

# THE DOCUMENT CONTROL TRIBUNE

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**Is your Manager /  
Supervisor  
"DC Aware"?**

**3 Myths on  
Performance  
Appraisals**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Are Things Always “Black or White” in Document Control? **Page 4**
- Is your Manager / Supervisor “DC Aware”? **Page 5**
- Can There Be a Standard Filing Structure? **Page 6**
- Comic Strip Series: “Hanging in There” with D. Ceecee, the Document Controller **Page 7**
- 3 Myths on Performance Appraisals **Page 8**
- Portrait of a Document Controller: Jan Jalloh, Senior Documentation Officer at the Pan-African Parliament **Page 10**
- Poor DC causes damage only in hazardous activity sectors – true or false? **Page 11**  
[Episode 1]
- Plan the Next Step of your Career **Page 12**

## EDITORIAL

It has now been a year since the majority of humanity has been living under various levels of freedom restrictions, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. The human cost of the pandemic has been significant, both in terms of lives and in economic terms.

For many of us, it has become the “new normal” to work from home. Many of us have had to learn to adapt and to seek new ways of collaborating with colleagues and work interfaces, mainly using technology.

Many of us have probably increased the comfort of their work space at home, hopefully using some of the tips that we provided in [issue number 22](#) of the newsletter.

Because many people no longer see each other all day, it can lead to difficulties for managers and supervisors to get an accurate assessment of how their team members are performing. It can become harder for some to keep focus on why Document Control is important to an organisation.

In this issue of the Document Control Tribune, we touch on subjects related to this perception of Document Control by their managers and supervisors. These issues are present in normal times, and they have become a real challenge in these highly unusual times.

We also explore big Document Control philosophical questions — as part of our constant quest to advance the profession further.

Together, let’s make 2021 another year during which the world can count on Document Control.





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# ARE THINGS ALWAYS « BLACK OR WHITE » IN DOCUMENT CONTROL?

**W**e live in a very opinionated world, wherein everyone has their opinion about everything and anything, and wherein opposing views appear to be impossible to reconcile.

People tend to see things as “right or wrong”, “true or false”, “real or fake”, “black or white” and very often, it is true that there is reality on one side and falsehood on the other side, it is true that there is a correct answer on one side and incorrect answers on the other side; the remaining question being: which side of the argument is right and which side is wrong?

The world of Document Control is not exempt from this binary stance on matters. For some Document Control professionals, there are the rules on one side, and anything that does not fit on the other side.

Of course, what **Document Controller professionals must never compromise on are the Document Control TICCQS values**, which ensure that people and organisations are protected.

But, provided that an action complies with the **TICCQS** values, are things always “black or white”?

Let's say, for example, that a new document is created but the user is not satisfied with the discipline that Document Control has allocated in the document number. Say that the document numbering structure of that company is:

Department-Discipline-Document Type-Sequential Number.

In this case, the DC allocated the following:

- Department: Business Support Services;
- Discipline: Finance;

- Document Type: Report.

But here is the problem: the document was produced by the Big Data Analyst (BDA), which is a position that was just recently created in the company, and which is a profession that did not exist 10-15 years ago; for these two reasons, the document numbering procedure does not have a discipline for anything to do with “Big Data Analysis”. Therefore, the Document Controller selected a discipline that vaguely sounded to be close enough.

A big argument ensues between the Document Controller and the Big Data Analyst (BDA): the DC refuses to deviate from the procedure and the BDA claims that the document is poorly classified and that therefore no one will be able to find it in the system.

The DC and the BDA face a classic “right or wrong” or “black or white” situation and no one is willing to budge.

But in this case, **would it not be wiser to officially update the procedure with this new discipline, rather than inaccurately classifying this document?**

Of course, the procedure should be updated.

It is not uncommon that inexperienced Document Controllers tend to have a very rigid approach to the rules, which is a good thing, in principle.

However, in certain exceptions, as long as measures are taken to make sure that the **TICCQS** values are respected, there can be shades of grey.

And in fact, **it is a trait of competent professionals to know when to deviate from the procedure and to do so without compromising the TICCQS values.**



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# IS YOUR MANAGER / SUPERVISOR “DC AWARE”?

To play their role of gate-keepers, **Document Controllers occasionally need to say “no”**: “no” to incorrect documents, “no” to hazardous practices, “no” to actions that carry a risk of harm to people or of damage to the organisation.

