



Spring 2006

*Skills Update is
the newsletter of
the SFIA Foundation*

Skills Update

SFIA v 3 adoptions begin

Adoptions have begun of SFIA v 3, the updated version of the IT skills framework, released in November.

With a greater breadth of skills and refined definitions, the latest version of SFIA is ideal for organisations aiming to introduce IT skills management.

In the private sector, BAE Systems will use SFIA to clarify career structures, job roles and professional requirements.

Meanwhile, in the public sector, the new Government IT Competency framework is based on SFIA, and will support career development

for 50,000 public-sector IT professionals.

The framework continues to receive high-level support within Whitehall from Ian Watmore, who has been recently promoted to head the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit and is a leading member of the influential CIO Council. Mr Watmore gave the closing address at the Foundation's November conference.

SFIA v 3 retains its previous structure, but now has 78 rather than 54 skills, with the additions reflecting a growing emphasis in the profession on business change and associated skills.



As well as reflecting more closely the wording of ITIL (the IT Infrastructure Library), the new version also now includes emerging issues such as security, wireless technology and the importance of ergonomics and other human factors.

*Watmore – SFIA to
underpin government
IT professionalism*

CPS ahead on staff skills target deadline

The Business Information Systems Directorate of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has found skills management an essential element in ensuring successful project delivery, according to Claire Hamon, CPS Chief Information Officer.

SFIA has been used in the Directorate since 2005, and staff are now using the SFIA-based Government IT Professional Framework as

part of the CPS approach to the Professional Skills for Government initiative. Every member of the Directorate's staff is on track to have a verified "skills footprint" well ahead of the Cabinet Office target deadline.

"We have succeeded in giving IT professionalism currency in an organisation where staff have traditionally been regarded as either legal or non-legal," Hamon says. "By identifying skills sets

and development streams, and critically appraising their own competencies against the framework, our people are realising wider career horizons.

"This approach is enabling us to integrate the technical know-how of the IT professional with broader strategic business skills. The value-adding contributions our people are bringing to the business are reflected in project delivery."

SFIA is held on behalf of UK IT users by The SFIA Foundation, a non-profit body whose members are:



SFIA Conference 9 November 2006
DTI Conference Centre LONDON SW1

Managing IT Capability - PA Group partners with SFIA



Lambert: SFIA is a key building block

PA Consulting Group is delighted to be one of the first large consultancies to enter into a formal partnership with SFIA. PA Consulting Group is a leading management, systems and technology consulting firm employing some 3,000 people.

Paul Lambert, capability consultant, says "We find that in the continually changing world of IT a comprehensive skills framework is vital for

organisations tackling outsourcing, skills shortages and rapid technology change. We see the SFIA framework as a key building block in helping organisations ensure they have the right IT staff with the right skills to deliver their IT and business strategy.

"This framework is then central to a process for planning, deploying, developing and assessing IT capability in a business," adds Lambert.

PA Consulting Group uses SFIA as a building block for such frameworks and were instrumental in helping SFIA align v3 of the framework with ITIL processes. Winning "Best Place to Work in IT 2005" and realising significant cost savings in IT re-sourcing are just two examples of how PA clients have benefited from this approach.

For more, visit: www.paconsulting.com

BAE Systems creates IT profession around SFIA v 3

International aerospace and defence system company BAE Systems is to set up an internal IT profession based around SFIA v 3.

Previously the company had grouped IT employees with either engineers or project managers, making it hard to gauge levels of expertise. Now, using InfoBasis ESI, it

will audit existing internal IT skills against SFIA within a dispersed workforce, spread over 20 sites in the UK alone. This information will enable BAE Systems to define and manage the roles of IT professionals within the company.

"It is important to ensure that our IT employees have a

clearly defined career path and are aware of the professional requirements they are expected to meet," said Adrian Fallows at BAE Systems.

"Our work will also ensure IT projects are matched to employees' skills, increasing both efficiency and, we hope, job satisfaction."

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SFIA v 3 Now Online

The SFIA Foundation web site now has a library of materials on SFIA v 3.

Resources include a completely browsable version of SFIA, with skill and level definitions, details of the changes in version 3, and all the Foundation's printed materials

For more, visit: <http://www.sfia.org.uk/cgi-bin/wms.pl/932>

SFIA Courses

The one-day 'Understanding SFIA' course, developed and delivered by the Foundation's appointed training consultants, will run on the following dates in 2006 at e-skills UK's London offices:

Tuesday 4 April (full)
Tuesday 6 June
Tuesday 5 September
Tuesday 5 December

For more information, visit: www.sfia.org.uk

Newly Accredited

The following have recently been accredited as SFIA consultants:

Ivan **Miljan** and Sonja **Priscan** of KING IT, Croatia; Anna **Withrington**, Jane **Miller**, Parviz **Daneshvar** and John **Godsell** of IBM(UK)

For a complete list of SFIA accredited consultants, visit <http://www.sfia.org.uk/cgi-bin/wms.pl/674>

The rise and rise of IT professionalism

Widespread adoption of SFIA underpins IT professionalism

A professional identity for IT workers may have taken its time, but its arrival now seems imminent, thanks to wide-spread support for the idea from institutions and employers.

