenic and Old Lace."

Direction: Can you briefly describe your business background?

Paul: I've worked in various communication fields since graduating over 20 years ago from Northwestern University with a major in radio/TV/film. My first eight-and-a-half years after college were spent in radio news, public relations, and marketing. It was only in January of 1990 that I entered the field of technical writing, joining a financial software company in Orlando where I worked for almost eight years. In the fall of 1997, I moved back to the Midwest where I've worked as a technical writer, proposal writer, and/or team leader for TransUnion, one of the three major credit reporting companies in the world.

Direction: Tell us about your work – responsibilities, challenges.

Paul: I'm a senior technical writer here and one of two main editors within our department. My primary internal customer is actually an external company--the data processing company that has associates on-site to work with TransUnion. The biggest challenge is multi-tasking as I try to make sure I don't let a project for my primary customer, an editing job for a colleague, or a project for another internal customer fall through the cracks.

Direction: What do you like most about your job?

Paul: I like the idea that documentation I develop can be successfully used by someone who's never undertaken a particular procedure before. I also like the fact that my edits help my colleagues to provide high-quality deliverables to their internal, and occasionally external, customers.

Direction: What advice can you give to someone who wants to get into P&P documentation?

Paul: Don't feel shy about asking questions of your subject matter experts. Odds are that if something isn't clear to you, at least one reader will also have the same question when they read the documentation you develop. And don't skip over a step just because you, or your customer, might think it's obvious. How you exit an application, for instance, is just as important as how you log in, even if it's as simple as clicking the X in the upper right corner of the window.

Direction: Tell us a bit of personal information about you – e.g., hobbies, where you live, your family, or other information to help us get to know you.

Paul: I'm married and live in Woodstock, Illinois, commuting into Chicago by train every day. I enjoy movies, television, mysteries, singing, and a hobby that I've really immersed myself in over the last five years: acting. I'm now starting to rehearse my 11th community theater show ("No Sex Please, We're British") since moving to Woodstock in January of 2001. My most recent role was as the Boris Karloff-like serial killer Jonathan Brewster in "Arsenic and Old Lace." Other shows have included musicals ("Cinderella," "Grease," "Phantom," "Godspell," "The Music Man") and straight plays ("The Odd Couple (Female Version)," "The Foreigner," "Miracle on 34th Street," "Much Ado About Nothing").

Paul Lockwood is Sr. Information Development Consultant, Technical Information Services, with TransUnion. If you'd like to contact Paul, email him at PLOCKWOO@transunion.com.

Outsource Your Documentation Services?

By Adrienne Escoe, PhD

Why would an organization want to outsource its documentation services? This article addresses the benefits and the drawbacks of outsourcing—and briefly discusses insourcing—and lists considerations for seeking outside assistance for documentation processes.

Outsourcing has become a popular alternative for managing businesses. Accounting services, employee benefits, mailroom operations, security, records storage, and many other outsourced functions help companies and public agencies not only cut operating costs but also reshape the way they do business. Organizations have benefited from the specialization, skills, and quality of outsourced functions. Outsourcing allows organizations to focus their resources on core business.

Benefits

The results of a Coopers and Lybrand study on outsourcing human resources administration show some of the benefits of outsourcing:

- 70% of respondents said they achieved greater efficiency
- 45% increased the focus on product and growth
- 42% saved administration costs
- 41% lowered overhead investment or debt
- 21% eased their regulatory compliance burden
- 18% outsourced because they could not find skilled employees

Top Ten Reasons for Outsourcing

The Outsourcing Institute (1995) offers 10 top reasons for outsourcing, compiled from surveys of over 1,200 companies and ongoing work with its members. Consider their application to documentation services:

1. *Reduce or control operating costs*. The single most important tactical reason for outsourcing, an outside provider's lower cost structure can be a compelling short-term benefit.

    - Outsourced services taking advantage of streamlined ways of managing documentation (they have the experience, know-how, and skills) can apply continuous measured process improvement to reduce operating costs from 25 to 60 percent, depending on the organization's existing processes.

