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*Skills Update is
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Skills Update

SFIA underpins drive to IT professionalism

In May 2006, four key UK bodies focused on IT skills joined forces to establish the Professionalism in IT alliance (ProfIT). Their goal: to support the UK's drive for leadership in the global IT market

In pursuit of this goal, ProfIT has two aims, both underpinned by SFIA.

First, to improve the ability of organisations to exploit the potential of IT. Second: to build an IT profession respected and valued by all.

"The collaboration between the four organizations is unprecedented, and gives ProfIT great momentum," said e-skill UK's IT

Professional Skills Executive Terry Hook.

One of the alliance's four bodies, e-skills UK is focused on standards and skills development strategy, all underpinned by SFIA. The British Computer Society, meanwhile, provides support services to individual IT professionals.

For organisations, Intellect helps suppliers verify their corporate professionalism, and the NCC disseminates essential IS management through its programmes for best practise and standards.

ProfIT already has wide backing. "This alliance is an important step forward in



building an industry-wide approach to IT professionalism and is one that the government supports fully," says Katie Davis, Director of Government IT Profession.

For more, visit:

www.ncc.co.uk/professionalism
www.e-skills.com/Resources-&Consultancy/ProfIT/1788

*Davies – government
backing for
ProfIT and SFIA*

SFIA annual conference: November 9th, London

The fifth SFIA Conference takes place on November 9th at the DTI in London.

The conference's increasing attendance has led the SFIA Foundation to increase the size of the conference in 2006.

"The growing popularity of SFIA means that this year

we will be having a larger exhibition as well as more seating for delegates," said SFIA Foundation Operations Manager Ron McLaren, who expects over 200 delegates to attend.

The conference features users of SFIA from the private and public sectors, including John Suffolk, the

government CIO, Paul Briggs of Norwich Union Life and Chris Coupland of BAE Systems.

The free, one-day conference includes exhibition, lunch and refreshments. For more information, and to book: www.imis.org.uk/about/sfia/2006conference

Agenda and more inside: see page 3

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Bourke: "SFIA's importance likely to increase"

Management consultants use SFIA with JEGS

Independent management consultants Beamans are the most recent organization to receive SFIA accreditation.

Founded in 1995, Beamans provides HR management consultancy services. The company also specialises in providing job evaluation services across government, with particular emphasis on using JEGS (Job Evaluation and Grading Support).

"Increasingly we are called upon to work with IT departments who are using SFIA to define roles," says Managing Director Michael Bourke. "Using JEGS in tandem with SFIA to ensure our evaluation approaches identify and define appropriate levels of role input and co-ordination is a very important aspect of the job definition and evaluation

process. With the increased emphasis on professionalism and standards within the civil service, SFIA's importance is only likely to increase in the future. It's therefore important we know and understand the SFIA framework so that we can link it appropriately to the job evaluation process"

For more information, visit: www.beamans.co.uk

Report explores impact of ICT skills on UK economy

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Information Age Partnership (IAP) are leading an industry and Government project to explore the impact of ICT on both competitiveness and productivity.

The resulting report, to be published around December 2006, will include a set of recommended actions to help

the UK's investment in ICT skills maximise productivity.

Key stakeholders such as e-skills UK, BCS, CBI, IET, Intellect, SEEDA, DfES and the e-Government Unit are contributing to the project's Skills Workstream, along with companies such as BT and LogicaCMG.

The Skills Workstream focuses on the UK's ICT

skills needs, including the use of skills frameworks such as SFIA.

The IAP is an action-oriented forum involving 40 leading CEOs from the UK's ITEC industries.

For more details, visit: www.iapuk.org/home or email Joe Gardiner, head of the DTI's ITEC Skills Team: joe.gardiner@dti.gsi.gov.uk

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SFIA links to ITIL

Following the translation of SFIA into Japanese comes news that the Portuguese chapter of the IT Service Management Forum (itSMF) has invited SFIA Foundation Operations Manager Ron McLaren to address next year's annual conference.

"SFIA v3 makes clear the links between ITIL and SFIA and this is generating more interest in the framework," comments Ron.

SFIA Course

Consultants interested in understanding more about SFIA, or gaining SFIA accreditation, should consider attending the one-day 'Understanding SFIA' course.

This quarter's course will run on Tuesday 5 December at e-skills UK's London offices in Victoria.

For more information, visit: www.sfia.org.uk/cgi-bin/wms.pl/680

Newly Accredited

Since the last newsletter, the following have been accredited as SFIA consultants: John Atherton, Lagoon Consulting; Paul Turner and James Cadle, Assist Knowledge Development; Gillian Killworth, Gillian Killworth Management Services.

Accredited Consultants choosing to be listed can be seen at:

www.sfia.org.uk/cgi-bin/wms.pl/674

SFIA Skills Management Conference 2006

Now in its fifth year, this year's SFIA Conference demonstrates both how widely the framework is used, and the extent to which it has become the accepted standard for professional IT skills in the UK and beyond.

The Skills Framework for the Information Age is now regarded as the natural choice of skills framework, as recognized by its adoption in initiatives such as the ProfIT alliance (see front page). Understandably, then, the conference begins with an address by Intellect Director General John Higgins which shows how such initiatives – and SFIA itself – are not academic, but crucial elements to building an IT profession in the UK.