In a well-functioning organisation, this possibility of a “no” from Documents Control is built into processes, procedures and practices.

However, **the effectiveness of the protective role of Document Control professionals depends very much on the commitment and the support of their hierarchy**: directors, managers, supervisors and team leaders.

Indeed, if the hierarchy of Document Control professionals does not support them, they cannot act as gate-keepers, which poses a threat to the safety of people and/or to the interests of the organisation.

Below are just a few examples of lack of support from hierarchy:

- A user submits a document with an incorrect revision number. Document Control rejects the document, but the **DC’s manager overrules** and decides to publish the erroneous document – in order

not to “slow down the process”;

- The Document Controller sets up the process so that all comments made on documents are directed to DC first, so that they can be logged and saved in a secure area before they can be forwarded to authors. However, **users complain that it “slows down the process”, and the manager yields to pressure** and decides that document reviewers can send their comments directly to authors;
- An important package of documents must be sent to an external company. The Document Controller naturally wishes to spend 5 minutes preparing a transmittal sheet, but **the package manager deems it a waste of time**, and the DC’s manager agrees to have the documents sent with no traceability.

The risks associated with such lack of support are well known to Document Controllers. But are they known to their hierarchy - directors, managers, supervisors and team leaders?

Often, the answer is no. **Many directors, managers, supervisors and team leaders are not aware of the importance of Document Control**

**and of the risks of not working by the best practices of Document Control.**

From the perspective of a single organisation or of a single individual, it may not be immediately apparent that not working by the best practices of Document Control can lead to significant harm and damage.

However, Consepsys, as the world-leading Document Control consultancy, routinely gets informed of instances wherein the lack of support to Document Control professionals causes harm to people, or damage to the organisation, to other organisations or to the general public.

To help Document Control professionals get the support that they need, Consepsys has recently published a 1-hour awareness course aimed at directors, managers, supervisors and team leaders, to explain the importance of Document Control in their perspective: **NDC-01, “The importance of Document Control for Management & Supervisory Roles”**.

We invite DC professionals to tell their hierarchy about this course, to increase their chances of being supported.



[www.consepsys.com/ndc1](http://www.consepsys.com/ndc1)



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& Supervisory Roles

A managerial perspective on how  
Document Control protects people & organisations

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# CAN THERE BE A STANDARD FILING STRUCTURE?

Consepsys is often asked: "Is there a standard for filing structures?" or "Is there a standard filing structure in my industry?"

**Many Document Control professionals face the daunting question of how to design their filing structure indeed.**

First, the answer is no, for one simple reason: **the filing structure of an organisation depends on a wide variety of parameters**, which are never exactly the same from one organisation to the next.

In a way, you can compare a filing structure to the way furniture, decorative items and fixtures are arranged in a home. Just for fun, let's try and list out parameters which would influence the arrangement of furniture, decorative items and fixtures in a home:

- |  |  |                                |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. Period of construction                | 5. Urban or rural area                       | 9. Income of the occupant(s)   |
| 2. Size of the home                      | 6. Number of floors/storeys                  | 10. Culture of the occupant(s) |
| 3. Geometrical configuration of the home | 7. Number of occupants                       | 11. Etc                        |
| 4. Climate                               | 8. Personality and tastes of the occupant(s) |                                |

We could continue this list for dozens of more pages, but that is not the point of this article.

No two homes have exactly the same parameters, therefore no two homes have exactly the same arrangement of furniture, decorative items and fixtures. The same principle applies to filing structures. **The parameters involved in the design of a filing structure are of immense diversity.** Let's list out just a very small sample of those parameters:

- |   |  |                                    |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Historical development of the organisation | 5. Organisational structure / chart                    | 9. Preferences of the organisation |
| 2. Activity sector of the organisation        | 6. Culture of the organisation                         | 10. Personality of management team |
| 3. Size of the organisation                   | 7. Single-location activity or multi-location activity | 11. Etc.                           |
| 4. Specific activities of the organisation    | 8. Single-national activity or multinational activity  |                                    |

We could continue this list for dozens of more pages, but that is not the point of this article.

**No two organisations have exactly the same parameters, therefore no two organisations have exactly the same filing structure.**

There is no standard filing practice, because every company is different and their filing needs are therefore different. For example, a company operating only one office in only one country will not have the same parameters as another company in the same activity sector operating 300 offices in 20 countries.

The specific parameters and the needs of each organisation empirically determine the way in which they file their documents.



