



## MDM Global Services White Paper

### Quality from Diversity

#### Abstract

Peer reviews are considered an industry best practice for consulting organizations to deliver consistent quality documents to their customers. The term peer reviews strikes fear into an organization because very few peer review programs are implemented effectively. I prefer the term Quality from Diversity (QFD) reviews. The term embodies the combined skills of a team and acknowledges the team's diverse backgrounds and promotes quality from our diversity.

The reasons most of the programs fail include:

- Time Required. Most peer review programs are not funded and the reviewer sees it as a "back burner" task. As a result the review time more than double the time it takes to create the original document.
- Lack of Funding. Peer reviews are not project funded. As a result, the reviews are conducted in haste and not given the kind of attention they deserve. MDMGS estimates that effective peer review programs add an additional 20% to the cost of the product. This includes the time perform the review and the time to correct any defects identified in the peer review. Therefore it cannot be an absorbed program.
- Lack of Management. Most managers and project leaders do not know who should do the review. There is also a lack of standards in our work product that would aid in reviewers objectivity. Because of this, it's important to select a reviewer who has the knowledge, experience, and objectivity to perform an adequate review.
- Creates Internal Conflict. Due to lack of standards, peer review programs often create friction among peers and as a result are abandoned or the results of the review are ignored and not incorporated into the original documents.

The key elements of a successful peer review program include a structured review process, establish product standard checklists, define the roles of participants, and establish a standard method of providing feedback.

One effective peer review, can greatly improve the quality of the documents sent to clients. It takes discipline and time, but peer reviews can be a great benefit to project quality control. They can also serve as a great teaching and learning exercise for both the reviewer and the person whose work is being reviewed.



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### Quality from Diversity (QFT)

#### Overview

Most teams are comprised of diverse technical backgrounds. They have expertise from various industries, different technical expertise, and has held a variety of technical positions. Given this variety — not to mention the varying level of company experience, — it's no wonder that some designs may appear strong in one area but weak in another.

The QFD program can help identify and bridge these gaps. The team members with hands on experience can learn from the consulting members input and vice versa. Ideally, the Colleague reviewer has a wide range of experience in order to effectively evaluate all aspects of the project, but almost any second set of objective eyes reviewing a design before its set into motion can be helpful.

Another benefit of an internal peer review is that the reviewer — not just the subject of the review — might learn a few things. It can also help a Portfolio

#### Implementing QFD program

##### Establish Standards

The cornerstone of an effective QFD program is to establish standards. In order to have an effective QFD program, there needs to be standards established; or reviews are going to lack objectivity and move the organization towards providing a standard quality product to our customers.

The most effective means of establishing standards is to make it an iterative process; start off with a framework and build on it. For example: what components belong in to what documents. If the team cannot agree on what belongs in a document, an effective QFD program cannot be implemented effectively.

Recommendation: Convene a task force of senior team members to review each document and have them identify the core component vs optional components. Once the matrix is completed, publish it and have it be the basis of the QFD program.

##### Identify the Reviewers

It's important to select a reviewer who has the knowledge, experience, and objectivity to perform an adequate review. The ideal review has two components, and may be conducted by two different subject matter experts, technical and procedural. The procedural review should be conducted by one of the team members of the task force convened to develop the review matrix. The technical review should be someone that has subject matter expertise.



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Recommendation: Assign reviewers to a specific area, and they become the subject matter expert and the gate keeper of the standards for each of the documents.

Subject matter experts are based upon two factors industry and company experience. An expertise matrix should be developed so all team members understand who the subject matter experts (SMEs) are and who will be doing the technical reviews of their documents.

Recommendation: A SME should be assigned when a project enters our domain. This provides a "go to" resource for the consultant assigned to the project.

### **Establish the Rules of Engagement**

An effective QFD program emphasizes diversity and team, by emphasizing the skills we all bring to the table, establishes an environment of respect among the team. So how is it done?

- Publish standards
- Assign procedural experts
- The SME matrix establishes an expertise hierarchy among the team members.

This "levels the playing field" among the team members and establishes the review processes. As a result most of the team members will defer to the procedural or technical SME for advice and the review process is viewed as a collaborative event not a "gotcha" event.

Recommendation: Publish standards, assign procedural experts and develop a list of SMEs. Assign an SME to the project when it begins. They can provide valuable expertise to the project throughout the entire project. It also fosters a teaming environment.

### **Clearly Define Roles**

The roles of the reviewers should be clearly defined. The definition of the roles should include standard quality expectations.

#### Consultant presenting the document for review:

- Document will contain all the core components
- Consultant will run spelling and grammar check prior to submitting it to the reviewer.
- The consultant will provide the reviewers, SME and Procedural Reviewer at least one day for review
- The consultant will submit the document to the SME



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### Procedural Reviewer

- The procedural reviewer's review of the document will be limited to the procedural content of the document. Are all of the core components present and addressed properly.
- The procedural reviewer will review the document within 1 day of receipt and schedule a meeting with the consultant to go over the review.

### Technical Reviewer

- The technical reviewer's role is to assure that the technical aspects of the document are clearly defined and will be understood by the reader.
- The technical reviewer will review the document within 1 day of receipt and schedule a meeting with the consultant to go over the review.

Recommendation: Publish the roles and discuss at a staff meeting.

### **Establish Standard Feedback Processes**

The standard feedback process should be informal. It should not be an email where the review includes the world as CCs. This creates an immediate defensive reaction from the professional being reviewed. This review should be conducted as a one-on-one exchange. This also contributes to the teaming environment.

Recommendation: Management should make it clear that the feedback process is between the reviewer and the professional being reviewed; however, saying that, the reviewers should approve the document before it is submitted to the approval process.

### **Develop Review Check sheets**

It is not necessary to establish standard check sheets for our QFD programs. The review process can be formal while allowing informal feedback among peers.

Recommendation: The technical reviewer and the procedural reviewer should be listed as contributors to the document and also as approvers. This puts "skin in the game" for the review process and confirms how important management feels the review process is. When the document is submitted to be reviewed it should already contain the approvals of the technical and procedural reviewers. This alerts Portfolio Services Management that this document is a collaborated document and should expedite their review.