

QUALITY ASSURANCE - WALKTHROUGHS

The objective of Quality Assurance is to give the customer exactly what he needs on time, every time and at the right cost.

One method for achieving this objective is the use of STRUCTURED WALKTHROUGHS at specific points in the project development cycle.

1. The aims of structured walkthroughs are:

- * To maintain Analyst/User contact throughout the project
- * To actively involve the users, and other DP Staff in the design process
- * To identify errors/misunderstandings/ omissions as early as possible
- * To obtain agreement on the work completed
- * To gain approval to continue
- * Within the DP area
 - to spread knowledge of the system
 - to verify that installation standards are being followed.

2. General characteristics of walkthroughs.

- * They should be held at frequent intervals at defined stages during the project. These are formal walkthroughs. Informal, problem-solving walkthroughs can be held at any mutually agreed time.
- * They provide a semi-formal review of work completed.
- * They should be conducted in an 'Ego-less' environment. They are not designed to show how clever the analyst is and, conversely, they should not be used to assess constructive criticism of the deliverables or products and a joint responsibility for all decisions.
- * They must be well controlled.
- * Typically 3 to 5 people.
- * Duration of 20 minutes to one hour.

3. **Conducting a Walkthrough**

- * Inform participants well in advance:
 - Objective/Agenda
 - Start time
 - Location
 - Duration

Copies of any relevant documentation should also be distributed in advance to allow for preparations.

- * Adhere rigidly to :
 - Start time
 - Duration
 - Original objectives/agenda

Do not allow unscheduled topics to be discussed. If it becomes apparent that a decision cannot be reached without further work being carried out, terminate the walkthrough, allocate the work to be done, and set a date for a further walkthrough.

- * Appoint
 - Chairman
 - Presenter
 - Secretary

The Presenter will run the walkthrough and be responsible for providing all relevant documentation, either in advance or at the actual meeting.

The Chairman will control the meeting and ensure that the agenda is followed and all relevant decisions are reached.

The Secretary will record the minutes.

- * The minutes will record :
 - all points of agreement
 - all points of disagreement
 - agreed action to be taken by whom, with timescales where appropriate.

- * The minutes should be no more than an A4 sheet and should be circulated within three to four days, or before the next walkthrough, whichever is the earliest.

(also see handout on Meetings)

Informal Walkthroughs

Informal walkthroughs are an aid to analysis and understanding, and a valuable tool for problem solving.

The principle objectives are some or all of those shown below:

- * To solve a specific problem or problems
- * To clarify the situation which surrounds a problem
- * To communicate the problem to other involved parties
- * To communicate with colleagues prior to agreeing a future course of action
- * To record outstanding problems so that follow-up action can be taken (usually associated with a Change Control Procedure).

The major differences between Informal and Formal walkthroughs are :

- * Often arranged at short notice
- * Normally a maximum of five participants especially chosen for their expertise, involvement, contribution etc to achieve set, limited objectives.
- * The Chairman/Secretary role is combined
- * Greater participation and much more 'frank' exchanges are more likely
- * Less formal structure, but need to be structured nevertheless.