

A S F E

PEER REVIEW

Reviewer's Guide

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FEBRUARY 2008

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Lauded by *Engineering News-Record* as one of the construction industry’s most innovative developments of the past 125 years, ASFE’s **Peer Review** gives Member Firms a genuinely unique opportunity to improve their business practices, internal and external communications, and overall risk management.

Peer Reviews are conducted to:

- evaluate the adequacy of a firm’s policies and procedures;
- assess the effectiveness with which a firm implements its policies and procedures;
- evaluate staff’s understanding of a firm’s goals and objectives, policies and procedures; and
- provide suggestions for strengthening a firm’s practice to enhance the quality of its services.

Most firms will benefit by inaugurating their **Peer Review** involvement with a Comprehensive Review; i.e., a **Peer Review** that considers all eight Core Management Components (CMCs). A Comprehensive Review often is appropriate for the firm’s second Review as well, to measure the impact of change. Depending on circumstances, firms that have been Reviewed two or three times might want to create a Review scope that emphasizes selected CMCs. In other cases, another Comprehensive Review may be more appropriate, as when a firm has experienced significant staff expansion, geographic diversification, or changes in service.

Peer Review User’s Guide is the title of a general guide that the Peer Review Committee prepared for ASFE Member Firms. Firms that wish to take advantage of **Peer Review** use the *Peer Review User’s Guide* as a reference. Almost all of the issues covered in *Peer Review User’s Guide* are covered in this guide as well. Members often have questions about the appendixes to the *Peer Review User’s Guide* and, for that reason, they are included in this guide in the same order; i.e., Appendixes A through H of this guide are essentially identical to Appendixes A through H of *Peer Review User’s Guide*.

To help make it user-friendly and nonintimidating, **Peer Review** has been designed as a “come-as-you-are” activity. Reviewers are engaged to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures, not to “bless” a firm because it has all its paperwork in place. If a firm has not prepared one document or another, so be it: Reviewers merely need a memo explaining the policy or procedure involved.

Using interviews and other means, Reviewers will determine how well *all* targeted policies and procedures are understood and followed, and the extent to which change may be worthwhile.

Reviewers’ Responsibilities: A Review Team consists of the Team Captain and, typically, from one to three Team Members, depending on the size of the Reviewed firm’s staff and the number of its offices. This guide presents procedures the Team should follow. Appendix I defines the terms used.

A Peer Review begins when a Team Captain agrees to serve and then collaborates with the applicant firm’s CEO to:

- identify written material for the Team’s advance Review,
- gather and evaluate completed staff and client questionnaires,
- establish a Review scope,
- set the Review schedule and identify logistical support needs, and
- select Team Members.

Appendix J comprises a checklist of Team Captain responsibilities.

Team Members review advance materials before departing for the on-site Review. On site, they interview staff, review files and other relevant materials, and participate in the exit conference. Immediately after the on-site Review, Team Members help prepare the written report that the Reviewed firm’s CEO usually requests.

ASFE vests overall responsibility for *Peer Review* and its continued development in the Peer Review Committee. Among other activities it pursues, the Committee establishes Reviewer qualifications, develops and conducts Reviewer training sessions, and sets guidelines for *Peer Review* promotion.

A member of ASFE staff serves as the *Peer Review* Administrator. Reporting to the Committee, the Administrator maintains records, prepares periodic reports, and helps firms start the process (see Appendix K).

Reviewer Training and Evaluation: The value of *Peer Review* is determined principally by the effectiveness of Reviewers. For that reason, participating firms' CEOs and Team Captains evaluate the performance of Team Members, using questionnaires (Appendixes H and L) issued by the Administrator within 30 days of an on-site Review. Completed questionnaires are returned to ASFE and placed into the respective Reviewers' files, each of which also contains a *Peer Reviewer Background and Experience* form (Appendix M) maintained by the Administrator.

The Committee determines whether or not a Team Member is qualified to serve as a Team Captain. In doing so, it considers an individual's experience and evaluations. Reviewers usually become Team Captains after completing several Reviews for which they've received superior evaluations from the Team Captains and the CEOs of the participating firms.

All Reviewers—Captains and Members alike—are required to attend a Peer Reviewer Training Session at least once every three years, except that Captains are permitted to use a *Peer Review Captain Home Training Session*. The *Session*, which comprises a 40-minute, voice-over PowerPoint presentation on a CD ROM, is identical to the one ASFE uses at Captain training sessions presented "live" at national meetings. The session is designed to refresh Captains' memories and update them on changes that may have been made since their last Review. The presentation discusses the *Peer Review* process in general (scoping with the CEO, scheduling, honorariums, etc.), modifications to existing documents, new documents, the questionnaires, Team size, and more.

Ethics, Confidentiality, and Noncompete Considerations: Peer Reviewers—meaning the Team Captain and all Team Members—should come from firms that operate outside a participating firm's geographic marketing area (GMA) to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Any information learned or developed by a Peer Reviewer is confidential. *It may not be shared with anyone* except other Reviewers on the Team, solely for Review purposes. Trust is the foundation on which Peer Review is based. Reviewers are individually duty-bound to keep confidential information absolutely confidential.

Peer Reviewers shall not disclose to any third party or use for personal or business advantage any information gained from or personal opinions formed about the Reviewed firm, including its employees, instruments of professional service, and clientele. For example, after a *Peer Review*, no Peer Reviewers and none of their firms should initiate recruitment of the participating firm's employees or marketing of the participating firm's clients in the participating firm's GMA. A written agreement requiring adherence to these conditions, such as the sample shown in Appendix G, can be executed by each Reviewer if the participating firm's CEO so prefers. Any Reviewer who is unable to commit to these requirements, whether or not in writing, must decline *Peer Review* participation.

Honorarium and Expenses: Each Team Member receives an honorarium for each day spent on-site, plus an additional one-day honorarium that considers travel to and from the site, as well as various pre- and post-Review activities. The Team Captain receives an honorarium for each day spent on site, plus an additional three-day honorarium that considers travel and the time and talent required to plan and manage the Review, and complete the written report that usually is required. The suggested honorarium is \$1,200/day for Team Members with previous *Peer Review* experience, and \$800/day honorarium for first-time Reviewers. Peer Reviewers are at liberty to charge a different fee.

The Reviewed firm is responsible for Reviewers' reasonable travel, hotel, and meal expenses. To avoid the carrying costs of these expenses, Reviewers may submit invoices as the expenses are incurred or may request payment of a retainer prior to the site visit.

Each Reviewer is responsible for submitting an invoice to the participating firm, preferably by no later than two weeks after completing the on-site Review. Appendix N illustrates a sample invoice form.

Each *Peer Review* should follow a consistent process that begins when the Administrator receives an application and responds quickly to the applicant firm's CEO with a list of qualified Team Captains. The CEO and the *Peer Review* Team Captain whom the CEO selects then confer about the issuance and collection of staff and client questionnaires. The Team Captain collects the questionnaires and prepares a summary of responses. The summary helps the Captain and CEO set the Review's scope and schedule.

Once they confirm the scope and schedule in writing, the Team Captain and CEO select Team

Members. Each Member is sent advance Review materials two to three weeks before the on-site Review.

The on-site Review, or "visitation," typically takes from one to three days, depending on the size of the firm and the number of offices to be visited (Appendix O). On-site Review concludes with an exit conference, and usually is followed by a written report, unless the participating firm's CEO requests otherwise. Team Members help the Team Captain prepare the report, which the Captain issues within 30 days of on-site Review.

Each of the steps of *Peer Review* is described more specifically below.

Team Captain Selection: The applicant firm's CEO starts the process by selecting a Team Captain from the list maintained by ASFE and posted on its website. CEOs are advised to select carefully. Even if they already know several Team Captains, they should speak with the CEOs of Reviewed firms to acquire comments and suggestions about qualified candidates. They should interview at least three candidates, evaluating the availability, interest, personality, business-management background, and relevant experience of each. They should also discuss honorarium issues.

Scoping Process: Among other concerns addressed during their initial conversation, the Team Captain and CEO need to schedule the mutual scope-development session and determine to whom staff and client questionnaires (Appendixes D and E) should be sent. (If the paper copy questionnaire is used, instructions on the questionnaire should direct the respondent to send the completed questionnaire to the Team Captain at the Team Captain's home address, without reference to the Captain's firm.)

The Peer Reviewed firm may elect to conduct its staff and/or client surveys using hard-copy questionnaires or by using password-protected, secure, online questionnaires (see Appendix D). In either case, the firm may choose to add its own questions to the standard Peer Review questions.

Staff questionnaires should be completed by at least one-and-one-half to two times the number of staff members who are expected to be interviewed during the on-site Review. Some CEOs may prefer that all staff complete questionnaires so none feels left out. In either case, the Team Captain needs to tell the CEO to inform staff about the upcoming Peer Review and (if appropriate) to advise that not all who receive questionnaires will be interviewed. (The Team Captain should give the CEO a copy of the sample memorandum shown in Appendix P.) The CEO should determine the number of client questionnaires to issue based on the breadth of the firm's client base, and assuming a 50%-60% return rate. Issuing at least 20 is suggested. Issuing 40 to 50 would be considered a reasonable maximum in most cases.

The date set for the scoping session should allow sufficient time for the circulation, collection, tabulation, analysis, and review of responses to both questionnaires. The insights gained from responses could suggest Core Management Components (CMCs) that need special emphasis and, accordingly, the expertise needed on the Review Team.

The CEO and Team Captain need to determine if the scoping session can be conducted by phone, or if a face-to-face get-together is better. If the latter is required, the CEO and Team

Captain need to discuss financial issues. Team Captains who travel to a CEO's office for a scoping session would be justified to request an additional honorarium, plus expenses. Something else could be arranged if the CEO travels to the Team Captain's office, or if they meet somewhere in between.

A unique, tightly focused scope can be particularly beneficial for firms that have been through several *Peer Reviews*. By contrast, well-established firms that have not previously been Reviewed are usually best-served by a Comprehensive *Peer Review* the first and second times. The first Review should yield insightful opinions about the completeness of a firm's policies and procedures, the effectiveness with which management communicates them, and the diligence with which staff implements them. The second Review, usually conducted about four years later, should help determine the efficacy of any changes made.

Comprehensive *Peer Review* comprises an assessment of all eight Core Management Components (CMCs) described in Appendix F:

- Business Management,
- Facilities and Technical Resources,
- Human Resources Management,
- Professional Development,
- Project Management,

- Financial Management,
- Marketing Practices, and
- Electronic Resources Management.