2. *Make capital funds available*. Outsourcing can reduce the need to invest capital funds in non-core functions, making capital funds more available for core domains.

   - Computers, printers, scanners, and telecommunications hardware and facilities are primary capital expenses for documentation outsourcing.

3. *Infuse cash*. Transferring assets from the customer to a provider is an outsourcing option. Equipment, facilities, licensing, and other assets may be sold to the provider, resulting in a cash payment.

   - Cash may be available from transferring hardware and licenses for documentation software.

4. *Resources not available internally*. Outsourcing can be a viable alternative to developing needed capability either from the ground up as in a new facility or from a geographic area added in a business expansion, or because internal resources are inaccessible.

   - Implementing quality initiatives, such as ISO 9000, or other efforts that might introduce new requirements for documentation, may exceed available staffing capacities.

5. Function difficult to manage or out of control. Outsourcing does not substitute for management responsibility, but it can offer an option for addressing problematic workplace situations.

   - Traditionally, documentation functions have had low visibility in their organizations (unless litigation, audits, or disaster recovery activities demand their involvement). Sometimes in a low visibility environment, management practices and work processes become static. For some, change can be intimidating. Outsourcing can introduce new performance expectations and objectivity.

6. Improve business focus. Outside experts can assume operational details while a company focuses on broader business issues. Implementation issues can siphon off management resources and attention.

   - Unless documentation is an organization's core business, for example, technical writing, records management, word processing, or editorial firms, an in-house documentation function supports other functions, such as manufacturing, distribution, engineering, and nursing. Managing the organization's documentation through outsourcing need not distract core leadership.

7. Access world-class capabilities. Outsourcing providers, because of their specialization, can bring extensive global, world-class resources to meet their customers' needs. Some of the capabilities an outsourcing partner can offer include: access to new technology, tools, and techniques; better career opportunities for personnel who transition to the outsourcing provider; more structure to approaches, procedures, and documentation; and a competitive advantage from expanded skills.

   - World-class documentation is a result of highly trained personnel experienced in continuous process improvement and powerful technology, knowledgeable and skilled leadership, ready access to professional publications and conferences, and supportive career development. Outsourcing can deliver access to these capabilities.

8. Accelerate reengineering benefits. An outside organization that already has reengineered to world-class standards can allow an organization to realize immediately the projected benefits of its own reengineering initiative.

   - Outsourced documentation services can bring the quality tools, metrics, developed teamwork, and results that reengineering initiatives seek. Outsourcing planning, managing resources, writing, or editing can reduce a project's cycle time.

9. Share risks. Organizations that outsource can become more flexible and dynamic. They can adapt better to changing opportunities.

   - Major documentation streamlining efforts commonly require increased attention at their initiation, and then taper off as processes improve. Outsourcing can better absorb the ups and downs without an organization paying for staffing that may be needed for just part of a year or without paying the hiring, learning curve, and severance costs of an expanding and contracting internal work force.

10. Free resources for other purposes. No organization has unlimited resources. Outsourcing can permit an organization to redirect its resources from non-core business toward gaining a greater return in serving its customers or clients.

    - Core business produces revenue. Generally, documentation does not (unless it is a firm's core business or one of its non-core profit centers). Documentation for most organizations is a separate administrative function, or it is produced to some extent by several employees, most of whom have primary responsibilities to make a product or provide a service to paying customers or clients.

So the potential gains of outsourcing are great. Organizations can benefit in many ways from outsourcing their documentation. But what are the drawbacks? What are the reasons organizations might not want to outsource their documentation activities?

Drawbacks

Documentation, traditionally, has been a private matter for companies. Organizations are concerned that proprietary information may get into the wrong hands. Employees believe that intimate knowledge of the organizational structure and individuals who make things happen in a company are critical to documentation processing. Company jargon, acronyms, and the details that only an insider would know could trip up outsourced staff.

Organizations proud of a long record of lay-off free operations are reluctant to risk damaging employee loyalty. They believe employees engaged in core business are the best choices for generating and processing their documentation. Employees handling documentation see outsourcing as a slap in the face, a lack of confidence in their skills and performance. Customers and clients may have good rapport with internal personnel; organizations do not want to risk damaging customer relationships.

