THE DOCUMENT CONTROL TRIBUNE

Your tribune, your say

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Editorial

By Julie Tchao

We are glad to publish this month the first issue of the 'Document Control Tribune'.

The aim of this newsletter is to provide information, content and news about Document Control, to all those who are interested in this discipline.

Document Control is implemented in a wide range of industries, from energy to mining, through oil and gas, construction, medical, healthcare, power supply, food and beverages, environmental services, information management, and many more.

Document Control being also one of the requirements of the Quality Management international standard (ISO 9001), this newsletter aims at providing information, not only to Document Control professionals, but also to any Quality Management professionals and, in general, to all those who are interested in these subjects.

This is also an open tribune: feel free to propose articles about Document Control, and we will be pleased to publish the best ones here! If you wish to do so, please contact us at dctribune@consepsys-im.com

This new forum offers the opportunity to communicate about our discipline, and to federate Document Control professionals around what is common to our function in all sectors and industries: the focus on Quality, document flow management, checks and controls on documents, attention to detail, organization skills.

We also want to inform widely: we want no fences between industries, countries, sectors, job functions or experiences... This is why this newsletter is free and will remain so. Do not hesitate to circulate it to your colleagues and friends and, if you wish to receive every issue of this newsletter, do not hesitate to subscribe!

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Why Implement Document Control?   By Julie Tchao

This question may seem peculiar for those who know what a good Document Control system can do. But these questions come more often than you may think: "Why do I need Document Control? Why implement it? Can't our employees/engineers do their own filing?»

First of all, Document Control is so much more than just filing documents. And this is where its value resides: implementing Document Control will support all the company's activities, and will add value at least in the following areas:

- **Retrieval of documents**: many companies working without professional Document Control struggle with document retrieval. Imagine if every employee searches for a document or for information for 15 minutes per day (15 minutes being a conservative / optimistic estimate). Document Control ensures that we can retrieve the right information, in a reasonable amount of time.

- **Control**: Getting control of documents (including document modifications, updates, withdrawal, etc.) means that you will be certain that the information at hand is the most up-to-date.

- **Information Security:** Document Control helps to define, implement and manage the rules for accessing documents (who can access a document, who can read it, modify it, etc).

- **Traceability and auditability:** Be sure that you will never lose track of what has happened on your Company's documents

- **Company protection:** In case of an incident on a processing plant for example, it is crucial and critical to be able to retrieve the last updated applicable documentation relative to this installation... and to retrieve it quickly. Document Control also allows to protect the company's reputation. Sometimes, it simply takes the issuance of one incorrect revision of a document to destroy years of customer trust.

- **Consistency:** Within the same Company/Project/Department, Document Control means working by the same standards, standardising documentation, and complying with industry regulations and legal requirements

- **Safety**: Implications of a lack of Document Control can be very serious and even lead to incidents, injuries or death.

In conclusion, implementing Document Control is a means to protect your company, and to ensure accessibility, retrievability, control and security for your documents and your information.

Why not try digital signature?

By Julie Tchao

Digital signature on documents is one of the areas where technology has made a significant difference and improvement to Document Controllers' daily tasks.

Indeed, in companies which have implemented digital signatures, Document Controllers no longer have to print documents out, to walk around offices to gather the signatures, and then to scan the signed documents in.

With digital signature, we manage only electronic copies all the way through, up to their signature point. This is really a huge gain in terms of time and manhours. Probably more than 10 minutes per document are no longer wasted.

In addition, the digital signature is available from anywhere, and one of the benefits really is that people can actually sign even if they are not in the office. We no longer have to wait for a manager to return from a business trip to physically sign a document.

One area where this has also significantly improved our lives is signature of transmittal sheets. Physically signing every transmittal sheet and acknowledgement of receipt can literally represent a significant part of our daily tasks. Electronic signature has significantly improved this process.

As every change in any work process, the implementation of digital signatures requires proper discussions, agreements (notably on the contractual / legal side), but it is undoubtedly a great improvement in terms of processes and workload.

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Mapping workflows and processes

By Julie Tchao

Being able to explain and demonstrate the Document Control workflows and processes is part of our day-to-day job as Document Controllers.

We may have to explain, for example:

- The flow of documents on a Project
- The process for document initiation and approval, involving several parties (for example: engineer, drafting department, Document Controller, engineering manager, etc)
- Work instructions regarding the course of actions to perform when receiving an incoming transmittal, when issuing an outgoing transmittal package, etc.

There are many examples where we may have to explain, in writing as well as verbally, our processes and workflows.

In this regard, most times, a good graphical procedure is usually more efficient than plain text.

A graphical procedure usually describes a process on a single page, with the use of flowcharts and graphics.