Focused Peer Review.

Although not as broad in scope as a *Peer Review*, some firms have found “Peer Review Lite” to be a valuable way to focus on a single issue that their peers in ASFE have already encountered. This approach can be used by firms that are relatively small and still getting established in their marketplace or by firms of any size that desire input about just one primary area of business. The approach generally requires less preparation than a Comprehensive *Peer Review*. Contact ASFE for more details.

On-Site Review Logistics:

During the scoping session, the CEO and Team Captain should discuss:

- the schedule of on-site Review activities,
- the Team’s on-site office and logistical support needs,
- hotel reservations, and
- interoffice travel requirements (for a multiple-office Review).

Staff interviews can have the most impact on normal office operations, so advanced interview scheduling can be particularly helpful. The Team Captain and CEO should start the interview scheduling process by determining how many people should be interviewed. Interviewees should represent all staff levels, so

the Team can obtain a full view of the staff’s perception of the firm. Most interviews should be scheduled to comprise about 30 minutes. As many as 45 minutes may be needed to interview senior members of staff. A Peer Reviewer should be able to interview five or six staff members each day while also attending to other activities.

Engagement Letter: The Team Captain should prepare an engagement letter to memorialize the scope and schedule agreed to at the scoping session. The sample shown in Appendix Q indicates:

- CMCs to be reviewed,
- CMCs to be emphasized,
- specific operational problems to be considered,
- written materials to be provided in advance (new materials should not be prepared, given that *Peer Review’s* purpose is to gauge the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures),
- the offices to be reviewed,
- number of additional Reviewers needed and their qualifications,
- the date(s) of the Review,
- schedule for completion of the written report,
- estimated budget, and
- logistical requirements (e.g., office facilities, support personnel, accommodations, and interoffice travel) and the party responsible for fulfilling them.

The CEO should confirm in writing receipt of the Team Captain’s engagement letter. When the Peer Reviewed firm is insured by Terra Insurance Company, the firm’s CEO must send a copy of the engagement letter to Terra. (Other insurance companies may have their own procedures that must be followed.)

Team Member Selection: Team Members usually are selected after the scoping process is complete. The Team Captain should include a list of prospective Team Members with the engagement letter sent to the CEO (Appendix Q). Team Captains are required to include the name of at least one Peer Reviewer with teams of three or more members. Team Captains are also responsible for mentoring and reviewing the first-time Peer Reviewer’s work. The Captain and CEO should review the list independently and delete the name(s) of anyone who should not be assigned. The CEO and Captain can then confer by telephone to assemble the rest of the Team, including two or more alternates in case some of the primary candidates cannot participate.

The Team Captain is responsible for confirming each Team Member, and for sending to each, and to the Administrator, an engagement letter confirming the scope of the Review, composition of the Review Team, date(s) of the Review, and a schedule of milestone dates for pre-Review, on-site, review, and post-Review activities.

Review Materials: Peer Review preparation should not be burdensome, because *Peer Review* is a “come-as-you-are” activity. Written materials that should be provided, when available, are listed in Appendix F. If the firm has not committed a given policy or procedure to writing, the Team Captain should encourage the CEO to prepare a brief memo describing the policy or procedure involved, so the Review team knows what it is. The purpose of *Peer Review* is to assess how effectively a firm is accomplishing its goals. The extent to which written and oral policies and procedures are understood and practiced will be evaluated through interviews.

Staff and Client

Questionnaires. The questionnaires can be administered via paper or through ASFE’s on-line *Peer Review* survey tool. Appendix D presents information the Peer Review Captain needs to administer the on-line survey tool.

On-Site Review: The sample two-day Review schedule shown in Appendix R is provided for general guidance *only*. The particular activities associated with any given Review, and staff’s availability for interviews, will have the most effect on schedule.

The on-site Review begins the night before Reviewers visit a firm's office, when they assemble to discuss their assigned responsibilities and the activities planned for the balance of their stay. At this time, the Reviewers should be given the Advance Staff Questionnaires completed by their respective interviewees. The meeting also creates social contact between the Reviewers, some of whom may not be well-acquainted with one another.

The Team begins its office visit by meeting with the CEO. Next, the CEO introduces the Team to key staff, leads a tour of the facilities, and confirms the schedule.

Most of the Team's time will be spent on interviews, reviewing pertinent files, and meeting periodically to discuss progress.

The input derived from CEO and staff interviews can be particularly instructive. The quality of that input is enhanced when the interviewees trust the Reviewers. Reviewers can help foster trust by:

- emphasizing that their purpose is to help the firm improve,
- stressing the confidentiality of the process,
- noting that they will not rely on a single opinion, and
- demonstrating that each individual's comments are being heard and understood.

Appendix S provides some interviewing tips; Appendix T lists sample interview questions. (Material provided in Appendix F can be helpful, too.) Reviewers should ask interviewees the same questions to maintain consistency of information. They should also take handwritten notes during each interview (with the concurrence of the interviewee) and prepare a summary immediately after they conclude interview.

Oral and Written Reports:

The importance of the oral and written reports cannot be overstated. Both must be communicated effectively. Key findings must be presented clearly, so the intent of the message is well-understood. (Appendix U provides suggestions for presenting findings about sensitive issues.) At least two critical issues need to be addressed:

1. Are the firm's quality control policies and procedures adequate for its size and the nature of its practice?
2. Is there an adequate level of completeness and consistency in the implementation of the firm's quality control policies and procedures?

The **Peer Review** Team should allow *at least* two hours to prepare for the exit conference and *at least* two hours to present its oral report. (In the case of larger firms, allowing three hours for the presentation may be wise.) *The exit conference may not be abbreviated because a Reviewer has to catch a plane.* The exit conference is too important to be compromised.

The Review Team usually provides its oral report to the CEO and CEO-selected members of the firm's top management. Some CEOs prefer to videotape the oral report, to share it with branch managers, among others. Whether or not the oral report is videotaped, the Review Team should ask to meet with the CEO privately, before the oral report, when sensitive issues are involved. (The Team Captain must consider this issue in planning.)

The Team Captain determines the format of the exit conference and decides who will report what. Those reporting must refrain from relating comments that can be attributed to a specific staff member.

The oral report should encourage dialogue. If it can be arranged, a dinner following the oral report provides an excellent opportunity for continued discussion under more relaxed conditions.

The Team Captain needs to inform the CEO that a written report, which is optional, is subject to civil-procedure discovery proceedings. Nonetheless, a written report is almost always requested. It permits the Review Team to coalesce and communicate its observations and recommendations far more effectively.

Review-related documents and work papers in the possession of Peer Reviewers after the on-site Review, and any electronic or other memory media containing them, *must* be either returned to the participating firm's CEO or destroyed.

Team Members who review the written report *must* issue comments directly to the Team Captain, and *must* destroy any copies of the draft or their comments, as well as any electronic or other memory media containing them.

The Team Captain issues the written report and keeps one — and only one — copy to facilitate discussions with the participating firm's CEO. The Team Captain *must* destroy that copy, as well as any electronic or other memory media containing the report, 30 days after the report is submitted.

Final evaluations: The Team Captain should request that the CEO of the Reviewed firm, upon receipt of the final report, complete the "CEO Critique of Review Team" form (Appendix H) and mail it to ASFE headquarters.

The Team Captain should complete the "Team Captain's Assessment of **Peer Review** Team Members" form (Appendix L) and mail it to ASFE headquarters.

ASFE Equivalency *Peer Review* is a validation Review that ASFE developed for large, multi-office firms that rely on internal *Peer Review*-type procedures. Although internal programs produce many benefits, they commonly lack some of the strengths inherent in an ASFE *Peer Review*, particularly when:

- the corporate office is not reviewed, and
- reviewers do not address corporate/branch communication issues.

Equivalency *Peer Review* can strengthen an internal program by:

- considering the corporate office's conformance with firm policies and procedures,
- evaluating corporate/branch communication,
- providing a broader perspective on practice issues, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of internal reviews of branch offices by monitoring several.

A Team Captain and CEO develop an Equivalency *Peer Review* scope much as they would develop a conventional *Peer Review* scope. Scheduling can be more complex, however, because Review Team participation in branch office reviews may occur over several weeks or months. In those cases, the Team Captain or a Team Member may return to the corporate office to provide an oral report after the final branch office visit.

The frequency of Equivalency *Peer Review* depends upon factors such as the results of previous evaluations, changes in firm leadership, or acquisition and merger activity. Equivalency *Peer Reviews* usually are performed about once every five years.

OTHER REVIEW, REGISTRATION, AND CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Peer Review

ASFE helped ACEC replicate the ASFE *Peer Review* Program, which, today, differs from ACEC's in a number of ways. For example:

- ACEC peer review team selection is handled principally by administrative staff, following a structured routine. Through ASFE's *Peer Review*, the Reviewed firm's CEO selects the Team Captain; the CEO and Team Captain together select the rest of the Team.
- ACEC reviewers examine financial information. ASFE's do not.
- ACEC reviewers identify issues and concerns. ASFE Reviewers report findings and conclusions, and provide recommendations.
- ACEC reviewers do not prepare a written report. ASFE Reviewers almost always do. Experience shows that the written report is an excellent communication tool for capturing the results of the *Peer Review*, including suggestions and recommendations.
- The fees paid for an ACEC peer review go principally to ACEC, to cover its administrative costs. Most ASFE fees go to the *Peer Review* Team.

ACEC's program is the same one used for members of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), American Institute of Architects (AIA), and the Association of Consulting Engineers of Canada.

Details: www.acec.org/education/peerreview.cfm

American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) Programs

A2LA programs have been developed as review mechanisms for A2LA members to help them evaluate their laboratories for A2LA accreditation. The A2LA program considers:

- organization and management,
- quality system audit and review,
- personnel,
- accommodations and environment,
- equipment and reference materials,
- measurement, traceability, and calibration,
- test methods,
- handling of test items,
- records,
- certificates and reports,
- subcontracting,
- outside support and supplies, and
- complaints.

The methods used to consider these issues are similar to those used for an ASFE *Peer Review*, except A2LA is more technically focused.

Details: www.a2la.org

International Standards Organization (ISO) 9000 Registrations

The ISO 9000 series (ISO 9001 through 9004) focuses on defining, developing, and maintaining a quality loop from the time a client's service need is recognized through follow-up with the client and supplier after the service is delivered. ISO 9000 registration indicates that a firm follows consistent communications and documentation protocol through the complete cycle of services to a client, but it does not focus on the quality of service that's delivered. By contrast, *Peer Review* examines the overall issues associated with effective business operations, leading to findings, conclusions, and recommendations that can help a firm improve.

