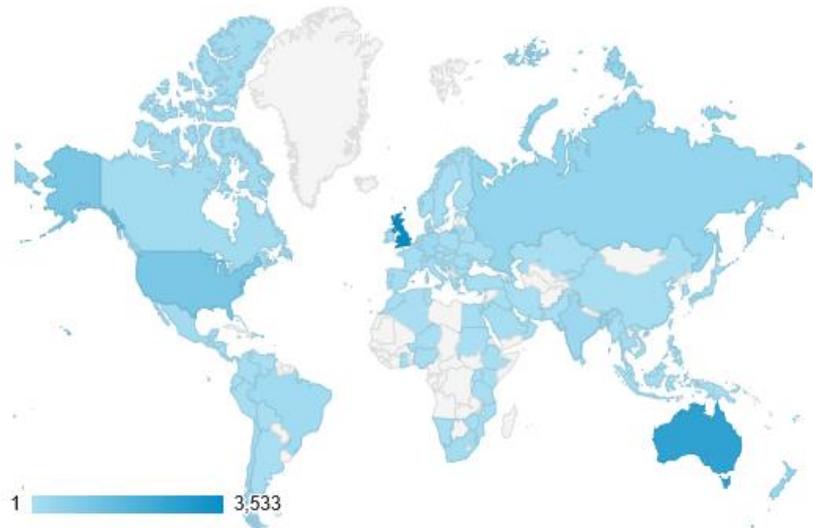**SFIA FOUNDATION**

# Skills Update

## Skills Framework for the Information Age *a Global Common Language*

SFIA, the Skills Framework for the Information Age, describes skills required by professionals in roles involving information and communications technology.

Formally established in 2000, and regularly updated, SFIA has become the globally accepted common language for the skills and competencies required in the digital world.

The creation of SFIA has been a united effort, involving many IT people, managers, educationalists and HR people from around the world. The collaborative development style involves open consultation and input from people with real practical experience of skills management in corporate and educational environments. That is what sets SFIA apart from other, more theoretical, approaches and has resulted in the adoption of SFIA by organisations and individuals in nearly 200 countries.



1                     3,533

**If you would like to find out more about The Foundation, the SFIA Framework, licensing opportunities or any other aspect of SFIA or if you would like to put forward a suggestion for the next version of SFIA please contact the business Administrator at: busadmin@sfia-online.org**

## SFIA – your flexible friend *by Peter Leather*

SFIA is designed to be flexible and non-prescriptive. This makes SFIA a very powerful tool but it does come with a health warning be wary if someone tells you how to "implement" SFIA.

- The real question should be "**What are your IT workforce related challenges and opportunities**" and how can **adopting SFIA** help you tackle them.

To illustrate this point I have collated a list of **63 activities which SFIA can support**.

- These are real examples – I have either done these myself, helped organisations to do these or seen them in action in other organisations.

- They are curated from

    o   my personal experience initially as a SFIA user and then as a SFIA consultant
    o   sharing experiences with SFIA Users via the SFIA User Forum and the SFIA Council

o   SFIA Conferences

**So if someone suggests you implement SFIA – which of these 63 things are in scope? And why?**

To help make sense of them I have categorised these using the IT Talent Life cycle which many people will be familiar with.

In reality, many of these examples can span more than one of the categories.

• The other feature of the framework is that it does **NOT** come with a prescriptive set of processes. You can do whatever you like with SFIA!
• To adopt SFIA and achieve your target benefits you will typically need to create new processes or adapt your existing people management processes.

Although this is a long list of uses – I am sure there are many other uses of SFIA. If you do know of anything you think should be added then please let me know.

### Organising & Planning the IT Workforce

1. Develop IT Talent strategy
2. Design of IT Career families
3. Design and creation of Professional communities of practices
4. Organisation design
5. Role design
6. Organisational skills – gap analysis and prioritisation of skills development
7. Validation of a Target Operating Model
8. Design outsourcing model
9. Workforce planning
10. Simplify job language to enable Position management
11. Integrating 2 IT organisations
12. Writing role profiles / job descriptions
13. Supporting process / technology driven transformations
14. Transition of start-up organisation to mature IT organisation

### IT Workforce Talent Acquisition

1. Creating job specifications for one off ad hoc recruitment
2. Creating job specifications for  a one off recruitment campaign
3. Creating job specifications for All recruitment
4. Screening candidates
5. Assessing candidates
6. Outsourcing – review of staffing
7. Outsourcing – specification of demand and supply
8. Internal recruitment

