

THE DOCUMENT CONTROL TRIBUNE

Issue 31
June 2023



**Late
submissions:
No more!**

**New to Document
Control?**

We answer to your top 5 questions

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EDITORIAL

Fortunately, many people understand the importance of being accountable in their personal life and in their professional life.

Many people understand that they have responsibilities and duties, and that no one else than themselves can fulfil their own obligations.

And if, for any reason other than disability, anybody else was to fulfil an individual's obligations in their stead routinely and as a basis, then that individual would not be considered as accountable.

Having the required competencies for the job, or having a plan and working the plan to develop the required competencies for the job are part of people's responsibilities and duties in the workplace.

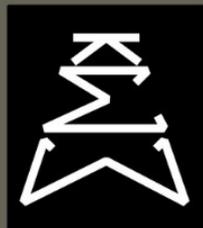
No one else than an individual can acquire competencies in their stead.

And if that individual does not have the required competencies for the job, the individual cannot blame others for their own shortcomings, nor for their own lack of plan to overcome their shortcomings. Blaming others for one's own shortcomings reveals poor personal values and results in loss of respect.

Instead, such individuals should focus on getting feedback, on improving their skills, on seeking help when needed, on benchmarking with others and on developing a plan for self-improvement, with a positive attitude.

With this issue of the DCT, let's reflect on accountability and let's continue to do our part, diligently.





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DOCUMENT CONTROL vs RECORDS MANAGEMENT

In the world of documents, information and data, there are different professions involved. Although they are “sister disciplines” from the same family, the focus of each of these disciplines is different.

So what makes Document Control different from Records Management?

Definitions

As per the worldwide-recognized definition by Consepsys, Document Control is a document management profession whose purpose is to enforce controlled processes and practices for the creation, review, modification, issuance, distribution and accessibility of documents. The role ensures that documentation available at official points of use within an organisation is trusted by its users and contains up-to-date, reliable, checked and formally approved information.

The ISO 15489-1 standard defines records management as the “field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records”. [2]

They are involved at different moments in the existence of documents

Document Control focuses on the regulation and compliance of documents throughout their existence, from when they are created to when they are not needed anymore.

Records Management focuses on retaining, securing, and disposing of records that serve as evidence of business activities.

While Document Control is involved at every step of the life of documents, Records Management will come into play only when the document becomes a “record” and needs to be safely archived.

Their scope is different

Document Control focuses on formal documents and is not, by essence, involved with other types of information that are not captured on documents: for example, 3D models, recordings of conversations, data models, etc.

Records management will keep track of all types of evidence, whether it is a document, an audio recording or a video.

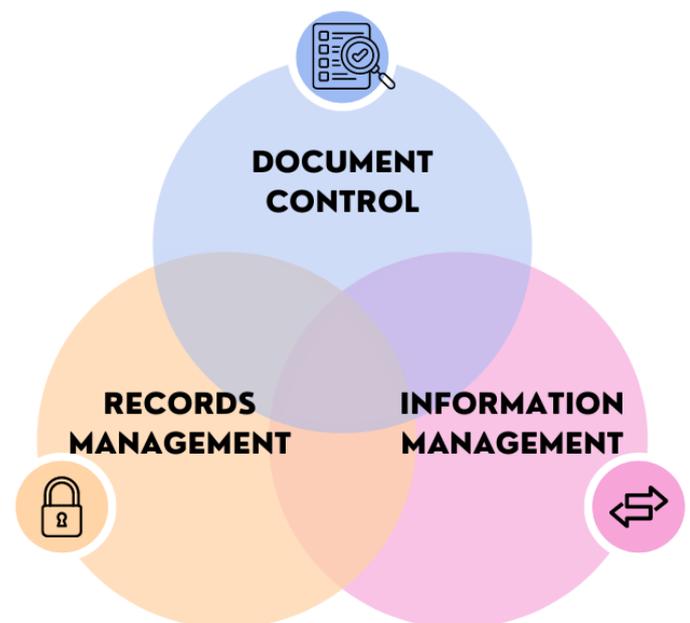
Interfaces

The daily interfaces of Document Control professionals are often document authors, engineers, clients, suppliers, reviewers, and approvers... because they are involved at every step of the way when it comes to producing, reviewing, approving, and distributing a document.