Details: www.iso.org

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Peer Review Program

Participation in the AICPA Peer Review Program, on which ASFE's is based, is a requirement for continuing AICPA membership. Any deficiencies noted in Peer Review Reports (which are available for other CPAs' review) must be corrected. However, an ASFE firm is free to accept or reject any of the recommendations made by the Reviewers recommendations.

Details: www.aicpa.org/center/prp/peer_review.htm

PEER REVIEW APPLICATION

Firm Name _____

Address _____

_____ ZIP _____

Name of **Peer Review** Coordinator (*Should Be CEO, Senior Principal, or Branch Manager*)

e-Mail Address _____

Telephone Number _____ Ext. _____

Facsimile Number _____ Website _____

- I need a copy of the **Peer Review User's Guide**.
- I need help understanding how **Peer Review** works.
- I need help selecting a Team Captain.

I have scheduled the **Peer Review** for: _____

My Team Captain will be: _____

Signed for the Firm: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Complete and Return to:

ASFE
8811 Colesville Road
Suite G106
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Tel.: (301)565-2733
Fax: (301)589-2017
e-Mail: info@asfe.org

TEAM CAPTAIN SELECTION

Begin your interview of a Team Captain candidate by discussing your firm's geographical marketing areas (GMAs) to ensure that your GMAs are remote enough from the candidate's to prevent conflicts of interest. Next, provide a thumbnail sketch of your firm (including its size, age, number of offices, and range of technical services), describe your general expectations of **Peer Review**, and indicate when you would like the Review performed.

Assuming no conflict of interest exists and the candidate is available, gain background information about the candidate by asking questions. Some samples:

1. Tell me about your career.
2. Tell me about your firm (*age, disciplines, size, branch offices, etc.*).
3. What is your role in the firm, especially as it relates to the eight Core Management Components?
(*Responses usually will suggest other questions that will yield more information about the candidate's experience in those areas that concern you the most.*)
4. How many Review Teams have you served on? How many as Captain?
5. How many times has your firm been Reviewed?
6. What benefits has your firm derived from **Peer Review**?
7. How has participation as a Reviewer benefited you and your firm?
8. Describe the procedure you propose to follow in working with me to develop a Review scope that will address my expectations.
9. Please provide references to at least three CEOs of firms you have Reviewed.

At the end of the conversation, advise the candidate of your schedule for making a selection.

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

As you should know, your firm is undergoing an ASFE **Peer Review**. We need your help. Please complete this questionnaire and mail it directly to the Peer Reviewer identified below. Do not show or submit any completed copies of this questionnaire to any member of your firm. This questionnaire and any subsequent dialogue with the Reviewers will be held in strictest confidence. Please be completely candid in all your answers. If a question does not apply to you, please write N/A.

1. What are the firm's three major goals? *List the highest priority goal first.*

2. What are the firm's strengths? *Please describe fully.*

3. What makes the firm unique compared to your competition?

4. What are the firm's weaknesses? *Please describe fully.*

5. What should the firm stop doing?

6. How could the firm increase its profitability?

7. What are the headquarters office's major responsibilities to the branch offices?

8. What are the branch offices' major responsibilities to the headquarters office?

9. How could the firm improve the quality of its services?

10. What do you see as the firm's major opportunities?

11. What do you see as the major threats to the firm?

12. How would you rate your firm's loss prevention record? Why does it have that record?

13. Who are the emerging leaders in the firm?

14. How does the firm nurture its emerging leaders?

15. Using the following form, rate your firm's business practices according to this scale:

- 3 – outstanding in all respects
- 2 – generally adequate for the majority of our needs
- 1 – lacking in form, structure, or execution
- 0 – virtually nonexistent

Element	3	2	1	0
Business Management				
Clear understanding of firm's mission and goals.				
Clearly defined and understood policies and procedures.				
Trained and responsive staff.				
Timely and useful information provided.				
Facilities and Technical Resources				
Well-defined lines of authority for selection, acquisition, and maintenance of facilities and other resources.				
Up-to-date equipment and facilities to meet clients' needs.				
Human Resources Management and Professional Development				
Even-handed and fair treatment of staff at all levels.				
Clearly stated and understood policies in all areas of employer-employee relations.				
Clear understanding of opportunities available to staff for training and advancement.				
Regular and adequate performance reviews.				
Project Management				
Clearly understood policies and procedures for client selection and contract formation.				
Effective record-keeping and file maintenance for project files.				
Effective means of selecting and assigning appropriate staff to each project.				
Quality control and quality assurance procedures in place and regularly practiced.				
Effective financial reporting procedures for tracking project progress, expenditures, and rate of completion.				
Financial Management				
Well-established and clearly understood chart of accounts.				
Corporate financial data made available at regular intervals.				
Billing and collection procedures in place and effectively used.				

Element	3	2	1	0
Marketing Practices Hard copy promotional materials accurately reflect the firm's image and represent firm's experience and capabilities.				
Website accurately reflects the firm's image, is updated often, and consistently and accurately represents the firm's experience and capabilities.				
Practices in place and followed to maintain and build on client relationships.				
Effective support in the evaluation of and response to requests for statements of qualifications and proposals.				
Electronic Resources Management Strategic plan for the firmwide information system infrastructure to meet client needs and expectations on a timely basis.				
Policies for the acquisition, maintenance, and use (both business and personal) of hardware, software, e-mail, and Internet.				
Policies for maintenance of electronic data files, system security, and back-up procedures.				

Submitted by:

Name _____

Title _____

Office _____

Department _____

Please send your response directly to:

Name _____

Address _____

_____ ZIP _____

Tel. _____

Fax _____

e-Mail _____

Double-click the Icon Below to view the instructions for On-Line Client and Staff Questionnaires



CLIENT QUESTIONNAIRE COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire Cover Letter

[Firm letterhead]

[Month, Date, Year]

[Individual's Name]

[Name of Client Organization]

[Client Organization Address]

Dear [Title] [Name]:

[Firm Name] is undergoing an ASFE *Peer Review* to improve our client service, and we need your feedback. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to the *Peer Review* Team Captain in the addressed, stamped envelope by [date].

[Peer Review Team Captain's Name]

[Home Address]

Tel.: []

e-Mail: []

Please note that you have a choice: You can allow your responses to be shared with our firm or you can keep them confidential. Indicate your preference on the last page of the questionnaire. (If you want your responses kept confidential, only Peer Reviewers will see your information, and will use it solely to develop trend data, without indicating who said what.)

Thank you for your help. If you have any questions, please get in touch with me.

Sincerely,

[Firm Name]

[CEO's Name]

[CEO's Title]

cc: [Peer Review Team Captain's Name]

Enclosure

Client Questionnaire

1. Rate your most recent experience(s) with the services provided by the firm for the following items that are applicable (1 poor; 3 average or typical; 5 excellent):

	1	2	3	4	5
TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE					
Quality of Deliverables					
Adequacy of Recommendations					
Quality of Field/Engineering Support Services					
Credibility with Government Agency Personnel					
Quality of Oral Presentations in Meetings					
BUSINESS PRACTICES					
Management Efficiency and Effectiveness					
Availability of Staff					
Meeting Budget Commitments					
Effective Decision-Making					
Appropriate Follow-up					
Quality/Accuracy of Invoicing					
PROFESSIONALISM					
Meeting Scope Commitments					
Meeting or Exceeding Expectations					
Appropriate Conduct					
Rapport with Staff					
Ability To Work Effectively with Client/Client's Other Service Providers					
TIMELINESS					
Meeting Schedule Commitments					
Responsiveness to Changes					
COMMUNICATION					
Understanding Client's Needs					
Status Reporting					
Timeliness in Communicating Problems/Changes					
REPRESENTATION					
Presents Client's Positions in a Fully Objective, Supportable Manner					
OVERALL SATISFACTION					

2. How familiar are you with the firm? (If the firm has multiple offices, which office do you work with? _____)

_____ Very _____ Somewhat _____ Not at All

3. How many similar/competitive firms have you retained in the past two years?

4. Why did you choose the firm being Reviewed?

5. What strengths do you see in the firm? *(Please rank in importance)*

6. What weaknesses do you see in the firm? *(Please rank in importance)*

7. How could the firm improve its services to you?

8. Would you retain this firm again?

Yes Possibly No

9. Would you recommend this firm to your colleagues?

Yes Possibly No

10. How does this firm's service compare to others' on similar projects?

Worse About the Same Better Much Superior

11. Is there anything else Peer Reviewers should know about the firm?

12. Share my responses with the firm Keep my responses strictly confidential

Submitted by:

Name _____

Title _____

Company _____

Date _____

Mail to:

[**Peer Review** Team Captain's Name]

[**Peer Review** Team Captain's Home Address]

CORE MANAGEMENT COMPONENTS

The eight Core Management Components (CMCs) considered in a Comprehensive Peer Review are outlined below, each being amplified by a bulleted list of desirable, but not mandatory, documentation, plus questions to assist in evaluation. When Comprehensive Peer Review is conducted, the Reviewers' report to the CEO could be organized in the order shown below, to provide a more structured and uniform appraisal. Otherwise, the report format should be established ahead of time by the Team Captain and the CEO.

