

TALKING FROG

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PROFESSIONALS WHO ASSURE QUALITY FOR US ALL
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DTI partners with Google to form Quality Assurance Forum

Google Groups, a new service that helps individuals meet to discuss issues relevant to their lives, has a new member. The DTI Quality Assurance Newsletter is now a discussion site where professionals and novices alike can discuss issues relating to the QA field. This forum, sponsored by DTI is a place to get the latest copies of our newsletter and read serious and not so serious stuff that might enlighten and amuse you.

Additionally, this will be a place where you will be able to help your fellow QAR's and let us all know the experiences you've had on the job.

We are also looking for any articles you may wish to write and post. Your expertise will make us all better QAR's.

Now, to tell you the truth, we're not experts on how to use this forum and will gladly accept any tips you might have.

The way it works is you can either go to our website and fill in the request to join the discussion group, or you can respond to an invitation from us to join.

Once you are a member, you can read all the articles on the site and comment on any of them. You can also submit your own requests for information or

articles that you have written.

Just a note, when you respond to an individual's article you can choose to either post for everyone to see or just for the author of the article.

We will be monitoring all posts and policing for appropriate material, i.e. no offensive language, etc..

We hope you choose to participate, as we have learned much from you in the past and hope we grow together in the future.

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What is a Quality Assurance Plan?

(This article was contributed by a discussion group member)

A quality assurance plan is a document, constructed by the project team, meant to ensure the final products are of the upmost quality. A quality assurance plan contains a set of documented activities meant to ensure that customers are satisfied with the goods or services a company provides. There are four steps of the quality assurance process: Plan, Do, Check, and Act. The focus of this article will be on what

items go into a quality assurance plan. The quality assurance plan should define objectives, roles and responsibilities, coordinate with other plans, and define tasks and the schedule.

Defining the Quality Objectives

No matter what system you use, you will need to be sure that the objectives have been defined for the project. Six Sigma uses a

predefined algorithm for determining quality objectives. Part of determining the objectives for the quality plan project involves identifying the requirements of the customers. For example, if a particular store generates many complaints about the level of customer service, more employee training may be required. Second, the level of quality must be defined. Is your company going for zero defects? Or is one in

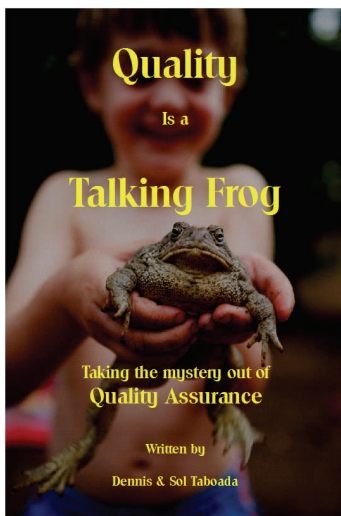
1569 Walker St.
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Phone: 866-870-5490
Fax: 770-319-8447
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QAP cont'd

one hundred okay? Make sure your objectives are well written and specific.

Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Once the quality objectives have been defined and stated, the next important part of creating a quality assurance plan is to define the roles and responsibilities of team members. In doing this, you will want to list each role that will be required. Once you have listed the roles, then you can itemize the responsibilities of each role. Be specific. You want the person who is assigned the roles to understand completely what is meant by each responsibility written for them.

Coordinate with Other Plans
No project plan occurs in a vacuum. This is even more true with the quality assurance plan. Make sure you are on the same level as those working on the risk management plans, the resource management plans, and the change management plans. It would be a terrible thing to work hard on a quality assessment plan that contradicts something in the risk management plan. Talk to the other people and project managers in your department.

Define Tasks and Schedule

Once the objectives and roles have been defined, and the other teams have been coordinated with, you can then begin to define tasks and create a schedule. Each and every task should relate directly to the quality objectives. Once each task has been defined, using the objectives as a reference, then you can begin to set the schedule. You can schedule two ways: either from the deadline in or from

the start date out. Each has their own benefits. You may wish to contact us to get the free quality assurance template.

Throughout a project, managers can help their teams focus on the right actions by developing the distinction between risks and effects. Making the project late or failing to meet quality guidelines might look like risks to new team members. However, both of those events are actually effects caused by unmitigated risks. When brainstorming potential risks with team members, leaders should use probing questions to discover the root causes of potential negative effects.

Without risk, a project offers little potential for reward. Effective risk management requires identifying risks, measuring their potential for harm, and creating plans to deal with the threats. Although very few project managers have the skills to defuse all of the time bombs lurking within their initiatives, effective leaders marshal resources to help their teams overcome risk.

One of the ways that effective project managers engage their teams is a process of identifying risks at the start of a new initiative. For many teams, this assessment occurs during the identification and preparation phases of the project cycle. According to risk management experts, the brainstorming period of a project is a perfect opportunity for colleagues to "shoot holes" in an idea, before those ideas become tied to a particular stakeholder or team member.

One method of identifying threats is to request a list of ten potential risk items from each member of the early planning group. Commonalities among participants can highlight risks that everyone worries about, but may not actually be the most perilous risks facing a team. Project managers may need to inject their own agenda items into the group list to make sure all possible risks are identified.

For teams that struggle to generate large lists of risks, scenario planning principles can be used for brainstorming as a group. Instead of simply asking participants to identify risks, leaders can guide team members through exercises that ask them to envision what project success and failure look like at specific points in the future. This abbreviated form of scenario planning can help highly successful groups connect with the idea of failure in a way that doesn't make them self-conscious.

Although companies use the phrase "risk management" to refer to numerous initiatives, project management professionals focus their efforts on predicting the events that might cause projects to fail. Appointing a risk officer, tracking risk, and reporting risk contribute to overall effectiveness.