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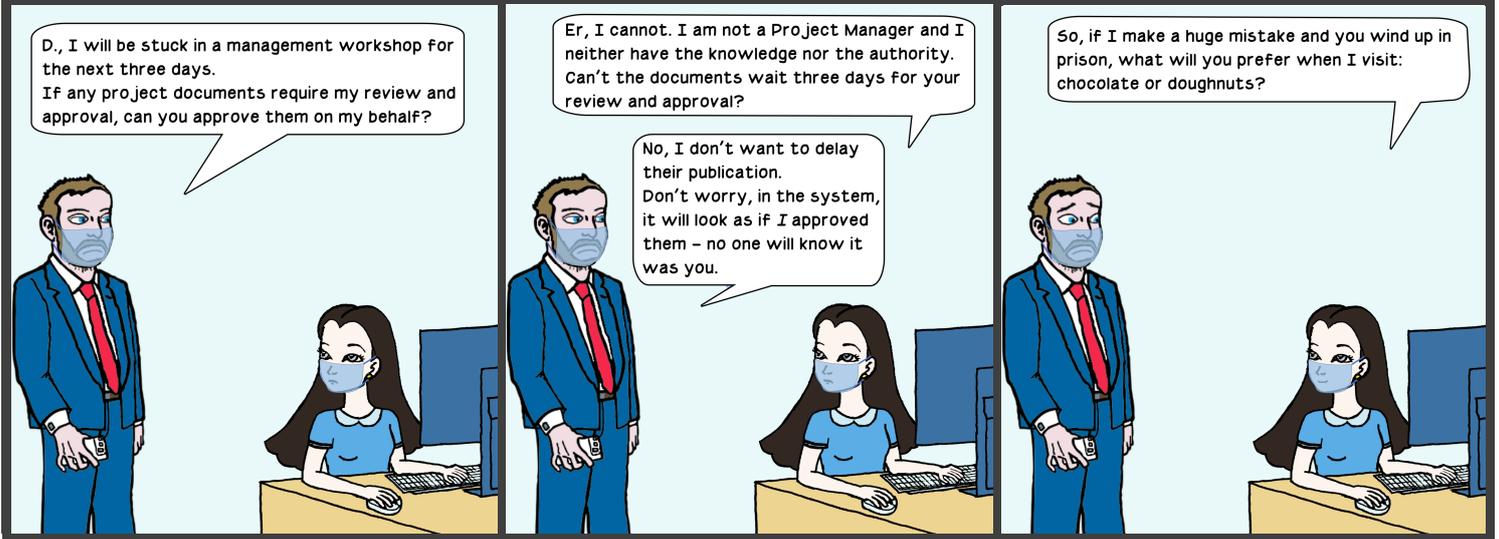


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**“Hanging in there”** with **D. Ceecee** - the Document Controller by Tuffmee

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## 3 MYTHS ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

A team leader or manager must divide his/her time between all members of the team, and he/she must also set some time apart for his/her own activities.

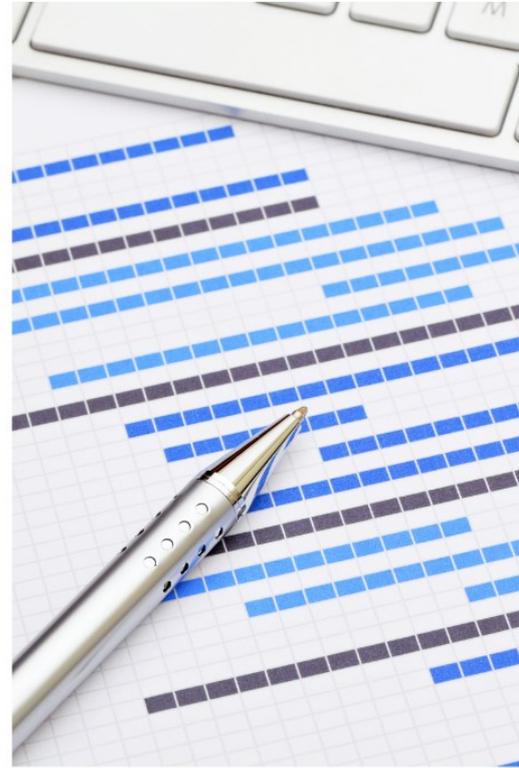
The very reason for the need for a manager or team leader is that the collective amount of activity produced by the whole team exceeds what a single person can do. Also, the magnitude of the work to be done requires that someone keeps an eye on the bigger picture – because it is easy for people to unintentionally stray away from their objectives if they are not closely supervised. Hence, there needs to be someone who oversees the activity, and who guides and coordinates the work of the group.