1. Business Management

- **Statement of the firm's mission, vision, goals, and objectives.**
 - **Description of the firm's ownership structure.**
 - **Organization chart identifying positions and the names of all professionals, technicians, and administrative personnel.**
 - **Job descriptions of key personnel.**
 - **Outline indicating the scope of the firm's services.**
 - **Policy and procedure for strategic planning and tactical implementation.**
- a. *Does the firm have a strategic plan that includes specific, measurable, and attainable goals?*
 - b. *Is the firm's strategic plan supported by a marketing plan?*
 - c. *Does the firm monitor attainment of the goals described in its strategic plan?*
 - d. *Are the plan's goals being met?*
 - e. *Is a statement of the goals available to employees and clients?*
 - f. *Does the organization structure define reporting relationships and assign responsibility to managers and other employees?*
 - g. *Do employees understand the organization structure?*
 - h. *Do employees understand the decision-making process and the levels at which various types of decisions can be made?*
 - i. *Has the CEO delegated authority to others so that the CEO is not overloaded and decisions are made in a timely manner?*
 - j. *Are communications between management personnel adequate and effective?*
 - k. *Does the firm's planning consider ownership transition?*
 - l. *Is the firm's long-range plan for leadership development and transition formulated and understood?*
 - m. *Are employees given written job descriptions?*

- n. *Does staff understand the job descriptions?*
- o. *Have position descriptions been prepared and appointments made for specialized positions such as Loss Prevention Coordinator, Health and Safety Officer, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, Human Resources Manager, and Information Technology Systems Manager?*
- p. *Does the firm have an office manual or similar document summarizing important company operating policies and procedures?*
- q. *Does the firm have any internal audit or quality assurance procedures to determine that policies and procedures are understood and implemented?*
- r. *What process does the firm have in place to promote continuous improvement in the quality of its services and to evaluate the level of client satisfaction being achieved?*
- s. *What measurable results has the firm recorded since implementing this process?*
- t. *How has the firm responded to the recommendations given in any past Peer Reviews?*
- u. *What percent of your practice involves services for owner-occupied residential projects (single-family or multiple-ownership; e.g., condominiums)?*
- v. *Other business management inquiries?*
- w. *What have you learned from your loss experiences?*
- x. *How do you determine that a claim is serious?*
- y. *Have potential future leaders of the firm been identified?*
- z. *Does the firm have a leadership skills development program?*

2. Facilities and Technical Resources

- **Standards for space and furniture allocation.**
 - **Inventory of major laboratory equipment, field instrumentation, safety equipment, computers, and other available facilities or resources.**
 - **Statement of procedures and description of facilities for handling and storing hazardous materials, contaminated samples, and specialized equipment used in geoenvironmental operations.**
- a. *Are employees' working conditions, physical facilities, and office environment satisfactory?*
 - b. *Does the firm's facility enhance its image?*
 - c. *Are in-house technical resources adequate; e.g., library, laboratory equipment, and personal computers?*
 - d. *Are the firm's resources generally current or out-of-date/obsolete?*

- e. *Do the firm's retrieval systems give professional staff ready access to the firm's past experience and project records?*
- f. *Have adequate provisions been made for employees' health and safety?*
- g. *Do employees receive protective equipment?*
- h. *Are there proper facilities for handling and storing hazardous materials?*
- i. *In your opinion, does the firm have an OSHA-compliant hazard communication plan and emergency preparedness plan?*
- j. *Have adequate provisions been made for the security of the firm's important files, documents, and reports, etc.?*
- k. *Other facilities and technical resources inquiries?*

3. Human Resources Management

- **Procedures for monitoring laws and regulations that affect the firm's practices.**
 - **Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action plans.**
 - **Substance abuse screening/testing policies.**
 - **Background check policies and procedures.**
 - **Description of recruitment procedures.**
 - **Personnel manuals and procedures.**
 - **Medical monitoring program.**
 - **Health and safety program.**
 - **Performance review procedures.**
 - **Employee advancement policies.**
 - **Resumes of professional and technical personnel.**
 - **Management information systems for personnel experience records.**
 - **Description of retention strategies.**
 - **Exit interview guidelines.**
- a. *Are personnel recruitment activities performed according to set standards and procedures?*
- b. *Are recent hires asked for suggestions on how to improve the recruiting and hiring process?*

- c. *Is the authority for employment of both entry-level and experienced staff clearly defined?*
- d. *Are new employees given adequate descriptions of their jobs and benefits?*
- e. *Do new employees receive a formal introduction to the firm's organizational structure, policies, and procedures, and management staff?*
- f. *If there is a personnel policy manual, are new employees asked to "sign off" on having read and understood it?*
- g. *If there is a personnel policies manual, do you believe it adequately reflects federal employment standards?*
- h. *Does the firm have adequate procedures for career path development, salary structure review, and benefit package development?*
- i. *Do administrative procedures document employee progress, training, registration, etc.?*
- j. *Do personnel records regularly document employee training, etc.?*
- k. *Does the firm have effective policies and procedures to assess individuals' strengths and weaknesses, periodically evaluate employee performance (using individual conferences to discuss progress toward past goals and set new goals), and advance personnel?*
- l. *Do personnel records reflect systematic implementation of evaluation policies and procedures?*
- m. *Is access to personnel files limited?*
- n. *Do employees understand and agree with the firm's policies for their evaluation and advancement?*
- o. *How effectively is information communicated to staff?*
- p. *Does the firm conduct scheduled staff meetings to keep staff informed of company activities?*
- q. *Describe staff morale.*
- r. *Is the human resources management function clearly defined in the organization?*
- s. *Is there a policy regarding moonlighting?*
- t. *Does the firm have written Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action plans?*
- u. *How well have any EEO or Affirmative Action plans been implemented?*
- v. *Does the firm have a substance abuse/testing policy?*
- w. *Does the firm's drug policy seem to satisfy federal, state, and client requirements?*
- x. *Are there procedures for responding to inquiries about former employees?*
- y. *Are single-person subcontracts reviewed for subcontractor/employee status?*
- z. *Other human resources management inquiries?*

4. Professional Development

- Professional development and continuing education policies.
 - Descriptions of employee training programs.
 - Seminar and professional organization attendance policies.
 - Registration/certification policies.
 - Policies and procedures for implementing ASFE and other loss prevention materials and programs.
- a. *Does the firm have appropriate policies and procedures for the continuing professional development of employees with budgetary support and controls?*
 - b. *Does the firm conduct in-house training programs and technical seminars? And if it does, do records reflect the topics covered and who took part?*
 - c. *How does the firm encourage participation in professional and technical societies and committees?*
 - d. *Is a conscientious effort made to assign professional and technical employees to projects of various types?*
 - e. *Do personnel records reflect the rotation of employees' assignments to expose them to various project types?*
 - f. *Are personnel familiar with ASFE materials, such as manuals, cassette tapes, CDs, CD ROMs, and case histories?*
 - g. *Have appropriate personnel participated in ASFE programs; e.g., BackYard Seminars, Project Manager Training Program, Fundamentals of Professional Practice, national meetings, etc.?*
 - h. *Is the office staffed with enough competent individuals to mentor persons with less experience, to help them reach their career goals?*
 - i. *Is there a formal process that permits sharing of project experience among the appropriate staff?*
 - j. *Are applicable employees encouraged to become registered or certified?*
 - k. *Is staff trained in health and safety and medically monitored as applicable?*
 - l. *Is the staff well-versed in the firm's business and professional ethical standards?*
 - m. *Other professional development inquiries?*

5. Project Management

- Standard contract(s).
 - Policy for including construction-phase services in the scope of service.
 - Procedures for assigning personnel to projects.
 - Communication policies and procedures.
 - Procedures for maintaining client confidentiality.
 - Communication recording systems; documentation policies.
 - Systems for storage and retrieval of the firm's current and prior records.
 - Record retention/purging policies.
 - Job cost recording procedures.
 - Guidelines for monitoring project progress and completion, including billing and financial tracking.
 - Procedures for identifying individuals who performed and/or reviewed specific work.
 - Warning systems to alert personnel to signs of trouble.
 - Overrun reviews and procedures.
 - Quality assurance/quality control procedures for review of technical correspondence and reports.
- a. *Are the duties, responsibilities, and authority of project managers clearly defined?*
- b. *Are project managers appropriately trained and managed?*
- c. *What policies and procedures are in place to see that all projects have written contracts?*
- d. *What percentage of the projects actually have written contracts?*
- e. *Are standard forms or templates for letter proposals and contracts used?*
- f. *Does the firm use checklists for reviewing contracts submitted to them?*
- g. *Are contracts signed by persons legally authorized to sign on behalf of the firm?*
- h. *Do employees know who is and who is not authorized to sign for the firm?*
- i. *Are standard provisions in the firm's contracts reasonable?*
- j. *Do any contract provisions inadvertently allocate liability to the firm?*

- k. *Are ASFE practices and/or language implemented in the formation of proposals and contracts?*
- l. *Are work plans prepared or reviewed by a senior person? Do work plans detail staff and resource requirements and estimate in-house costs?*
- m. *Do the files indicate that scope of service changes are documented and communicated to the client in writing?*
- n. *Does the firm require that key project staff be briefed on the overall scope?*
- o. *Do project managers receive timely reports of project costs in relation to budgets, the status of invoicing and accounts receivable, and other applicable information?*
- p. *Do project files indicate that clients are kept well-informed during project execution?*
- q. *Are clients' reports and other project information held in confidence?*
- r. *Are there satisfactory procedures for selecting personnel with adequate technical training and proficiency to perform the work required for a particular project?*
- s. *Do working papers in project files indicate the names or initials of persons performing the work so that an inquiry could determine their qualifications?*
- t. *Do project files indicate that calculations are checked and that other reviews are performed?*
- u. *Are records maintained to indicate the proficiency of technical and applicable professional personnel for performing various laboratory testing and field monitoring procedures?*
- v. *Is there continuity in the participation of personnel throughout the project?*
- w. *Is there adequate management review of employee workloads and schedules, as well as project schedules and deadlines?*
- x. *Are schedules regularly met?*
- y. *Is staff size adequate for the current workload?*
- z. *Are policies and procedures for supervision of employees, for checking of calculations and other work, and for review of oral presentations and reports adequate to provide quality services?*
- aa. *Are checklists used for self-reviewing of reports and drawings to help ensure that all applicable items are considered?*
- bb. *Are project reports well-organized and well-written?*
- cc. *Do reports separate fact from opinion and identify risks and limitations?*
- dd. *Has appropriate, ASFE-recommended language been used in reports?*
- ee. *Are construction or remediation cost estimates adequately qualified?*

- ff. How does the firm respond to requests to certify the adequacy of work?*
- gg. Does the firm use outside consultants?*
- hh. Does the staff know what consultative resources are available to them, both in-house and outside?*
- ii. Does the firm enter into written contracts with subcontractors?*
- jj. Does the firm require subcontractors to provide proof of insurance?*
- kk. Are project files well-organized?*
- ll. Do the files provide a reasonably complete and chronological record documenting project activity?*
- mm. Are there practical policies and procedures for closing projects, such as disposal of samples and reviewing, purging and storing files of completed projects.*
- nn. Have project close-out procedures been uniformly implemented?*
- oo. Does the firm commonly recommend or require as a condition of engagement that its participation on a project be continued through construction?*
- pp. How successful is the firm in securing the construction observation work?*
- qq. Does the firm have a consistent records retention policy?*
- rr. Do employees know what the records retention policy is and is it followed?*
- ss. Are there policies and procedures for field personnel relative to their responsibilities for testing, observing, and reporting?*
- tt. Do field personnel understand their responsibilities and authority limits?*
- uu. Are standard forms available for field personnel's use in gathering data and providing documentation during construction?*
- vv. Are field reports properly qualified as to the observer's inability to witness all conditions?*
- ww. Are site-specific health and safety plans prepared for work on contaminated or potentially contaminated sites?*
- xx. Does evidence indicate that employees receive health and safety briefings prior to undertaking work in the presence of hazardous or potentially hazardous materials?*
- yy. Does the firm track regulations governing reporting of hazardous materials?*
- zz. Do staff members involved know their responsibility to report the finding of hazardous materials?*
- aaa. Other project management inquiries?*

