

Australian Ramp & Access Solutions Pty Limited

Appreciation of the Task

At Australian Ramp & Access Solutions Pty Ltd, as professionals, we recognise the value of documenting our technical activities. The following are six key benefits AR&AS has identified to help professionals understand the importance of documentation in a complete quality process:

1. Accountability:

If a process required documentation, it is much more likely to occur. Many quality processes require documentation in some form to trigger the next phase. The completed documentation becomes the key to opening the door to the next step.

For example, a contract might not be signed until a documented review of the contract terms has been completed.

2. Completeness:

If standard forms and checklists are incorporated into a quality process, those tools become roadmaps to ensure the entire process is followed. Good documentation should tie directly to the process being completed.

An example; A reviewer might feel tempted to bypass the defined quality control review process to speed submission of a deliverable. But if documentation of the completed review is required, the reviewer will have to perform all duties needed to generate that documentation.

3. Consistency:

Individuals might attempt to complete a given task in many ways. This might be acceptable in some situations, but in many cases a consistent approach creates organisational efficiency. If the form of documentation generated is standardised, the process used to create the documentation also are a standard.

This ensures reviews are conducted in a more consistent manner companywide. The corporate headquarters is then able to combine and analyse data more easily.

4. Timeliness:

The knowledge that a form or document must be signed and dated according to a specified schedule encourages compliance with that schedule. When deadlines are important, documentation is important.

For example, if offices are required to submit financial results to corporate headquarters by the end of each month, they will take the steps necessary at the local level to collect & document that information in a timely manner.

5. Communication

Documentation improves communication flow amongst team members. E-mail and the internet have increased the speed and flexibility of project activities, thus increasing the need for documentation.

An example; Individuals who did not participate in a team meeting because of business travel can quickly review meeting results if through minutes were documented and made available in an electronic form.

6. Record:

A documented record of decisions made or actions taken can span gaps, provide the necessary information years later and protect a team and its leaders.

For example; A contractor's claim of design error might spark an investigation into the design process. If good records were kept of the meetings and decisions, those records would be invaluable in responding to any subsequent enquiries.

The documentation benefits listed can be cited as the value of paperwork. Completing the task itself is important, but if documentation is required and not yet completed, the task is not done. The doing and the documenting are complementary and necessary parts of most useful quality processes.