

Project Document Controller Course

Lesson-5: Controller Roles and Skill sets

Many document control personnel began their careers without adequate training and learned 'on the job' the hard way. Learning more about this function and the steps that can be taken to enter this field of document control could help a person to determine whether it is the right one or not.

Hence, in this module a person can learn in depth about the document controller's role in a project, skill sets required and various challenges they face while performing their duty.

The lists of the topics covered in this lesson are listed below.

Content

- A. Document Controller of a Project
- B. Key Roles of Document Controller
- C. Document Controller Accountabilities
- D. Skill Sets Required for Document Controller
- E. Document Controller's Scope of Work
- F. Time Management in Document Control

Now, we will go through each topic given above in detail.

A. Document Controller of a project

The functions that briefly explain the job of Document Controller are as follows.

- **An individual responsible for efficiently managing the documentation** pertaining to the Project that he or she is responsible for.
- **The person is expected to maintain updated documentation** and organize their safe keeping, storage, appropriate use, and disposal.
- **The person handles various forms of documents** and in different media and manages it either manually or with the assistance of suitable software as well.

Here, we will discuss additional and essential information related to the document controller function. Through the explanations given here, one should be able to understand the various aspects of the document controller function and the necessary professional responsibilities.

First, a Document Controller is tasked with the responsibility of managing all the documentation pertaining to whichever Project he is responsible for.

That is, he can maintain updated documentation; ensure their safe storage, appropriate use and disposal utilizing appropriate methods. It would include scanning paper documents and the process of uploading or obtaining documents and ensuring proper and secure storage.

Lastly, the responsibility of document controllers includes management of both external and internal documents. Documents can be retained in any media and form and managed either manually or with the assistance of suitable software as well.

B. Key Roles of Document Controller

- **Distribute relevant documents to internal teams**
- **Assist in access to files as needed**
- **Store documents in physical or digital media**
- **Manage flow of documentation within the organization**
- **Create templates for future use**
- **Maintain confidentiality of information**

The **Key Roles of a Document Controller** in a construction project are explained as follows.

The **first role** of a document controller is to distribute relevant updated versions of the documents to internal teams. In contrast to external documentation that concerns other stakeholders; internal documentation pertains to issues and matters concerning the organization. Internal documentation generally relates to internal records and other **company processes** that employees are required to follow to complete their work, ensure quality, and maintain records as evidence.

The **second important role** of the document controller is to Assist in access to files as needed by the project team. Even though, bulk of the document controller's time may be spent in report writing and archiving the project materials, the person has to ensure seamless document management throughout the project lifecycle such that any particular document is accessible to all whenever it is demanded.

The **third important role** of the document controller is to ensure the safekeeping of all documents in either physical or digital media. As a document controller you will be required to manage the intake, handling, and storage of all project-related documents, including its management in physical or digital form.

The **fourth key role** of a document controller is to manage the flow of documentation within the project team. In the construction industry, documents are critical evidence when disputes arise, and documentary evidence plays a crucial role in obtaining disputed work and related payments. Hence maintaining the flow of these documents to all project personnel concerned gains significance.

The **fifth key role** of the document controller is to create document templates for future use. As a document controller, you need to develop standardized templates for project documents to ensure consistency and efficiency in future projects. Customized templates would include relevant sections for capturing project details, milestones, and deliverables. Version control and document tracking mechanisms can also be incorporated within the template to facilitate easy updates and revisions.

The **sixth and the most important key role** of Document controller is to maintain confidentiality of information. As a Document Controller you will contribute to the protection of sensitive project data, mitigate the risk of unauthorized access or leaks, and foster a culture of trust and integrity within the project environment. You will maintain strict confidentiality of information through access controls, secure distribution, and implementing document security measures.

In summary, a good understanding of all these six key roles of a document controller is essential for you to perform efficiently, add value to the project progress, and become an asset to any project team.

C. Document Controller Accountabilities

1. Support the project team

- To check and validate quality documents & drawings
- Maintain records in the database
- Verify the metadata of each file

2. Manage all technical documents with respect to

- Quality
- Revision status
- Timely receipt
- Distribution

3. Utilize data base on document control system

- To track documents
- Monitor approval loops

- Revision identification

Key responsibilities for which the document controllers will be held accountable are,

- They need to understand that they have to support the project team in various ways, namely, to check and validate quality documents & drawings, to maintain records in the database, and to verify the metadata of each file.
- Will support the project team by ensuring accurate and up-to-date quality documents and drawings. Moreover, they will also maintain an organized database of records for easy access and retrieval. Additionally, they must verify the metadata of each file to ensure accurate information and effective document control.
- Will be accountable for managing all technical documents in relation to quality, revision status, timely receipt, and distribution. Therefore, they will ensure that technical documents adhere to established quality standards and requirements, verifying accuracy, completeness, and compliance.
- Will also keep track of document revisions, maintaining a clear record of the latest version and any changes. This helps ensure that stakeholders have access to the most up-to-date information.
- Must ensure that technical documents are received in a timely manner, coordinating with relevant parties to prevent delays and ensure efficient document flow throughout the project lifecycle.
- Will be required to manage the distribution of technical documents, ensuring that they reach the appropriate recipients and stakeholders according to predefined distribution lists or project requirements.