6. Financial Management

- Procedure for budget and business plan development.
 - Policy for regular preparation of financial statements.
 - Procedure for monitoring backlog of work.
 - Billing procedures.
 - Collection procedures.
 - Procedures for the timely distribution of a project's financial data.
 - Procedures for storage and retrieval of financial records.
- a. *Does the firm prepare an annual budget? Does it include capital, revenue, and overhead projections?*
- b. *Are financial statements prepared frequently enough so that performance can be monitored in relation to budgets?*
- c. *Are actual results compared to budget?*
- d. *Are invoices to clients prepared and issued in a timely manner?*
- e. *Are policies concerning collection of overdue accounts receivable reasonable?*
- f. *Are procedures for backing up and storing important financial records satisfactory?*
- g. *Other financial management inquiries?*

7. Marketing Practices

- Statement of qualifications.
- Quality assurance review procedures for marketing publications.
- Brochures and/or other marketing materials (including website, news releases, etc.)
- Guidelines for responding to requests for proposals.
- Procedures for screening potential clients and projects before accepting them.
- Identification of persons authorized to commit the firm contractually on projects.
- Marketing plan.

- a. *Does the firm have a marketing plan? If so:*
- *Is its depth consistent with the size and complexity of the firm?*
 - *Does it outline the firm's business development philosophy and approach to the marketplace?*
 - *Is it updated at an appropriate frequency?*
- b. *Has the responsibility for preparation and control of public relations documents been clearly assigned?*
- c. *Does the firm follow a reasonable procedure for securing clients' approval before release of marketing materials referring to their clients?*
- d. *Do brochures and other materials, including web pages, reasonably represent the firm's actual scope of services, qualifications, experience, and personnel?*
- e. *Does the marketing material include language that could create contractual liabilities or client misunderstandings?*
- f. *Are the resumes of professional and key technical personnel current?*
- g. *Do most or all employees have business cards?*
- h. *Are there satisfactory policies and procedures for screening new clients and projects?*
- i. *Is the authority for accepting new projects on behalf of the firm clearly stated and understood by employees?*
- j. *Do personnel in the firm write technical papers?*
- k. *Does the firm participate in awards programs?*
- l. *Is there adequate follow-up to proposals that were not successful?*
- m. *Is there an established policy or procedure for soliciting feedback from clients on a consistent basis after completion of projects?*
- n. *How is client feedback information documented and used by management?*
- o. *Does the firm regularly communicate with current and past clients through newsletters, press releases, e-mail, personal notes, social outings, etc.?*
- p. *Other marketing practices inquiries?*

8. Electronic Resources Management

- Policies for acquisition and maintenance of hardware and software.
 - Established monitoring procedures for software licensing compliance.
 - Organizational definition of responsibility and authority for planning, implementing, and maintaining the firmwide information systems infrastructure.
 - Written policies for maintenance of electronic data files, backup procedure, system security and staff use, and management surveillance of facilities for appropriate use for company business.
 - Guidelines for business and personal uses of company e-mail, Instant Messaging, and Internet.
 - Software inventory.
- a. *Has the firm established appropriate policies and procedures for the continuing development of electronic data systems with budgetary support and controls?*
- b. *Does the firm have policies and implemented procedures to monitor software monitoring procedures for compliance with licensing agreements?*
- c. *What policies and procedures are used to ensure back-up of important files and purging of obsolete data?*
- d. *What procedures are in place to secure access to information stored on the firm's computers?*
- e. *Are reasonable policies and procedures applied to govern the use, storage, and deletion of e-mail?*
- f. *What procedures or guidelines are in place to assure QA-QC review of outgoing project e-mail in accordance with the firm's QA-QC practices for other outgoing project correspondence such as letters and report?*
- g. *Do appropriate employees have the skill and system capabilities needed to download project-related information from the Internet?*
- h. *What software and/or hardware solutions are in place to protect the firm's computers from both receiving and sending viruses? How often are the software solutions updated?*
- i. *Other electronic resources inquiries?*

SUGGESTED AGREEMENT FOR SERVICE AS A PEER REVIEWER

I recognize that *Peer Review* is a singularly important service whose success depends upon the integrity of Peer Reviewers. In return for the professional, educational, and other benefits that service as a Peer Reviewer will bring to me personally, I herewith confirm my awareness of professional *Peer Review* practices and, accordingly, I agree:

- to treat as confidential and not disclose to any third party information gained or personal opinions formed by me about the participating firm during the course or as a consequence of *Peer Review*, including, without limitation, information or opinions about the firm’s policies, methods of operation, instruments of service, employees, clientele, etc.;
- to abstain from the targeted recruitment of employees of the participating firm based upon information gained during *Peer Review*;
- to abstain from marketing the participating firm’s clients in the firm’s geographic marketing area based upon information gained during *Peer Review*;
- to treat as confidential, not disclose to or discuss with any third party, and return to the participating firm or destroy Review-related documents, work papers, and memory media in my possession;
- when serving as a *Peer Review* Team Member, to treat as confidential, not disclose or discuss with any third party, and destroy or return to the Team Captain any drafts of the written report and any memory media containing them, or
- when serving as a *Peer Review* Team Captain, to treat as confidential, not disclose or discuss with any third party, destroy all drafts of the written report, destroy all memory media containing any drafts of the written report and the final report, and destroy all except one copy of the written report immediately after submitting the original copy to the participating firm, and, 30 days thereafter, to destroy the sole copy in my possession, and
- in the case of uncertainty about proper procedure, to address the issue to the appropriate party within the participating firm (such as the CEO) and within ASFE (such as the Chair of the Peer Review Committee, the President, or the Chair of the Council of Fellows).

Signed _____ Date _____
 (Peer Reviewer)

CEO CRITIQUE OF REVIEW TEAM

The value and success of *Peer Review* depend on the participation of effective Reviewers in an up-to-date Review process. Your firm has just completed a *Peer Review*. Please help us improve the quality of our process and Reviewer training. Just complete the following critique and return it to us promptly. Thank you!

Instructions: This questionnaire is to be completed by the participating firm's or office's CEO. Most of the questions can be answered using brief comments or by checking the appropriate boxes. It should only take you a few minutes, but if you have strong feelings about certain issues, please expand your comments. Many of the questions can be answered on a 5 to 1 basis, 5 being a positive superlative and 1 being a negative superlative.

Note: ASFE records indicate that the following individuals are being evaluated by this questionnaire:

Captain: _____
Team Member #1 _____
Team Member #2 _____
Team Member #3 _____

This questionnaire was completed by:

1. What is your assessment of the "scoping process" that was conducted with the Team Captain before the *Peer Review*?

2. Were you able to mold the *Peer Review* to suit your firm's unique situation?

3. What would you do to improve the Team Captain and/or Team Member selection process?

4. The task of assembling existing documents might have required some time. Did it? _____
 If so, was the process of gathering the documents of any value to your *Peer Review*? _____
 Did you "create" any documents for submittal in preparation for the *Peer Review*? _____

Comments: _____

5. How would you rate the overall *Peer Review* experience from your personal standpoint?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

6. How would you rate the overall *Peer Review* experience from your firm's standpoint?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

7. How well did the Peer Reviewers conform to the established schedule?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

8. How well did the Reviewers work as a team?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

9. How well did the Reviewers evaluate the Core Management Components you wanted reviewed?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

10. Evaluate the attitudes of the Reviewers toward management, technical staff, and support personnel.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

11. How effectively did the Reviewers communicate with staff members?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

12. How do you rate the Reviewers' exit conference?

5 4 3 2 1

Comments: _____

13. How do you rate the Reviewers' written report?

Prioritized Recommendations	5	4	3	2	1
Thoroughness	5	4	3	2	1
Clarity	5	4	3	2	1
Timeliness	5	4	3	3	1

Comments: _____

14. How do you rate each of the Peer Reviewers?

Captain	5	4	3	2	1
Team Member #1	5	4	3	2	1
Team Member #2	5	4	3	2	1
Team Member #3	5	4	3	2	1

Comments: _____

15. Was the time spent by the Reviewers too long _____, too short _____, about right _____?

Comments: _____

16. What problems were not discussed during the *Peer Review*?

17. In your opinion, how often should your firm be Reviewed?

18. What were the most beneficial aspects of *Peer Review*?

19. Were there any significant negative aspects of *Peer Review*?

20. What should be done to improve the Peer Review process before your next Review?

21. Would you recommend the Team Captain to another CEO? _____Yes _____No

If No, why not? _____

22. Your evaluation of Team Members

Team Member #1 _____(name)

Promote to Team Captain? _____Yes _____No

Keep as Team Member **ONLY**? _____Yes _____No

Remove from list of qualified Reviewers? _____Yes _____No

Comments: _____

Team Member #2 _____ (name)

Promote to Team Captain? _____ Yes _____ No

Keep as Team Member **ONLY**? _____ Yes _____ No

Remove from list of qualified Reviewers? _____ Yes _____ No

Comments: _____

Team Member #3 _____ (name)

Promote to Team Captain? _____ Yes _____ No

Keep as Team Member **ONLY**? _____ Yes _____ No

Remove from list of qualified Reviewers? _____ Yes _____ No

Comments: _____

23. In your own words, what did this **Peer Review** mean to you and your firm?


Can we use this quote in our promotion of the **Peer Review** process? _____ Yes _____ No

Please return form to:
ASFE
THE BEST PEOPLE ON EARTH
8811 Colesville Road, Suite G106
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Attn.: Peer Review Administrator
Fax: 301/589-2017
e-Mail: info@asfe.org

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Some of the terms used are defined as follows.