**The team leader or manager has objectives to achieve through the team, in relation with the bigger picture of the organisation, within certain parameters and within the principles of the culture of the organisation.**

In this context, the manager must determine how each member of the team performs in the pursuit of the overall objectives, and within the parameters that were set out for the team and for each team member.

Let's now examine 3 myths on the way managers or team leaders perceive their team members:

#	Myth	Reality
1	<b>“My boss sees and knows how hard I work”</b>	<p>A typical manager / team leader must divide his/her time between his/her own work and typically, 2 to 10 other people.</p> <p>In reality, the manager focuses his/her attention on each individual for only a fraction of his/her time, and he/she cannot be with each person for each minute of each work day.</p> <p>Many people think that their boss “sees and knows” how hard they work, but in fact, he/she knows little about their activity, unless they tell him/her.</p> <p>A parent cannot possibly know at all times what each of their children does – otherwise there would not be so many videos on the internet about children who have drawn and scribbled all over walls.</p> <p>Similarly, people must realise that a team leader cannot possibly know at all times what team members do. Working hard is not sufficient. <b>A team member must effectively communicate about work done with the team leader – to get a better chance that the team leader be aware.</b></p>
2	<b>“If I work hard, I will undoubtedly be rewarded”</b>	<p>Working “hard” does not <u>necessarily</u> pay off.</p> <p>A Document Controller – let's call him Peter – works 12-hour days on a routine basis. However, 70% of his work contains mistakes. He works hard, but he does not work well: he places volume, speed and long hours before quality.</p> <p>Another Document Controller – let's call her Mary – works 14-hour days every weekday and she routinely works during the weekend. However, most of this additional work time takes place outside of office hours, far from the eyes of her manager.</p> <p>Although she works hard and she works well, she actually works against herself by making things look easy – indeed, her manager does not see all the extra hours that she puts in and he genuinely believes that she achieves that large amount of good work during normal working hours.</p> <p>As a result, it does not look as if she is working that hard, from her manager's perspective.</p>
3	<b>“If I am the best at my job, I will get promoted”</b>	<p><b>Many people are disappointed when promotions keep flying over their heads, despite the fact that they are the best at what they do.</b></p> <p>Being a team leader, a supervisor or a manager requires very different competencies and a very different mind-set from being a technical specialist – as Conespsys covers in its courses <a href="#">“Certified Lead Document Controller”</a> and <a href="#">“Transitioning to a Manager Position”</a>.</p> <p>Being the best at one's job does not necessarily mean being the best candidate for a position as a manager. One must take into account the ability to understand the bigger picture and the soft skills that are required, for example. Also, even if one is the best at what they do and even if one is the best candidate for a position as a manager, does the boss know? Many people work hard and forget to communicate about their achievements.</p> <p>After all, it is unlikely to get what we want if we do not ask for it.</p> <p>In any case, when a person wishes to get a promotion, that person must identify the competencies required to be a team leader and they must develop in those areas to increase their chances of success.</p>



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# PORTRAIT OF A DOCUMENT CONTROLLER



## JAN JALLOH

Senior Documentation Officer at the Pan-African Parliament, in Johannesburg, South Africa

*Jan attended the Certified Document Controller course in a live online classroom in January 2021.*

### Can you tell us a bit about you?

My name is Jan Jalloh and I am 52 years old. Since college I have been working as a document controller, first at a health facility, then an international NGO, and later the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union, a continental union consisting of 55 member states headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia).

During my time I have been able to build my portfolio through supporting, designing and management of document control activities.

My experience at the African Union has built up my proficiencies in document control, and it has also allowed me to participate in a variety of document control activities to share best practices, learn about new tools, and network with colleagues.

Moving forward, I would love to share my knowledge of document control with others. I believe my experience and passion for document control will allow me to be a great asset to many.

### What is your current role?

I am currently the Senior Documentation Officer at the Pan-African Parliament, the legislative organ of the African Union, based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

My role concerns the overall control of parliamentary documents, including objectives, policies, procedures, and services.

Specifically, I ensure that the working, administrative and information documents for all parliamentary sittings are available in the working languages and are in order.