Records Management will have fewer daily interactions with the people involved in creating and reviewing documents. They will define, plan and organise the adequate filing and categorisation of records, but they might interact with users more at a systems level than at a personal interactions level.

What they have in common

Although, as we have seen above, these professions are different in nature, they are also part of the same family. As such, they share common values and features: In Document Control's values, we have Compliance and Traceability. These are shared with Records Management, which is why it's essential that these two functions work together and find synergies when they exist in the same organisation.



LATE SUBMISSIONS: NO MORE!

A constant struggle that Document Control professionals talk about a lot is the difficulty in getting people (e.g. authors or external suppliers) to submit their documents on time and well in advance, so that Document Controllers can have the time to check the documents, to send them back for modifications if required, and to get the document ready to be transmitted or distributed by the day on which it is actually due.

A lot of the time, Document Control professionals receive a document right on the dot of the official deadline, giving them absolutely no time to check and to send it back in case of errors; this puts Document Control professionals under much pressure and, sometimes, unfortunately, some may be tempted to take shortcuts with quality, integrity and compliance, which may have very damaging consequences ultimately.

This issue is so frequent that, in a recent poll on LinkedIn, the results were astonishing:

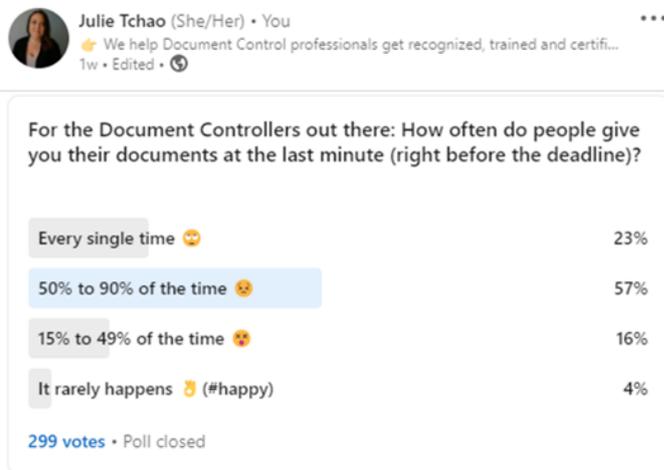
75% of Document Controllers said that their interfaces very frequently submit their documents at the last minute (more than 50% of the time), with even 23% who said that it happens

every single time. It's also interesting that only 4% said that it rarely happens!

So, in the face of this very real issue, **what can we do?** There are indeed very effective ways to reduce the occurrence of this kind of problem; let's see five examples below:

Set clear expectations

Set a clear deadline for authors: they must provide you with the document within a pre-determined number of hours before the actual deadline – for example,



24 hours prior: if the document is due to be distributed or transmitted on Friday, then the author must send it to Document Control on Thursday by 10 am. This kind of rule is commonly known as "Document Control turnaround time" or "Document Control cut-off time".

Some of you will say, "Whaaaaat??? I can't do that, there will be a riot in my office!"; but when you think about it, authors typically have several weeks to prepare a document, therefore how is it possible that they submit it to you at the last minute (typically at 5 pm on Friday)?

You may think: "How can I justify such as rule to my stakeholders?" With postal services, UPS or DHL, people are used to deadlines and they accept that a parcel will be processed and expedited on the following day if it is submitted after the deadline. So, why would it be "not justifiable" for Document Control to have cut-off times and dates? Don't be afraid to negotiate the means to do a good job. As long as people know about the Document Control cut-off time in advance, there is no reason why they can't integrate it into their schedule.