Further, companies question projected cost savings in light of an outside organization's incentive to create more work by charging fees according to time worked. Employees are concerned that an outsourcing firm's culture may be incompatible with their own.

Decision Considerations

The decision to outsource a documentation function should be made only after careful consideration of an organization's goals compared with the benefits and drawbacks of outsourcing. Note that some of the benefits of outsourcing may be achieved without some of the drawbacks by hiring or training an internal documentation specialist or by contracting with an outside specialist. Specialists can train staff and lead improvement efforts. The considerations shown below may help an organization decide whether to seek outside assistance—outsourcing.

- Documentation function costs are perceived to be too high.
- No one knows the cost to produce an average policy or procedure or any other document or to maintain a record.
- Capital equipment and facilities are outdated for competitive documentation processing.
- Facilities or personnel are unavailable or inadequate to meet the organization's expansion requirements.
- The documentation function is difficult to manage. Its processes are out of control. The company is buried in too much documentation. It takes too long to process new documents, revisions, or cancellations. It is difficult to find needed current or archived information quickly. Documentation is obsolete.
- Management is spending too much time putting out "fires" in the documentation function.
- Documentation staff members are using processes, technology, and tools that are inappropriate for world-class organizations.
- Career development is limited for documentation specialists.
- Reengineering the documentation function is taking too long.
- Core business staff members are being pulled away from serving the customer to writing documentation.

Adrienne Escoe is President of Escoe Bliss Communication, Inc. of Tustin, California. You can reach her at www.escoebliss.com. This article is adapted from the author's books, Nimble Documentation®: The Practical Guide for

World-Class Organizations, and The Practical Guide for People-Friendly Documentation, both available from ASQ Quality Press, (800) 248-1946, or online book dealers such as amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.

Announcement: Las Vegas Conference Update

By Dawnell Claessen, P&P SIG Conference Coordinator

Three P&P SIG Sessions at the 53rd Annual STC Conference!

The Policies and Procedures Special Interest Group is THRILLED to announce that the conference committee has accepted all of our proposals for SIG sponsored sessions for the Las Vegas conference. If you are planning on attending May 7-10 2006, be sure to catch one or all of these sessions!

Policies & Procedures Communication 101

Gain an overview about communication P&P and the P&P discipline. Learn about the fundamental purpose, principles, techniques, vocabulary, trends, and resources for P&P. Discover opportunities and roles for P&P practitioners.

Tentative Schedule: Monday afternoon, May 8, 2006

Topics in Policies and Procedures – A progression Session

Fifteen speakers from various areas of practice will host tables with a variety of topics directly relevant to Policies and Procedures practitioners. Attendees hear a twenty minute presentation about one topic, and then move to another table to hear the next twenty minute presentation and so on. Sessions in this format are among the best attended at the conference. Come and see what all the fuss is about!

Tentative Schedule: Tuesday afternoon, May 9, 2006

Developing and Managing Policies and Procedures for Compliance

In this moderated panel discussion, five panelists will discuss the challenges and opportunities and some "best practices" relating to policies and procedures developed for compliance.

Tentative Schedule: Wednesday morning, May 10, 2006

PS – If you would like to host a table in the progression session there is still one available.

Also, if you had a proposal for a session on policies and procedures accepted for the conference, please contact me so it can be advertised through our SIG.

Just email Dawnell Claessen at *mail@dawnell.com*.

Letters, We Get Letters…

From our members…

October 25, 2005

Ray and Lois,

I've been writing procedures for many years, but I've just begun a new job in which I'll be writing policies. Designing and writing documents that have no natural sequence presents a host of new challenges.

Ray, I am grateful that you've shared your expertise so freely. Thanks to you – and more broadly, to the archives – I've quickly picked up many tips and book titles that I'll soon be putting to good use. I've ordered two of Good's books and no doubt will order more.

Thanks,
Paul Stregevsky
Senior Member, Washington, DC chapter

Thanks, Paul. Try using our ListServ too for valuable advice from the policy pros. – Editor