These vast number of documents generated demands highly creative and knowledge intensive tasks, especially as each document for a parliamentary sitting must be drafted, coded, edited, translated, formatted, proofread, finalised, printed and distributed to the highest professional standards and in a timely manner.

This process further involves different aspects and a multi-disciplinary team - usually made up of authors, drafters, translators, interpreters, editors, desktop publishers, print production officers, and document managers - is responsible, and these different professions use their own unique procedures to undertake their tasks, but often must rely on in-

*"This course has presented a prime opportunity to expand my knowledge base. [...] I am seeing improved productivity and adherence to quality standards."*

formation supplied by others.

### Can you describe your professional experience?

I have spent 29 years working in an information intensive environment serving in a document control capacity as well as a variety of other functions. As the current Senior Documentation Officer to the Parliament, faced with diverse and geographically distributed operations, my years of experience have prepared me well with the vital skills and fundamental knowledge requi-

site to manage all stages of the document control life cycle and focus on results and desired outcomes and how best to achieve them.

### Which ConsepSys course did you attend and when?

I attended the Certified Document Controller Course from 18 to 22 January 2021 (live online classroom).

### What did you think about the course? How did it help you in your current role and career development?

Given my experience, I would say the Course was excellent and I really enjoyed it.

In terms of contents, it covered the fundamental aspects of document control, providing extensive hands-on experience and in-depth knowledge and un-

derstanding. In terms of organising, I found the course equally brilliant.

The time schedules, modules, practical exercises, video lectures, and the instructor's enthusiasm were all appealing to me. I am now looking forward to taking more online courses.

This course has presented a prime opportunity to expand my knowledge base. Since January 2021, I am seeing improved productivity and adherence to quality standards.

# POOR DC CAUSES DAMAGE ONLY IN HAZARDOUS ACTIVITY SECTORS – TRUE OR FALSE? [Episode 1]

A person wishes to have an update of the Energy Performance Certificate of their home, after they have conducted expensive window replacement and heat insulation upgrades (Figure 1).

The person contacts a specialist, who issues a quotation (Figure 2), based on the initial discussion.

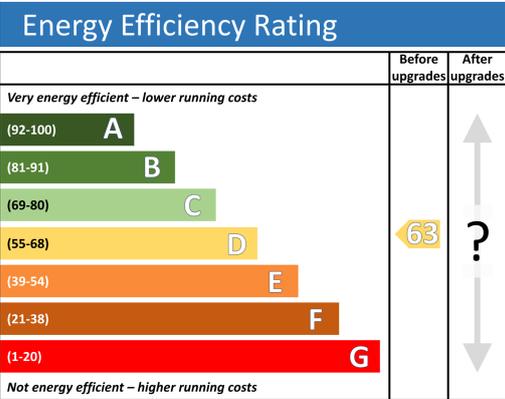


Figure 1

Shortly afterwards, the homeowner requests an addition to the scope of work. As a consequence, the specialist updates the quotation (Figure 3), but keeps the same quotation number.

The homeowner decides to hire the specialist, who completes the job as it was agreed. However, when the specialist issues the final invoice to the homeowner, the latter is surprised that the cost of the service is 67% over what they expected. Indeed, because the quotation number was the same, the homeowner ignored the second quotation (Figure 3) and remained on the idea that the cost would be that shown on Figure 2.

A dispute ensues between homeowner and specialist and, at the end, the specialist is forced to charge the price shown on the initial quotation. Because of the absence of a simple revision system, the specialist loses 67% of the price.

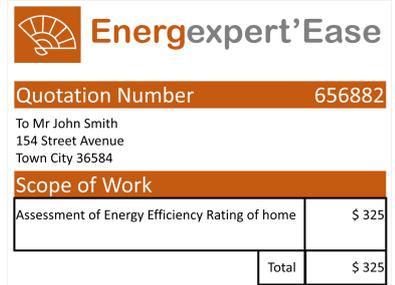


Figure 2

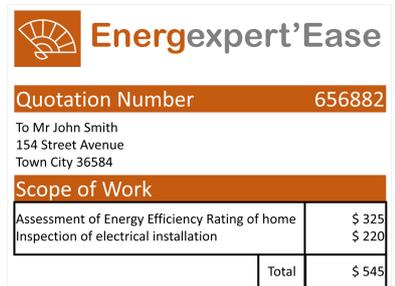


Figure 3

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