- *Administrator*: ASFE’s Executive Vice President or designee.
- *Advance Review*: Review of documents and other materials by the **Peer Review** Team before traveling to the Review site.
- *Branch Office*: A principal office that is an extension of the headquarters office through branching, affiliation, or other means.
- *CEO*: The chief executive officer of a member firm or the manager of the office being reviewed.
- *Committee*: The ASFE Peer Review Committee.
- *Comprehensive Peer Review*: A Review that gives about equal weight to each of the eight Core Management Components (CMCs).
- *Core Management Components (CMCs)*: Professional service firms’ eight strategically important management areas.
- *Firmwide Peer Review*: A procedure permitting the simultaneous Review of all offices of Participating Firms with more than one office. Firmwide **Peer Review** involves the Review of the firm’s headquarters office plus all or a representative number (at least one-third) of the branch offices.
- *Office Review*: A review of a given office’s facilities, materials, and staff attitudes and understandings.
- *Participant*: A participating firm or office.
- *Participating firm*: Any ASFE Member Firm office that has undergone (within the past five years) or is undergoing **Peer Review** or, in the case of a multi-office firm, a Firmwide **Peer Review** or Equivalency **Peer Review**.
- *Peer Review Day*: Any day or appreciable portion of a day during which the Review Team visits a participating firm’s office or is traveling between offices.
- *Peer Review Team*: The Team Captain and one or more Team Members selected to perform a Review.
- *Peer Review Team Captain*: The leader of a **Peer Review** Team. In order to become a Captain, an individual must have served as a **Peer Review** Team Member on at least three Reviews, and have been recommended in reports evaluating past Review Team service.

- 
- **Peer Review Team Member:** In order to serve as **Peer Review** Team Members, individuals must be registered and/or degreed professionals with at least ten years' experience, associated or formerly associated with an ASFE Member Firm that has been Peer Reviewed. Reviewers must have extensive knowledge of the talents and techniques required to manage professional service firms effectively. They must have at least five years' office management experience and must have served as an officer, associate, or senior professional of a firm. Reviewers who have attended an ASFE-sponsored or ASFE-sanctioned Peer Reviewer Training Session at least once every three years will be on the ASFE Reviewers List.
 - **Peer Reviewer:** A **Peer Review** Team Captain or Team Member.
 - **Principal Office:** A full-time business office rather than an office established solely to monitor one or two projects or otherwise serve on a temporary or ancillary basis.

TEAM CAPTAIN'S CHECKLIST

A Team Captain becomes the Captain of a specific Review Team the moment the individual agrees to so serve for a particular Review. The following checklist is intended to comprise a list of a Team Captain's key responsibilities. Team Captains are encouraged to modify this checklist as experience suggests.

Before the On-Site Review

- _____ Be sure the CEO has obtained a **Peer Review** number from the ASFE office. Use that number on all Review correspondence.
- _____ Initiate the scoping process by setting a date and time for it. If face-to-face, discuss honorarium and travel cost impacts for the scoping session.
- _____ Confer with the CEO to determine the number of staff and client representatives who should be asked to complete questionnaires; whether to use hard-copy questionnaires or electronic; and the schedule for initiating the surveys and by when responses must be received.
- _____ Once scope is agreed to, identify available written documentation of policies and procedures that will be provided to the Review Team before on-site Review.
- _____ Identify any informal briefing memos needed to assess key practice issues not covered by written policies and procedures.
- _____ Discuss the organization of the oral and written reports with the CEO.
- _____ Establish Team size and set the duration and desired dates of the on-site Review.
- _____ Working with the CEO, identify the expertise and experience Team Members should possess, and the geographic locations of their practices.
- _____ Coordinate the selection of Team Members and alternates with the CEO, being sure to include the name of a first-time-Member candidate when the Team will comprise more than two Members.
- _____ Identify the individual responsible for logistical support within the Participating Firm.
- _____ Prepare an engagement letter in which you document the Review's scope and logistical support matters. If the participating firm is insured by Terra Insurance Company, remind the CEO to issue a copy of the engagement letter to Terra. Obtain the CEO's confirmation of understandings.
- _____ Communicate with candidate Team Members to confirm their ability and willingness to serve. Provide a copy of the engagement letter to each and to the ASFE **Peer Review** Administrator.
- _____ Identify interview candidates based on their questionnaire responses. Achieve a balanced distribution of staff levels. Assign interviewees to rest of Team and provide copies of questionnaires.
- _____ At least two weeks before site visit, advise the CEO of preferred interviewees and proposed interview dates, times.
- _____ As required, make last-minute refinements to schedule to help minimize disruption of the Participating Firm's normal course of business without compromising the Review.

On-Site Review

- _____ Set time and place for Team to assemble the evening before the office Review. Inform Team Members.
- _____ Set time for the Team to meet with the CEO to kick off Review activities.
- _____ With Team Members, meet other senior management personnel. Receive an orientation tour and briefing on office logistics.
- _____ Each day, meet individually with Team Members to assess progress and the need for schedule revisions or specific arrangements based on findings to date.
- _____ Conduct evening debriefing sessions over and following dinner to begin consolidation of findings and outlining oral report.

- _____ On the evening before the last Review day, lead Team in examining work completed to date for adequacy of scope coverage. Make adjustments in activities to fulfill the commitments made when the scope was developed.
- _____ Assign reporting responsibilities to rest of Team for the exit conference. Typically, the Reviewer who makes an oral presentation about a scope item is also responsible for preparing the draft for that portion of the written report.
- _____ Conduct exit conference with CEO and CEO's designated staff.
- _____ Encourage the CEO to host an informal dinner with key staff.
- _____ Assuming a written report is desired, inform Team Members about their assignments and schedule.
- _____ Encourage the CEO to complete and mail the "CEO Critique of Review Team." with **Peer Review** number, and to use the promotional materials that ASFE staff will provide.

After Review

- _____ Assuming a written report is desired, receive report drafts prepared by Team Members within one week (or according to a different schedule) and assemble the full report. If you prefer, send the full draft report to all Team Members for a final review before issuing it to the CEO.
- _____ Return or destroy and/or delete all documents provided by the participating firm.
- _____ Save one hard copy of the final report, if prepared. Destroy any hard copies of the draft report, any elements of the draft or final report, and any other copies of the final report, or delete them, or destroy any media (e.g., CD ROM) to which they have been saved. Notify all Team Members to do likewise, and to return or destroy and/or delete all documents provided by the participating firm.
- _____ Within three weeks after the on-site Review, submit and remind each Team Member to submit an invoice for the honorarium and expenses to the CEO or CEO's designee. All invoices should bear the **Peer Review** number.
- _____ Thirty days after submitting a final report, if one has been prepared, call the CEO to inquire about any questions or the desire for more follow-up. Then destroy your one remaining copy of the final report.
- _____ Complete "Team Captain's Assessment of Peer Review Team Members."

SAMPLE LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

[Date]

[Name and Title of CEO]

[FIRM NAME]

[Street Address]

[City, ST ZIP]

Re: *Peer Review* No. _____

Dear []:

Congratulations on your decision to participate in *Peer Review*. You are joining the ranks of many ASFE Member Firms that have already reaped the benefits of *Peer Review*.

A list of qualified Team Captains is posted on ASFE's website (www.asfe.org). If you have any difficulty accessing the list, let me know.

The *Peer Review User's Guide* is also available on the website. Please review it. It describes recommended procedures for selecting a Team Captain, which is an extremely important task. If you want more input, contact a member of the Peer Review Committee or a representative of a Member Firm that has been Peer Reviewed. Once you select your Team Captain, you two together will plan for the Review.

Note: We have assigned _____ as your *Peer Review* number. Please be sure to reference this number on all related correspondence.

I wish you success in your *Peer Review*. I am confident you will find it beneficial. I also look forward to seeing you and others from your firm at the upcoming ASFE meeting in [].

Sincerely,

A S F E/The Best People on Earth

[Name]

Peer Review Administrator

TEAM CAPTAIN'S ASSESSMENT OF PEER REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

Peer Review No. _____

Name of *Peer Review* Team Member: _____

Participating Firm: _____

Please complete and return this form to help ASFE's Peer Review Committee monitor the performance of Peer Reviewers and identify training needs. Please complete one form for each Team Member. Please check the appropriate answer to each question and provide explanation if the answer is "needs improvement."

1. Familiar with the *Peer Review* procedures?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

2. Reviewed the advance material provided by the participating firm?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

3. Evaluated the Core Management Components discussed in the *Reviewer's Guide*?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

4. Able to converse and relate to management and staff; listened well?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

5. Appropriate attitude toward the participating firm's management and staff?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

6. Able to analyze findings and present well-thought-out conclusions?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

7. Good presenter in the exit conference?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

8. Prepared a well-written section of the *Peer Review* report in a timely manner?

Outstanding _____ Satisfactory _____ Needs Improvement _____

Comment: _____

9. On how many *Peer Review* Teams has the Team Member served? _____

10. Would you recommend that this Reviewer be assigned to additional *Peer Reviews*?

Yes _____ No _____

Comment: _____

11. If your firm were undergoing Review, would you want this Reviewer on the Team?

Yes _____ No _____

Comment: _____

12. Is this Reviewer ready to serve as a Team Captain?

Yes _____ No _____

If not, when? What additional training is needed? _____

13. Have you given oral feedback to the Reviewer about specific improvements needed?

Yes _____ No _____

If so, what? _____

14. Any other comments?

Prepared by _____, Team Captain

Date _____

Please return to:

ASFE

THE BEST PEOPLE ON EARTH

8811 Colesville Road, Suite G106

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Attn.: *Peer Review* Administrator

Fax: 301/589-2017

e-Mail: info@asfe.org

Areas of Personal Expertise

(Check all boxes that apply to your current position and business expertise.)

	I primarily do this	I primarily manage this	I supervise firm's activities	I am aware of activities	No significant experience
Business Management					
Facilities and Technical Resources					
Human Resources Management					
Professional Development					
Financial Management					
Project Management					
Marketing Practices					
Electronic Resources Management					

Peer Reviewer Training

ASFE Training Session(s) Attended: *(Circle as appropriate)*

San Francisco, October 2008	Yes	No
Indian Wells, October 2005	Yes	No
San Antonio, October 2002	Yes	No
New Orleans, April 2000	Yes	No
Maui, October 1997	Yes	No
Dallas, April 1994	Yes	No

Other Prior Sessions in past 10 years *(list approximate dates)* _____

ACEC Peer Review Training _____

Peer Review Experience

Has your current firm been Peer Reviewed? Yes No
 How many times? _____ Most recent (date) _____

Brief Statement about Benefits of Being Reviewed

Peer Reviews Completed

Name of Firm Reviewed	Team Captain	Team Member	Year

PEER REVIEWER REMUNERATION REQUEST

Peer Review No. _____

Your remuneration request should be submitted to the participating firm no later than two weeks after Review. Timely submission is *crucial*.