The UK's IT membership bodies have long backed professionalism, with the BCS in particular beginning a focussed campaign on the subject in 2004. The most recent manifestation of this has been the BCS Professionalism in IT Programme, which has brought together leading lights from the public sector and industry to define a suitable qualifications framework.

As well as industry-wide initiatives such as this, individual employers are creating their own IT professions to meet specific internal needs. Private sector companies such as BAE Systems (see opposite) aim to increase efficiency and job satisfaction by introducing a well-defined identity for IT staff which places them on an equal footing with the company's engineers and project managers. Another benefit of an IT profession is that it makes clear both future career paths and current responsibilities.

BAE Systems has chosen to create its IT profession based on the latest version of SFIA, which they say provides the

right balance of breadth and detail in describing skills.

In the public sector, the government is also using SFIA v3 to underpin a definition of professionalism for the 50,000 staff it has working in IT.

"SFIA v3, incorporating as it does many business-focused skills, supports our existing performance management processes," says Director of Government IT Profession, Katie Davis. She echoes BAE Systems and others in stating that while the immediate gains of better resource management are welcome, they are not the sole reason for creating a profession.

"The professionalism focus demonstrates that working in IT in government is about having a career, not just a job. We are looking at the long-term, and at recruiting and retaining the brightest and the best."

And while the individual benefits from professionalism, the employer does, too. West Dunbartonshire Council is able to point to considerable improvements in its service delivery following its introduction of mandatory professional IT development. In government, too, Davis sees professionalism as a driver to raising the bar of expected quality standards.

Separate organisations creating their own vision of

IT professionalism might sound like a recipe for disaster, but the differences in approach are minimal, thanks to the fact that they are all underpinned by the same skills framework: SFIA.

The fact that SFIA is now the industry standard IT skills framework makes adopting it a sensible choice, as it removes the need for both creating and maintaining an employer-specific framework, while at the same time introducing the possibility of benchmarking against other users.

No IT professional or their employer would expect SFIA to be the only gauge of their professionalism and development. Employers such as Norwich Union already use frameworks describing the 'soft skills' and expected behaviours of staff. Some employers will ask for evidence of additional skills specific to their sector – many IT professionals in government, for example, will be asked to develop themselves in line with the new Professional Skills for Government initiative.

Whatever additional skills an IT professional requires, however, the definition of the core skill set for their profession is clear, and the widespread adoption of SFIA underpins what has become the start of a genuine IT profession in the UK.



Davis: IT is about a career, not just a job

Last word



*SFIA Foundation
Operations Manager
Ron McLaren forecasts
the take-off of SFIA in
government.*

The SFIA Skills Management Conference, held at the DTI Conference Centre in November brought together over 200 people who are devoting their efforts to improving skills and professionalism in information technology.

The theme was “Expanding the Horizons”, which described an important phase in the uptake of SFIA. We see expansion in the range of uses to which SFIA is put. Most of the processes in the cycle of skills management are now benefiting from the use of SFIA: it is helping with recruitment, deployment, assessment, development, reward and overall planning.

The other important aspect of this broadening is seen in the range of organisations who are getting involved. IBM made their involvement clear at the SFIA Conference. Since then, PA Consulting has also become a partner of The SFIA Foundation, and there are others in the pipeline.

Still on the supply side,

BCS have added another product in the SFIAplus stable (BCS IT Job Descriptor); and e-skills UK have launched their SFIA Profiler.

Among the users, the growth is accelerating. Local Government is now making a showing; Central Government has taken the significant step of using SFIA for the Government IT Skills Framework. There is also significant activity among large user organisations, some of whom will be talking at next year’s conference. All this underlines what many people have been telling me in the last six months – SFIA is now the standard IT skills framework.

The involvement of larger organisations is related to another important aspect of SFIA. These people are not just rewriting their role profiles. Deep change in the way IT is being managed and deployed is now being seen. This emphasises the need for more systematic and consistent skills descriptions, so the

implementation of SFIA is part of a much larger project. We always said that SFIA was not just a matter of detail: it’s about how you run the company.

To support this wide range of expanding activity, the Foundation has launched SFIA version 3, the fruit of feedback from several years of use. The whole set of information on version 3 is now on the SFIA web site, including an improved browsable edition and printable editions of all documents. One of these is the transition guide “Moving to SFIA version 3”. If you want to know what has changed, that is where to start.

In addition, in response to increased demand for training on SFIA, the Foundation has now published a schedule of dates for the one-day ‘Understanding SFIA’ course. See News in Brief, or visit www.sfia.org.uk for the latest version.

Finally – put The SFIA Conference in your diary: 9 November 2006.

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