The benefits are numerous:
- First of all, it is easier and quicker to read (for most people).
- It is also easier for people to understand where they are involved in the process, and what is expected of them.
- Another selling point is that it can be displayed and printed on a single page: it makes it easy for a team of Document Controllers for example to display it on their desk, in order to ensure that they all follow the same process.
- It forces the initiator to think a process all the way through

In the future, try and map your processes with the help of graphical procedures. You probably will not regret it!

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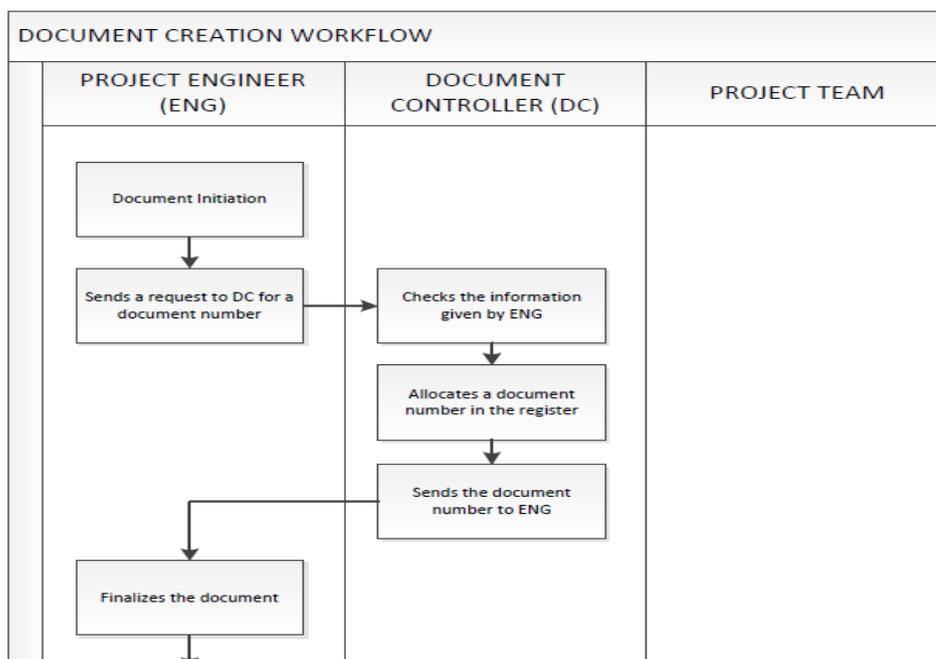ConsepsysInformationManagement

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Example of an extract of a graphical procedure

DOCUMENT CREATION WORKFLOW

PROJECT ENGINEER (ENG)	DOCUMENT CONTROLLER (DC)	PROJECT TEAM
Document Initiation		
Sends a request to DC for a document number	Checks the information given by ENG	
	Allocates a document number in the register	
	Sends the document number to ENG	
Finalizes the document		

Final Documentation and Safety

By Luis Heng CEng

Final Documentation is one of the phases of a (construction or fabrication project) whereby Document Control and Safety overlap and collide.

Document Controllers must always bear in mind that the documentation packages that they prepare will be delivered to production/processing plants, factories, constructed sites/buildings, control rooms etc, and that technical professionals will rely on these documents in their day-to-day activities.

The quality, the accuracy and the integrity of the delivered documentation must be flawless in order to avoid accidents.

The difficulty often lies in the fact that Final Documentation packages must be prepared in a haste, under pressure, often with additional, unusual and temporary team members, and that this phase may, in certain cases, involve literally thousands and even tens of thousands of documents.

It is challenging for anyone to deliver a flawless package in such conditions. However, the lifes of many people may depend on the quality of this work.

Practical examples of issues that Document Controllers must bear in mind when they compile final documentation may include:

- What if I overlook the fact that a page is missing in an Oil and Gas equipment isolation procedure? The maintenance/operations person in charge of isolating the equipment from incoming flammable/explosive fluids may miss a few procedural steps and wind up injured or killed;

- What if forget to include operating manuals for the maintenance of a building's lift/elevator before final documentation hand-over is signed off? The client may have to pay significant amounts of money, after close-out of the contract, to obtain this documentation at last. Maintenance of the lift/elevator may meanwhile be delayed and this situation may represent a potential hazard.

- What if I inadvertently insert a superseded version of a technical document in the final documentation package? A whole ulterior plant/factory/site modification project may start on incorrect information and may wind up wasting significant sums of money before anyone realizes the mistake. It may also put people's life at risk, for example, if excavation works are launched in an area which is not supposed to include a buried high-pressure gas pipeline.

Document Control has gradually evolved to become a profession which requires a high level of skills and competencies. This higher profile and its perks come with a greater responsibility: the obligation to develop a thorough understanding of the business, operational and functional context of one's position within an organization or a company, and the obligation of awareness of all its implications, especially in terms of safety.