It's all about setting clear expectations: if you don't spell out the rule clearly and if you don't explain what actions you need to take, then it's possible that your interfaces don't realise how long the process takes you after they have submitted their document to you!

>>> [this article continues next page](#)



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Educate your interfaces

A lot of the stress caused by deadlines is due to a lack of understanding or knowledge of our interfaces:

- Make sure they are trained to self-check their work and provide them with check-lists
- Enforce that they self-check before submitting a document to you
- Educate with flowcharts about the tasks that you will perform after they submit a document to you
- Regularly train them on the steps they must take, the most frequent problems encountered, the tips and tricks to get their document issued quickly, etc.
- Communicate about best practices and lessons learnt at every opportunity that you have

Advance notifications

As a Document Controller, you probably have the list of documents with expected delivery or submission dates. That allows you to be proactive and to send friendly reminders in advance to authors, to let them know that you are expecting their document by a specific date and time. These notifications can be easily automated, therefore those advance notifications require minimal effort on your part, but they will make a massive difference in the flow of documents.

Clear rules

Once you have set your own turnaround time and educated authors about it, then rules must be spelt out and communicated explicitly:

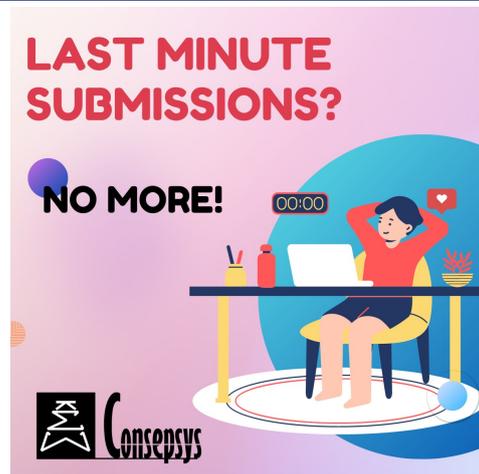
- If a document is due to be distributed or transmitted on Friday, then authors must submit it to Document Control by 10 am on Thursday.
- Any document received after the Document Control cut-off time will be processed as and when it is possible, and authors must be aware that it might be distributed or transmitted one working day after the day that they had in mind.

Understanding of the entire workflow

Sometimes an author thinks that once they have submitted their documents, the work is over... It demonstrates a lack of understanding of the entire workflow as well as a misconception about how many people will need to get involved after they finish their work: there might be an admin involved with the finishing touches, a Document Controller for the quality, compliance, integrity and traceability checks, a content checker, an approver to authorise the publication of the document... and that is just what would happen BEFORE the document would be ready to be registered, uploaded and distributed... Therefore, it's the responsibility of Document Control to ensure that users and interfaces understand that the process does not end once their own involvement is over.

Other tips?

What are your tips to avoid last minute submissions of documents? Let us know in the comments [here](#)



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COMMON PRACTICES AND BEST PRACTICES

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

BEST PRACTICES

or

COMMON PRACTICES

A common practice is not necessarily a “best practice”.

- A **common practice** is a widely used method or technique; but there may be more effective methods and techniques; the effectiveness of a common practice may not even be proven by facts. It’s just “the way we are used to doing things”. How do we know if a common practice is a good practice or, better, a best practice?
- A **best practice** is a method or technique proven to be superior or optimal in achieving desired outcomes or minimising risks. It is based on evidence, research, and experience, demonstrating its superiority over other alternatives.

Let’s take a first example that is not work-related.

Eating three, four or even five meals per day is a widespread practice (breakfast, lunch, dinner, afternoon snacks, midnight visit to the fridge, etc.). It’s a widespread practice. But is it actually a good practice?

Scientific studies have revealed a direct relationship between intermittent fasting, good health, and long life. In other words, people who eat only once or twice a day tend to be healthier in the long run and tend to live longer.

That is an good example of where there is a difference between common practices and best practices.