Finally, the document controllers will be accountable for creating and utilizing the database for document control, to track documents, monitoring approval loops and maintaining revision data.

Utilizing the document control system's database to track documents, you will ensure their accuracy and efficiency in their management. You will also monitor approval loops to facilitate timely document approvals and maintain smooth workflow.

Additionally, you will play a crucial role in maintaining proper records of document revisions, enabling proper version control, and ensuring stakeholders have access to the latest and most relevant information.

By effectively managing these aspects, doc. controllers will be promoting the integrity, accessibility, and efficient handling of technical documents, supporting the project team in their decision-making processes and overall project success.

D. Skill Sets Required for Document Controller

1. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
2. Proficiency in Adobe Acrobat and MS Office Applications, viz., Word, Excel & Outlook
3. Ability to organize documentation
4. Conversant with document management software (DMS)
5. Ability to work cross functionally internally and externally

Five critical skill sets that a Document Controller is expected to possess and display

- I. **Excellent communication** and interpersonal skills: A document controller must be able to communicate effectively with team members. An excellent document controller is conversational, knowledgeable and enjoyable to speak with.
- II. **Proficiency in Adobe Acrobat and MS Office Applications** like word, excel and outlook: To excel as a Document Controller, proficiency in these computer tools and applications is essential. This skill set enables efficient creation, editing, and formatting of documents, effective data management, and seamless communication with project stakeholders. Proficiency in these tools enhances productivity and ensures the smooth execution of document control responsibilities.
- III. **Ability to develop file management system to organize documentation:** This ability includes structuring and categorizing documents in a logical manner, implementing proper naming conventions, and establishing a systematic filing system. Strong organizational skills ensure easy retrieval, streamlined workflows, and efficient document management processes.
- IV. **Conversant with Document Management Software**, i.e., DMS software: Being a Document Controller, you must be proficient and knowledgeable in document management software. This entails having a thorough understanding of DMS functionalities, such as document storage, version control, access permissions management, metadata management, and search capabilities. Being conversant with DMS enables efficient management, organization, and retrieval of project documents, ensuring smooth document control processes and effective collaboration among all project stakeholders.
- V. **Ability to work across functions and levels** both within the organization as well as among the stakeholders, such as clients, other contractors, consultants, etc.: This is a crucial skill required for a project document controller. These covers collaborating with different departments, teams, and external stakeholders to gather, review, and distribute project documents effectively. Strong interpersonal and communication skills are essential

for building relationships, resolving conflicts, and ensuring seamless information exchange. Being adaptable and flexible in working with diverse groups enhances coordination and contributes to successful project documentation management.

In summary, a good understanding of the skill sets required and taking the effort to acquire them will set a doc. Controller apart from rest of the bunch and help grow in stature and in career.

E. DOCUMENT CONTROLLER'S SCOPE OF WORK (1)

- Originate documents based on standard formats / templates
- Identify and number the documents as per numbering scheme
- Organize and store all technical and commercial documents
- Use Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) (if needed)
- Digitization of documents in physical form
- Maintenance of mandatory documents required by regulatory authorities

The scope of work of a document controller encompasses various responsibilities related to control and management of documents related to the project. The following are the six primary tasks that fall within the scope of the document controller.

First, create documents based on standard formats and templates

This covers the creation of new documents utilizing standard formats or templates as laid down in the document control procedure, if there is one established. This ensures consistency in document structure and layout and a professional appearance. By adhering to established formats, they contribute to streamlined document creation process and maintain uniformity across the project documentation.

Next, Identify and number the documents as per the approved numbering scheme

Document Controller is accountable for assigning unique identification numbers to documents based on a designated numbering scheme. This enables systematic organization and categorization of documents, facilitating easy tracking, retrieval, and reference.

Organizing and storing all technical and commercial documents is one of the several items within the work scope of the document controller.

This involves establishing a structured filing system, categorizing documents based on type or subject matter, and creating logical folder structures. Proper organization ensures easy

accessibility, minimizes duplication, and facilitates efficient document retrieval and control processes.

The next important part of document controller's work scope is to Use Electronic Document Management System, i.e., EDMS, wherever possible.

This involves effectively leveraging the features and capabilities of an EDMS to manage, control, and secure electronic documents.

Another important point in the scope of work is Digitization of documents that are in physical form.

This involves converting paper-based documents into electronic formats through scanning or other digital conversion methods. Digitization facilitates easier storage, retrieval, and sharing of documents, reduces physical storage requirements, enhances document accessibility, and improves overall document management efficiency and sustainability. It enables the document controller to create a digital repository of documents, ensuring their long-term preservation and facilitating seamless information access for project stakeholders.

