WRITING EFFECTIVE SPECIFICATIONS

(SAMPLE PROGRAMME)

SYNOPSIS

The importance of high quality specifications is of paramount importance in achieving the right technical performance and value for money. This training programme has been developed to help those involved in producing specifications to create high quality documents in an organised and effective way.

The programme emphasises the need for a clear definition of requirements combined with the ability to communicate those requirements effectively to third parties. A structured method of preparing specifications is provided, and a range of practical techniques is presented to enable delegates to put the principles into practice. The importance of a good specification to contractual success is a key theme of the programme.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the workshop are:

- to understanding of the role and purpose of specifications in the contract
- to present a framework for organising and producing specifications
- to define the key steps involved in creating effective specifications
- to demonstrate methods for assisting in defining requirements
- to provide tools and techniques for scoping and structuring specifications
- to show the role of specifications in managing variations and changes to scope
- to present methods to assist the writing and editing of specifications
- to review how specifications should be issued and controlled

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

This two-day workshop comprises a mix of tutorials and practical case study sessions geared to the clients business environment. The tutorials cover the key principles and practical methods for writing specifications while the case study sessions illustrate how the principles can be applied.

The workshop is designed for approximately 12 - 15 delegates, who are or will be involved in writing or contributing to the preparation and management of specifications. The programme structure will be participative and session timings may be adapted to match the particular training needs and pace required by each group.

PROGRAMME: DAY 1

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES (Workshop Sponsor)
CREATING EFFECTIVE SPECIFICATIONS

the role of specifications in communicating requirements
the costs, benefits and qualities of effective specifications
the processes and challenges involved
the key stages in compiling an effective specification
exercise: qualities of an effective specification

ORGANISING THE TASK

designing the specifications required; applying BS 7373
defining the purpose, readership and title of each document
creating effective procedures for writing, issuing and controlling specifications
the roles and responsibilities of the key players

SESSION 2

SPECIFICATIONS AND CONTRACTS

understanding contracts; the contractual role of the specification
integrating and balancing the technical and commercial requirements
writing specifications to achieve the appropriate contract risk strategy
deciding how to specify: functional vs design requirements
the role of specifications in managing variations and changes to scope

CASE STUDY 1

Teams review a typical project scenario, and identify the implications for the specification

SESSION 3

CASE STUDY – FEEDBACK AND DISCUSSION
SCOPING AND DEFINING REQUIREMENTS

the importance of the functional requirement/user specification
deciding what issues the specification should cover
scoping techniques: scope maps, check lists, structured brainstorming
clarifying priorities; separating needs and desires
dealing with requirements that are difficult to quantify
useful techniques: cost benefit analysis, QFD, Pareto analysis

SESSION 4

CASE STUDY 2

Teams apply scoping techniques to develop the outline contents for a specification

PROGRAMME: DAY 2

SESSION 1

REVIEW OF DAY 1
STRUCTURING THE SPECIFICATION

typical contents and layout for a specification
the three main segments: introductory, key and supporting
creating and using model forms: the sections and sub sections
detailed contents of each sub-section
tools and techniques for structuring specifications

SESSION 2

CASE STUDY 3

Teams develop the detailed specification contents using a 'model form'
Feedback and discussion

WRITING THE SPECIFICATION - 1

the challenges of written communication
identifying and understanding the readers needs
choosing and using the right words; dealing with jargon
problem words; will, shall, must, etc; building a glossary
exercises and examples

SESSION 3

WRITING THE SPECIFICATION - 2

using sentence structure and punctuation to best effect
understanding the impact of style, format and appearance
avoiding common causes of ambiguity
being concise and ensuring clarity
exercises and examples

SESSION 4

EDITING, ISSUING AND CONTROLLING THE SPECIFICATION

why editing is difficult; developing a personal editing strategy
editing tools and techniques
key requirements for document issue and control
managing revisions and changes

SUMMING UP AND ACTION PLANNING

What actions should be implemented to improve specifications?
Summing up and closing remarks