

Quality Auditing: The Necessary Step Towards the Required Quality Objectives

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Abstract

In an era when many, some would say most, software projects fail to meet their objectives, by being late, over budget and causing extreme customer dissatisfaction, the quality audit of projects is a common occurrence. A common conclusion of quality audits is that a project has not followed up-to-date project management and quality methods. And a common recommendation is to set up a task force to make the imminent deliveries AND in parallel to introduce a Quality Project Management Method. What, then, characterises a good such method?

It involves setting up a dedicated team of qualified staff including specialists in QA, System Design, Acceptance Configuration Management, and providing an environment where effective work can be done; providing everyone with the space, equipment and information necessary and creating an atmosphere of determination to success, hard but not hurried work. Objectives, requirements and commitments are managed and status is regularly checked against the planned schedule, quality target and budget. Problems and risks are highlighted early and solved. Acceptance is managed. Staff is educated and motivated. The result of all this is to make deliveries on schedule and having them accepted and paid for. There is visibility of key activities, management awareness, no nasty surprises, successful projects, motivated staff and an all-round professional image.

Donald Davies has been a project manager since 1956. Starting with Stantec Zebra he managed a succession of projects for ITT, UNIVAC, ICL and Philips, including message switching projects and reservations projects for Canadian Army, SAS and Siljaline, banking projects for AMROBank and Swedish Post and several more. Apart from project work he has been system manager and also set up the support organisation for the ICL 2900 new range. He became a consultant in 1978 and for a time specialised in crisis management and undertook a series of recovery exercises in France, Holland and Sweden. Recently interested in teaching project management he has designed and run a series of workshops and introduced the idea of project competence centres. He is a director of Compex (Competence Centres) and Project Management Workshops Ltd.