Finally, Maintenance of mandatory documents required by regulatory authorities

This part of work includes ensuring that all necessary documents are prepared, updated, and retained in compliance with relevant regulations and industry standards. The document controller must stay abreast of the regulatory requirements, establish effective document control processes, and facilitate timely submission of required documents to regulatory bodies. By fulfilling this duty, the document controller helps ensure regulatory compliance, mitigate risks, and maintain the project's integrity and legal obligations.

E. DOCUMENT CONTROLLER'S SCOPE OF WORK (2)

- Distributing documents to the relevant people within organization as well as client / consultant / sub-contractor
- Prepare Document Control Procedure and obtain approval
- Training team members the flow of documentation as per DCP
- Ensure the correct procedures and document flow process is followed
- Responsible for control, security, accessibility, and timeliness of all relevant documents

Another important task that falls within the scope of document controller is **Distributing documents to the relevant people within the organization as well as client, consultants, sub-contractor, etc.**, This means ensuring that the right people such as project team members, project sponsors, and other stakeholders have access to the right information at the right time regarding the project status because decisions on projects requires a great deal of planning and timeliness.

Next, essential work in the Document controller's scope is **Preparing Document Control Procedure and obtaining approval.** This work involves creating a comprehensive procedure outlining the document control process that outlines document creation, revision, distribution, and archival steps. The document controller ensures alignment with project requirements, seeks approval from relevant stakeholders, and establishes a standardized framework for effective document management throughout the project lifecycle. This document control procedure serves as a reference for all project team members, ensuring consistency, compliance, and streamlined document control practices.

Also included in the scope of document controller is **Training the team members, on the flow of documentation as per Document Control Procedure**, which means Educating team members on the Document Control Procedure to ensure adherence to standardized documentation processes.

Providing training on document creation, revision, approval, distribution, and archiving steps to promote consistency and accuracy. Furthermore, offering ongoing support and guidance to ensure effective document management throughout the project, maintaining compliance and facilitating efficient collaboration are other responsibilities of the document controller.

The next point, the document controller is **Responsible for control, security, accessibility, and timeliness of all relevant documents** which amounts to establishing and maintaining control measures to safeguard the confidentiality and integrity of relevant documents, ensuring proper accessibility to authorized individuals while maintaining strict security measures for sensitive information, Monitoring document timeliness, tracking deadlines, and facilitating timely document submissions.

Additionally, the document controller is expected **to ensure that the established document control procedures and document flow processes are followed.**

This target can be achieved by,

- a) Implementing and maintaining document control systems and procedures
- b) Monitoring and enforcing compliance with document control policies and guidelines
- c) Facilitating document reviews, approvals, and revisions according to established protocols
- d) Ensuring proper document distribution, storage, and retrieval for effective information management

F. TIME MANAGEMENT IN DOCUMENT CONTROL

1. Generally, monitor circulation of documents and time durations
2. Flag delays in milestones to avoid negative impact on project delivery
3. Handle all forms of correspondence via different media
4. Maintain document transmittal records
5. Generally, track flow of documentation

Another important topic to discuss in document control is Time Management which is addressed in this module.

Even though we have touched upon this point under various other topics before, considering its importance and impact on document control measures, it would be good to discuss this in sufficient detail separately.

On an individual level, Time management can be defined as the process of planning and exercising Conscious control over time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity. Good time management enables you to get more done in less time, particularly when time is short and deadline pressures are high.

While you should manage the time available to you smartly to optimize your individual output, keep in mind that our focus here is primarily time management with particular reference to project work related documentation.

In previous modules, we have seen the general flow of documentation in Project work, and you would recall that the entire documentation flows through different stages, namely, creation, submittal for approval by the appropriate authority, final use, and disposal. Each of these stages has to be completed within certain deadlines so that the overall project work stays on schedule.

Based on our experience and the results we have witnessed in the field; we believe better control over time management with reference to documentation can be achieved by following the **five important techniques** which are presented here.

First, in the list is monitoring the circulation of documents and tracking their time duration to ensure timely completion of tasks and milestones.

Second, flagging any delays in milestones promptly mitigates potential negative impacts on project delivery schedules.

Third, Efficient Handling of all forms of correspondence, including emails, letters, and other media, to maintain effective communication and timely response.

Fourth, maintaining document transmittal records to track the movement and distribution of important project documents.

Finally, closely tracking the flow of documentation throughout the project to ensure it follows proper channels and processes, promoting efficient document management and timely decision-making.

We would like to add some additional points here. That is, most projects have a **Baseline Plan, or an Execution Plan** submitted by the concerned Contractor to monitor their progress in a timely manner.

Using these Baseline Plan and Execution Plans as a guideline for the allowable time limits, you as a document controller can monitor the numerous document submittal logs which require daily updates, such as the Material Inspection requests, Shop Drawing Approval requests, and so on.

By aligning these submittals with the Baseline Plan or Execution Plan, you can ensure that the project progress is accurately tracked, and information is updated regularly. This enables effective time management and facilitates the timely completion of the project.

(END OF LESSON-5)