Another illustration, this time from the field of nursing. A common practice among nurses is to use alcohol swabs to clean the skin before administering an injection. This practice is based on the assumption that alcohol swabs can prevent infection and reduce pain. However, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), a best practice is to use sterile single-use devices for injections and avoid unnecessary skin preparation. This practice is based on evidence that alcohol swabs do not reduce infection rates and may actually increase pain and tissue damage.

Now let’s return to the Document Control world.

As you know, Consepsys relentlessly collects and disseminates Document Control best practices worldwide. By being exposed to so many professionals every year from all parts of the world (over 105 countries) and over 65 activity sectors, we hear a lot of good practices... but we also witness a few common practices that can be very damaging to the organisation. For example:

- Not creating a new revision after the integration of comments on a document;
- Distributing unapproved documents to users with no control;
- Not agreeing on Document Control rules at the beginning of the project and not documenting them in the contract;
- Not updating the Document Control procedure to reflect changes in practices or tools.

The fact that the above are (unfortunately) common practices does not mean that they are good practices.

On the contrary, they create risks for the organisation (loss of business, dissemination of wrong information, inability to defend oneself in a lawsuit, etc.).

A best practice is based on evidence, data, logic and actual effectiveness, and it is usually documented and standardised for consistent implementation. A best practice also considers the ethical implications and the impact on stakeholders of the process.

Therefore, **it is essential for Document Control professionals to question why they are doing something the way they are doing it** and to seek out and adopt best practices whenever possible. This can improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of their work, as well as their satisfaction and safety. It can also benefit their clients, customers, and other stakeholders relying on their services.

The best way to do that is to **confront your day-to-day practices with a best practices reference**. That is precisely what the [Consepsys Certified Document Controller Course](#) is designed to do: taking every aspect of the Document Control profession and showing common practices, good practices vs bad practices, and allowing you to compare what you do with the very best and recommended Document Control practices.

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

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PORTRAIT OF A DOCUMENT CONTROLLER



JOHN CHRISTEN

Document Control Specialist, for New Gold Inc. in Ontario, Canada

John attended the Certified Document Controller course in December 2021 - Live Online instructor-led session

Can you tell us a bit about you?

My name is John Christen and I am from Thunder Bay, Ontario. Thunder Bay is in NW Ontario and is located on the shores of Lake Superior, the world's largest freshwater lake! The city is also home to the largest Finnish population per capita outside of Finland.

My home life includes my beautiful wife and three, outstanding children, Lincoln (5), Scarlett (3) and Michael (2). They give vibrancy to me every single day. Being a father has changed my outlook on life and my general perspective on things.

I enjoy being outdoors and spending time with the kids, reading them stories and teaching them new things. I also love American Football both college and NFL and have been an Auburn Tigers fan for years. I am looking forward to what the future has to bring for my family as my wife and I watch our children grow.

What is your current role?

My current role is Document Control Specialist for the New Gold Rainy River Project. It is located 65km NW of Fort Francis, Ontario. I, however, am based out of the Thunder Bay office.

I am responsible for the management of our entire document control sector as I am the sole controller for all departments on/off site.

Can you describe your professional experience?

I have not always been a document controller and my career has taken a few alternate pathways since I have began working. I started working as a land surveyor in 2000, working in the oil and gas industry in North Alberta.

I graduated from Civil Engineering at Confederation College in Thunder Bay in 2013 aspiring to work in the field of engineering, yet still finding myself drawn to the work of the outdoors. Thus, I began working with the New

“Document Control is the foundation and baseline for the safety standards in the workplace”

Gold project during the earthworks stage in 2015 with a local Engineering consulting firm.

I joined NGD in 2019 as Surveyor for the Mine Operations Technical Services in the Open Pit where I worked until I was injured on site.

While on modified work, I assisted the current Document Controller until they were no longer there and then, I took ownership of the document control department through training, online education, and self taught while on the job.

I no longer was the assistant on modified duties, but as the Document Controller itself.

Which ConsepSys course did you attend and when?

I attended the online Certified Document Controller in December of 2021.