The launch of SFIA v 3 at last year's conference was the beginning of large-scale adoption in central and local government. This has been underlined by SFIA's role as the basis of the Government IT Competency Framework (www.cio.gov.uk/itprofession).

Perhaps understandably, therefore, the conference agenda includes examples of SFIA usage in the British public sector stretching from a Cornish Council to the Scottish Executive.

But SFIA's use extends well beyond the public sector, a key part of the framework's success. Since its inception in 1999, when it was first published as the National IS

Skills Framework, SFIA has been used extensively by the private sector. This year's conference features case studies from both BAE Systems and Norwich Union Life. SFIA is central to BAE Systems' appraisal process and the development of its IT personnel, while Norwich Union Life have used it to dramatically overhaul the management of their IT function. SFIA enables Norwich Union to understand the skills development needs of both individuals, and of entire professions. It also used by managers when choosing which staff to assign to projects.

Although SFIA was initially targeted solely at the UK IT

profession, interest in the framework now extends abroad, and once again the conference will welcome delegates from the US and from continental Europe. Terry Hook's closing remarks will outline the successes that SFIA is encountering in Europe, and stress that it is seen as a complimentary rather than a competitive view of IT professional skills.

The conference takes place at The DTI Conference Centre, Victoria Street, London on Thursday 9 November. Registration begins at 9:15, and the day ends at 16:30.

For more details, or to book: www.imis.org.uk/about/sfia/2006conference

Programme

09:30	Registration, coffee	14:00	Transformational Government John Suffolk, Government CIO, on SFIA and the Transformational Government agenda
10:00	Welcome to the Conference Ron McLaren, Operations Manager, SFIA Foundation	14:30	Planned Development Russell Cosway, North Cornwall District Council, on identifying development targets for IT professionals
10:05	ProfIT and SFIA John Higgins CBE, Director General, Intellect, on professionalism and productivity through IT	15:00	Tea Break
10:30	Industry Story - BAE Systems Chris Coupland, Director of IT & e-Business, BAE Systems, on Professional Development	15:15	Competing on Capability Phil Rice and Paul Lambert, Senior Consultants at PA Consulting, present a proactive approach to management of capability of IT staff that delivers competitive advantage and cost improvements. The approach is presented through case study examples.
11:00	Coffee Break and Exhibition	15:40	The European Connection Terry Hook, e-skills UK, with an update on EU activity
11:30	Professional Development Paul Briggs, Norwich Union Life, on Professional Development as a Key business enabler	16:00	Keeping Up to Date Ron McLaren, The SFIA Foundation New arrangement for keeping SFIA up to date.
12:10	SFIA in Scotland Bill McGowan, Scottish Executive, on SFIA in Professional Development in the Scottish Executive	16:25	Questions from the floor
12:35	Questions from the floor	16:35	Close
12:45	Lunch and Exhibition		

How Many Users?

Given the availability of free downloads of SFIA, it is not easy for the Foundation to come up with an exact number of current users. An email survey of those who have downloaded SFIA has just been carried out by the BCS, on behalf of the Foundation. Of the 10% responding, 235 said they were currently using SFIA. More details in the next newsletter

Last word – IT Role Profiles



*SFIA Foundation
Operations Manager
Ron McLaren considers
job roles, profiles and
SFIA*

More and more organisations are moving to an assignment-based mode of working. The reasons: productivity and professional development.

This move necessitates a clear description of the organisation's skills assets – i.e. the people. That means having role profiles. A role profile is not a job description: it is a broad description of a professional identity such as Business analyst. It lists the attributes these professionals are expected to have and what, in general terms, is expected of them. It is the answer to the question “what are you?” not “what are you doing?” Of course, a list of SFIA skills is a key component of the role profile. Its breadth implicitly defines opportunities for growth. This is important: narrowness breeds a “silo” culture.

There would be 12 – 20 IT role profiles, each one being described at about three levels. Headings include: role name, role purpose (two or three lines!), typical

accountabilities (when you are working on a project, these are the kind of responsibilities you would have), skills (as per SFIA), knowledge and experience (in general terms), qualifications, behavioural competencies (as used in the organisation). Each heading is followed by a list of bullet points, not an essay. One page per level.

What are the roles?

A basic set of profiles might include: Business analyst, IT Consultant, Architect, Software engineer, Test engineer, Content provider (= Technical author), Development manager, Project manager, Service manager, Service technician, Support technician. The names and content vary a bit from one organisation to another. They might also vary over time, depending on what organisational change is being pursued.

With our people's identities defined in this way we now know that we have, say, 136 software engineers (say, 98 SE, 32 Lead SE, 6 Principal

SE), and so on. Knowing what we have got opens a lot of doors and removes a lot of confusion.

It's an approximation!

Of course, the people in a given role are not all the same. They approximate to the role in their individual ways. But we know about them individually, so we can manage their deployment and development. When staffing a project, the essential requirement is stated in terms of role, level, technical knowledge, application knowledge (“we need a Senior software engineer with experience of SQL Server and financial systems”).

Very last word

A last word as the space runs out: minimise the number of senior IT management roles: one is a good number. There may be a number of senior management positions, but you want versatile, developing managers, not senior silo dwellers! If they don't broaden, how can they succeed the current IT boss?

The SFIA Foundation is a not-for-profit body jointly owned by:



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Publisher: Ron McLaren
ron.mclaren@sfia.org.uk

Editor: Donald Taylor
donaltdt@infobasis.com