Name of Reviewer _____

Reviewed Firm _____

■ Honorarium _____ days @ \$ _____ per day = \$ _____.

■ Itemization of Expenses

Travel to/from city (air, rail, etc.) \$ _____

Auto miles @ current IRS rate (\$0.____) _____

Hotel _____

Meals _____

Other (specify) _____

TOTAL \$ _____

■ Receipts must be attached. *All* expenses must be itemized and documented for IRS purposes.

Honorarium payable to: Firm Self*

Expenses payable to: Firm Self

*Social Security Number _____

Address _____

Signature _____ Date _____

SUGGESTED PEER REVIEW STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

Number of Full-Time Employees in Each Office Being Reviewed	Minimum Number of Peer Reviewers	Suggested Number of Site Visitation Days
1 - 5	1	1
6 - 10	1	2
11 - 20	2	2
21 - 50	2 or 3	2 or 3
51 - 100	3	3
100 - 175	4	3 to 4
175+		To be determined by CEO and Captain

SAMPLE CEO MEMORANDUM ABOUT *PEER REVIEW*

To: All Staff
From: John Jones, CEO
Date: Feb/10/08
Subject: ASFE Peer Review

As many of you may know, Jones Consulting Group is preparing for our ASFE *Peer Review*. Because this will be a new experience for many of you, I want to share with you what we expect to gain from the process.

The primary reasons for being Reviewed are: 1) to learn what we can do to improve our business practices to more effectively serve our clients, and 2) to meet the needs of our staff for professional growth and satisfaction with their place of employment.

To implement *Peer Review*, a team of principals from firms like ours will spend two days in this office and one day in the Wahoo office. They will interview staff, examine typical project and report files, and gather other data to help them evaluate management's effectiveness in several key areas. Before leaving our office, the team will present an oral report to a group of our senior management, and then follow up with a written report within 30 days. I will share with all of you the results of the review and the recommendations of the Review Team.

The team will be selected from a list of qualified Peer Reviewers provided by ASFE. All Reviewers will come from firms located outside of our geographic marketing area. Every Reviewer is duty-bound to adhere to a somewhat rigid set of ethical requirements.

I will be working with the Team Captain to develop the appropriate level of review for the eight Core Management Components: Business Management, Facilities and Technical Resources, Human Resources Management, Professional Development, Project Management, Financial Management, Marketing Practices, and Electronic Resources Management. To get the best possible picture of our effectiveness in these areas, we will create a review scope that considers the views of senior management, staff, and key clients.

Within the next two weeks I will distribute questionnaires to a preselected cross section of our staff, to get a balanced level of input. (Because of our size, it will not be practical for all staff to complete one.) If you receive a questionnaire, it's important that you complete it within three days and send it to the Team Captain to help us develop an effective scope. Your responses will be confidential, but we will check with the Team Captain to determine who has not responded. If everyone responds quickly, I won't have to waste time with follow-up calls.

We will also send questionnaires to a number of our clients to get their assessment of our services. These questionnaires will also go directly to the Team Captain.

When the *Peer Review* Team visits us, the Reviewers will select staff for interviews. Any information gained through these interviews will be kept confidential by the Review Team. For the Review process to yield the best results, you need to be forthright in your responses so we can learn where and how we can work to improve Jones Consulting Group.

I know each one of you will extend a warm welcome to the Review Team. Thank you for your participation.

SAMPLE ENGAGEMENT LETTER

Date

[Name and Title of CEO]
 [FIRM NAME]
 [Street Address]
 [City, ST ZIP]

Re: *Peer Review* No. _____

Dear []:

I'm pleased with the progress we've made in defining the scope of your upcoming *Peer Review*. Staff and client input has been valuable in helping us assess your key concerns, reflected in the scope, below. Please review the scope and let me know if I have missed any issues or if any areas lack the amount of emphasis you want.

With this letter I enclose a list of prospective Team Members selected to meet the general qualifications we discussed. Please select at least *[five]* candidates to fill the *[three]* positions so we will have fallback selections in case one or more are unable to participate. As we discussed, I will make the calls to enlist them once we have agreed on the order in which they should be contacted.

I am also attaching a proposed schedule for the on-site Review. This schedule is for the general guidance of the Review Team. We will adjust it to accommodate the availability of your staff, given inevitable work-schedule changes. The Team Members will be asked to schedule their return travel to accommodate the dinner gathering following the exit conference that we discussed. This has proven to be time well spent in reviewing the Team's assessment of a firm.

We have discussed the pros and cons of a final written report and, per your request, we will prepare one and issue it within 30 days of visiting your offices.

We have targeted the Review dates for sometime during the week beginning *[the day of week, month, date, year]*. It would be preferable to either start the review on Monday or complete it on Friday, so Team Members are not traveling on two workdays.

As for specifics of the scope, we will emphasize the following Core Management Components (CMCs): *[list by title]*.

If all of the CMCs are not to be given an in-depth evaluation, an assessment of the remaining CMCs will be limited to a peripheral overview. Within the context of the Review, we will also address your developing plans for *[this might include such issues as management training and/or succession, ownership transfer, need for new directions in developing information systems technology within the firm, etc.]*.

The written documentation available for the primary areas of concern is well developed and, I believe, more than the Team will need to review in advance. Nonetheless, advance Review of several documents will be helpful. These include: *[list pertinent documents from the key items identified in Appendix F]*.

One area you asked us to stress is written documentation. Please help the Team by preparing a

brief memo outlining the firm's procedures and how they are applied. With that memo in hand, we can assess whether your intended message is compatible with the understanding of your staff.

Team Members will make their own travel arrangements to and from your head office location, in *[city]*. We will be on-site for *[three]* days. All of us will require hotel reservations for *[four]* nights. Once the Team has been selected, I will advise you if any have to stay over for a *[fifth]* night. I understand that your administrative assistant, *[name]*, will make these arrangements and send me details so I can pass the information on. We anticipate using taxis for local travel because of the relative proximity of the hotels to your office.

Because this is a Firmwide Review, some of our Team will be traveling to your other *[two]* offices. As discussed, we will take day-trips, so no additional hotel reservations will be needed. Your assistant will make air travel arrangements for the *[two]* day-trips as soon as we identify the rest of the Team. Because I am not familiar with *[city]*, I will appreciate learning your opinions about nearby restaurants.

I've included a budget estimate for the Review on the attached Budget Worksheet. The estimate of expenses that will be incurred for travel, lodging, and meals should be considered approximate. The estimate for Team Member honoraria should be reasonably accurate based on our agreed-upon site review schedule.

I believe this covers the logistical issues. I look forward to your comments on the scope and arrangements outlined above. I will initiate contacts to fill out the Team as soon as we agree that we have all bases covered.

I look forward to our visit. In the meantime, if you have any thoughts or questions on any aspect of **Peer Review**, please call or e-mail. And as a reminder, if your firm is insured by Terra Insurance Company, you need to send the company a copy of this letter. I am not familiar with the requirements of other insurers.

Sincerely,
[NAME OF FIRM]

[Name of Team Captain]

pc: Peer Review Administrator
ASFE

SAMPLE TWO-DAY REVIEW SCHEDULE

The following sample schedule covers the activities that are completed during a typical two-day *Peer Review*. **Each schedule should be specifically** structured for a Review so the Review Team's time is used effectively, while reducing disruption of a firm's operations.

Night before the Start of the Office Review

6:00PM-10:00PM Review Team meets for dinner, reviews Office Review schedule.
 Captain assigns areas of responsibility to Team Member(s).

First Day of Office Review

8:00AM-8:30AM Peer Reviewers meet with the CEO to discuss schedules, procedures, and special arrangements.

8:30AM-9:00AM Peer Reviewers meet with the CEO and key staff members for introductions and briefings. Team Captain describes objectives and procedures of the Peer Review. CEO gives background information about the firm, its history, scope of services, organization, policies and procedures, accomplishments, and problems. Staff members describe their responsibilities. Discussion is encouraged.

9:00AM-9:30AM Team receives a guided tour of office, laboratory, and other facilities.

9:30AM-Noon Team conducts individual interviews with: the CEO; other principals and key staff members, including managers and supervisors; representative professional and technical employees; and representative office staff. (Suggested interview questions are listed in Appendix T.)

Noon-1:00PM *Optional:* Peer Reviewers and senior staff lunch together. (Review Team may opt for a working lunch.)

1:00PM-1:30PM Team continues individual interviews.

1:30PM-2:00PM Peer Reviewers meet to exchange information and impressions gained to this point.

2:00PM-5:00PM Reviewers continue interviews and begin review of reports, files, manuals, and other documents.

After 5:00PM Peer Reviewers exchange information, noting areas where additional input is needed. They also plan activities for the following day and formulate preliminary *Peer Review* evaluations using Appendix F as a guideline.

Second Day of Office Review

8:30AM-Noon Team continues to review project files, reports, proposals, purchase orders, manuals, and similar materials. Additional or follow-up interviews may be conducted.

Noon-1:00PM Peer Reviewers (only) have a working lunch.

1:00PM-1:30PM	Team continues its review of reports and proposals.
1:30PM-3:30PM	Peer Reviewers meet to discuss findings and organize their conclusions and recommendations for the oral report to the CEO.
3:30PM-5:30PM	The Review Team meets with the CEO to present its report of conclusions and recommendations. (With the concurrence of the Team Captain, the CEO may invite other key executives to attend all or some of this meeting.)
After 5:30 PM	One or more of the Team Members should make every effort to stay for a casual dinner with the firm leaders. Members of ASFE consistently rate the opportunity to network with their peers as one of the most valuable benefits of ASFE.

Note: All members of the *Peer Review* Team should plan to remain at the office until at least 6:00PM and should arrange their travel itinerary accordingly.

After the Office Review

The Team Captain and Team Members usually prepare a written report, with each Team Member drafting an assigned section in a convenient electronic format. Drafts of sections prepared by Team Members are sent to the Team Captain according to the schedule set by the Team Captain. The Team Captain assembles the report and edits it for continuity and consistency. The report draft may, at the Captain's option, be sent to all Team Members for review and comment. In that case, Team Members would return suggested revisions to the Team Captain, and destroy any hard-copy or electronic copies not returned to the Team Captain.

Team Captain incorporates comments and issues the final report to the CEO within the agreed-upon schedule.