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

I found the Course to be very informative and it helped me to decipher and remedy all the methods to be considered poor practice in this profession.

I took the bull by horns, so to speak, and I wrote a controlled documents policy, revised our processes, procedures, guidelines, and restructured our workflows while also giving training to current and new managers on the proper procedures.

This job is very important to me because it is the foundation and baseline for the safety standards in the workplace and after having been injured at work, and changing careers because of it, I take advocating for the safety of workers very seriously.

I look forward to finishing all the courses ConsepSys has to offer in the near future and I highly recommend not only document controllers take these courses, but management as well, for at the end of the day the sole purpose of a Document Controller is to protect the Shareholders investments.



Advanced Document Control

TRAINING COURSE

A course focusing on **non-routine activities**, which represent the opportunity for Document Controllers to **raise their profile and to expand their knowledge**.

It allows DCs to **increase their credibility** by demonstrating a better understanding of their interfaces. This course guides participants to make a significant difference and to add a lot more value as a professional.

[More Information](#)



A course by Consepsys:
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COURSE OUTLINE

- Module 1**
Understand Document Control stakeholders and their requirements
- Module 2**
Setting up Document Control for a new project
- Module 3**
Reporting on the status of documents (KPI, statistics,...)
- Module 4**
Writing Document Control Procedures & Specifications
- Module 5**
Raising awareness about Document Control
- Module 6**
Organising an As-Built documentation package
- Module 7**
Managing your competencies

www.consepsys.com/DCA

NEW TO DOCUMENT CONTROL? WE ANSWER YOUR TOP 5 QUESTIONS

Is Document Control a good job?

Well, it depends on your criteria, of course

But in general, yes, we can say Document Control is a good job:

- You can work in a variety of activity sectors in all countries of the world (Consepsys has already trained people from 105 countries and counting!)
- Your position can place you in various environments, such as an office environment or a site environment
- It is a position where you are likely to have many interactions with many different types of people, cultures, and professions... so it is exciting if general curiosity and learning new things regularly are essential to you
- This is a position where you can grow: if you are willing to learn, improve, and be proactive, there is room to develop in this profession and often, into other professions.

How much does it pay?

On average, the annual salary of a Document Controller in 2023 is USD 44,360 (about £ 36,591). But many variations can make this average lower or much higher, such as your experience level, activity sector, geographical area (and, of course, your drive for excellence and skills improvement). To dive into details about the specific salary in your activity sector or your country, you can use the Consepsys [annual salary survey](#) as a benchmark.

Is it hard or complicated?

There is actually a misconception out there, believing that Document Control is easy and that anybody can do it. We definitely disagree with that statement as this profession, if it is not done with the proper understanding, can lead to severe mis-

takes and potentially catastrophic consequences. Before entering the work, there are things that you need to learn and that are not typically learnt on the job: our Certified Document Controller course gives you the robust foundation that you need before embarking on this journey.

Which skills should I have? What software should I learn?

There are skills that you will need in every organisation to be an efficient document controller:

- Soft skills: attention to detail, good verbal and written communication, proactiveness, ability to understand and follow a process, quality mindset, assertiveness (to name a few)
- Technical Skills / Software: Computer skills are essential. In terms of software packages, a Document Controller must be very proficient with Microsoft Office suite (Excel, Word, PowerPoint), and there are a few other software packages that you might consider learning – Watch Useful computer skills for Document Controllers
- What about Electronic Document Management Software? There are hundreds of EDMS software. With so many, it is more a matter of getting trained in the software that your company is using. Knowledge of an EDMS software comes with on-the-job experience and should progress quickly after a few weeks of working with it daily.

What does a document controller do?

The day-to-day tasks of a Document Controller can be quite varied, which is what makes this profession interesting.

- Have a look at the [Job Description for a Document Controller](#), and read about the [career roadmap](#)
- Don't forget to watch the [« What is Document Control » video](#) to better understand the profession and what it entails.



DOCUMENT CONTROL

Competency Matrix



Formally manage your competencies

More