The CEO should call the Team Captain within one week of receiving the report to confirm its receipt and, if the CEO so desires, to discuss findings, seek clarifications, and so on. If the CEO does not initiate any contact within two weeks the Team Captain should call the CEO.

INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR PEER REVIEWERS

Dr. Gary D'Angelo* presented the following tips at an April 2000 *Peer Review* training session. We present them here to help ASFE Peer Reviewers improve their information-gathering effectiveness when interviewing a participating firm's management and staff.

- Reduce misinterpretation by asking clarifying questions. Research has shown that the average level of misinterpretation in a conversation is about 25%. Try to remember this simple thought: "I know what I said, but what did you hear?"
- Establish accuracy by asking confirming questions, to gather the accurate data you need to develop effective recommendations.
- **Distinguish between *needs* and *opinions*.** "We need more thus-and-so around here" is not a statement of need; it's an opinion. Remember to ask, "What's not happening to make you say that?"
- **Learn how to help the interviewee trust you**, so you can get solid answers to somewhat intimate questions. Start by recognizing the level of risk taken in a conversation. That risk can be characterized on an ascending scale of 1 to 4, as follows:

Level 1: Engaging in small talk, typified by light humor or questions like, "How's the weather?"

Level 2: Gathering basic facts, using questions like, "How long have you worked here?"

Level 3: Requesting opinions about likes or dislikes, or asking questions such as, "How would you increase profit?"

Level 4: An intimate level where the interviewer seeks to expose hidden needs by asking, for example, "What kind of job do you think the CEO is doing?" Build trust (so you can get to Level 4) by:

- holding the conversation in a private location in which the other person feels most comfortable,
- explaining why you need to know the answers to the questions you are asking,
- emphasizing that you understand sensitive issues may be revealed and that you will treat them confidentially and anonymously,
- shutting your notebook as a nonverbal cue that it's safe for the interviewee to reveal intimate information, and
- changing the venue of the conversation. (Have you ever noticed how much you learn when you walk someone to the door or elevator after an otherwise unproductive meeting?)

- **Learn to recognize nonverbal cadence**, a grouping of nonverbal characteristics (eye contact, voice pitch, posture, etc.) that is unique to each person and revealed during interviews. Establish a baseline by paying attention to your interviewee's nonverbal cadence when you ask low-risk questions. For example, if the interviewee maintains strong eye contact with you and leans forward when you ask low-risk questions, but then leans back and looks away from you when answering a high-risk question, the person's nonverbal cadence has changed, usually signifying increased risk or trust. What caused the change? What does it mean? Find out by asking.
- Keep asking clarifying and probing questions when you continue to receive generalized opinions (e.g., "We don't communicate enough around here?") in response to questions that seek specificity. Asking for an example is usually a fast, productive technique.
- **Closed-end questions (answered by yes or no) can be effective** as long as you remember to ask why the person responded that way.
- **Prioritize the firm's needs** as you understand them. The firm will not be able to implement all of the *Peer Review* Team's recommendations. It should work on those that are most important or which need to be done quickly.

* Gary D'Angelo, Ph.D.
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Seattle, WA 98103-2004
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SAMPLE INTERVIEW INQUIRIES

The following questions and other inquiries are suggested to develop information on a staff member's knowledge of the firm's approach to the eight Core Management Components. The questions should be tailored to the position and experience of each employee.

A. General Inquiries for All Personnel

1. Introduction (Low Risk)

- 1.1 Describe your education, experience, and career objectives.
- 1.2 What are your technical and managerial responsibilities?
- 1.3 Do you have an employee manual? Do you generally agree with the policies? How well are the policies implemented?
- 1.4 How is the firm organized? Who runs the show? Other key people?
- 1.5 To whom do you report? Are you supervising anyone?
- 1.6 How would you describe your compensation and benefit package?
- 1.7 Describe the firm's top three goals in order of importance.
- 1.8 Describe the loss prevention materials available to you. When and how do you use them?
- 1.9 What sort of loss prevention training have you had and does the firm practice what it preaches?
- 1.10 Describe the electronic resources available to you.

2. Details (Medium Risk)

- 2.1 What strengths exist in the firm that are not being capitalized upon?
- 2.2 What is your understanding of the reasons your firm is participating in *Peer Review* and why we are doing these interviews?
- 2.3 How much does the firm emphasize quality performance? How can quality be improved?
- 2.4 Describe how projects are managed.
- 2.5 Can you and others in the firm make decisions without checking with superiors? If so, what types?
- 2.6 Describe your firm's health and safety program and its medical monitoring program.
- 2.7 How often is your performance formally reviewed?
- 2.8 Describe the process of performance reviews.

- 2.9 What other feedback do you receive with respect to your performance?
- 2.10 How is staff selected to attend continuing-education/professional-development programs?
- 2.11 Is staff encouraged to write and publish technical papers? If so, what incentives are offered?
- 2.12 Describe your involvement with clients.
- 2.13 Describe your involvement with capital expenditures.
- 2.14 Describe who makes policy for the firm and who is asked to provide input into policy changes.
- 2.15 Do you know how the firm is doing financially? How is this communicated?
- 2.16 Describe your firm's marketing efforts.
- 2.17 Who hires staff?
- 2.18 How much staff turnover occurs? Describe your firm's employee retention practices. Why have recently departed employees left?
- 2.19 What is the organizational structure for planning, acquiring, and maintaining the firm's information systems infrastructure?
- 2.20 Describe the policies and practices used to maintain system security and integrity of data.
- 2.21 What does the firm do to verify corporate and individual staff compliance with software copyright laws?
- 2.22 What is your opinion of the firm's web site?

3. Probing (High Risk)

- 3.1 If something happened to the top dog, who would run the firm?
- 3.2 Describe how the firm encourages, identifies, recognizes, and rewards superior performance.
- 3.3 Describe how firm management reacts when mistakes are made.
- 3.4 How would you describe employee relations and morale?
- 3.5 How would you increase teamwork in the firm?
- 3.6 Describe how principals communicate with associates. How good is communication around here?
- 3.7 Whom do you consult with about important issues?
- 3.8 If you were the CEO, how would you improve the firm?

- 3.9 What are the most frustrating and satisfactory aspects of your job?
- 3.10 Would you advise a friend to join the firm?
- 3.11 What are your thoughts on the firm's leadership skills development program?
- 3.12 Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

B. Inquiries for Drilling Personnel

- 4.1 Is a manager or supervisor in charge of drilling operations, including contracting of all drilling activities, planning, and scheduling?
- 4.2 Are drillers trained and/or certified appropriately for the services they perform and for the geographic locations in which they perform their services; e.g. certified monitoring-well installers, water-well drillers, etc.?
- 4.3 Does the firm have clearly established procedures for safety equipment, health and safety plans, and job specifications? Do all drillers and supervisors understand these procedures?
- 4.4 Are personnel and equipment supplied with the proper safety equipment and devices for projects? Is everyone familiar with the function and operation of this equipment?
- 4.5 How is maintenance of equipment and spare parts inventory handled? Is it adequate?
- 4.6 What measures does the firm employ to limit its exposure for damages to buried utilities, landscaping, wetland area, and unauthorized entry onto project sites?
- 4.7 Has the firm established a safety-training program specifically for drillers and drill helpers?
- 4.8 Has the firm established a medical-monitoring procedure for drilling personnel?
- 4.9 Is the drill crew given proper and complete information? Do project engineers brief drillers about special problems the site may present? Do drillers receive specific site information?
- 4.10 Describe how the calibration of various pieces of testing equipment (SPT hammers, vane shear, cone penetrometers, etc.) is maintained.
- 4.11 What practices are followed to prevent the falsification of data?
- 4.12 If the firm uses subcontract drilling services, what does the firm do to verify the subcontracted firm has a subcontract agreement, adequate insurance, and a health and safety plan?

C. Questions for Laboratory Personnel

- 5.1 What is the laboratory's organizational structure?
- 5.2 How is work checked? Who prepares reports?
- 5.3 Who assigns and schedules work?
- 5.4 Does the lab participate in a reference sample program? Which one?
- 5.5 Is the lab accredited by COE, FAA, CCRL, AALA, NVLAP, AASHTO?
- 5.6 When and how are samples disposed?
- 5.7 When is equipment calibrated? By whom? To what standard?
- 5.8 Are other labs used to provide testing services the firm is not equipped to provide?
- 5.9 Is the annual budget for new lab equipment adequate?
- 5.10 What evidence is there that recent developments in laboratory testing equipment or methods are being investigated and integrated into the firm's business as appropriate?
- 5.11 What practices are followed to prevent the falsification of data?
- 5.12 If the firm uses subcontract laboratories, what does the firm do to verify the subcontracted firm has a subcontract agreement and proper insurance?

TIPS FOR PROVIDING CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Dr. Gary D'Angelo* presented the following suggestions at ASFE's Spring 2000 Annual Meeting. He offered them to help Member Firm leaders provide constructive criticism to their subordinates in the daily operation of their firms. We present them here in a slightly altered form to help ASFE Peer Reviewers provide constructive criticism during the *Peer Review* exit conference, to help motivate the participating firm's CEO to take action to improve the firm.

- **Provide immediate, specific feedback**, and do it often. Don't use the school model of waiting until the job is over; that's too late. Give feedback early so your subordinate has time to change.
- **Give feedback in a positive, persuasive way**, because it will get much more response than feedback designed to create fear. Using a fear approach, you would say something like, "If you don't improve your report writing, the firm will lose its key clients, especially the shipping company." Using a persuasive approach, you'd cite a positive advantage and say, "If the firm improves its report writing, you'll gain a competitive advantage because your key clients have said they will hire only those firms that hand them clear, concise, and accurate reports. They don't want to have to do a lot of editing."
- **Recognize that most smart/successful people respond to nonconstructive criticism by adopting a defensive posture** and blaming someone else or an outside source (e.g., the client's staff), rather than focusing on themselves. Typically, they have succeeded most of their lives and don't like to think they have made a mistake or failed. To get through to these folks: focus on issues, not personalities; rely on persuasion, not fear; and communicate repeatedly until they catch on.
- **Connect your feedback or criticism to how it will help the firm** meet its priority goals. If the CEO can visualize how your comments will help achieve priorities, the CEO will listen and act.
- **If possible, prioritize the feedback** to focus on urgent and important goals, rather than less important, less urgent goals.
- **Seek feedback** from the CEO during an exit conference, to help ensure the CEO understands your message.

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