### Deployment of IT resources & skills

1. Deployment of IT professionals onto client assignments
2. Resource management
3. Finding subject matter experts within your IT workforce

4.    Creation of 70:20:10 / developmental assignments
5.    Reducing dependency on Contractors – reduce risk and cost
6.    Managing a diverse workforce – multiple locations , geographies, cultures

### Assessing & Analysing IT Talent

1.    One off organisational skills assessment / skills audit
2.    Personal skills assessment
3.    On-going skills assessment as part of performance management / personal development
4.    Internal promotion / recruitment criteria
5.    Benchmarking for IT Certifications
6.    Making "buy v build" decisions
7.    Making sense of complex IT roles
8.    Prioritisation of training / development activities
9.    Benchmarking performance – internal
10.   Benchmarking performance – external
11.   Managing performance problems
12.   Clarifying and explaining performance gaps
13.   Developing line manager capabilities
14.   Identifying the risks of losing key staff
15.   Identifying resourcing risks and contingencies within teams
16.   Retaining key IT staff

### Developing the IT Workforce

1.    Supporting IT strategic workforce development for transformations / significant change program
2.    Creating a learning and development catalogue
3.    Measuring outcomes of L&D programmes
4.    Defining learning outcomes of academic programmes
5.    Defining career paths
6.    Improving line managers capabilities
7.    Designing and implementing IT Career development processes
8.    Improving the quality of career conversations
9.    Developing high performing IT organisations and people – improved engagement / productivity
10.   Demonstrating professionalism / instilling confidence in stakeholders
11.   Positioning IT qualifications
12.   Applying generic HR High Potential (HiPo) processes to IT organisation and roles
13.   Training & development to support new Service Management processes
14.   Applying 70:20:10 model

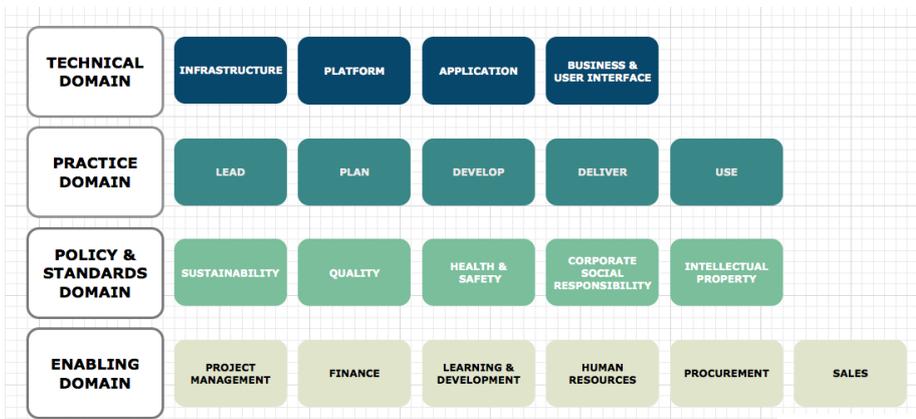### Rewarding the IT Workforce

1.    Designing salary guidelines
2.    Job evaluation
3.    Benchmarking for individual recruitment
4.    Support for annual salary reviews
5.    Dealing with restrictions on IT salaries (e.g. public sector)

Peter is an accredited SFIA Consultant and has been using SFIA strategically and operationally since 2003 He is also secretary of the SFIA Council, leads the global SFIA User Forum and is a regular speaker on SFIA, IT Skills & IT professionalism. *uk.linkedin.com/in/peterleather*

## IBSA *(Innovation and Business Skills Australia) by Dennis Trevarthen*

In late 2015 SFIA consultant Dennis Trevarthen from Ability Associates Australia worked with national skills body IBSA (Innovation and Business Skills Australia) to develop an IT Skills Framework. The objective was to create a framework that would guide further development of national qualifications and be capable of mapping to recognised schema like SFIA.

| TECHNICAL DOMAIN | INFRASTRUCTURE | PLATFORM | APPLICATION | BUSINESS & USER INTERFACE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PRACTICE DOMAIN | LEAD | PLAN | DEVELOP | DELIVER | USE | |
| POLICY & STANDARDS DOMAIN | SUSTAINABILITY | QUALITY | HEALTH & SAFETY | CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY | INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY | |
| ENABLING DOMAIN | PROJECT MANAGEMENT | FINANCE | LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT | HUMAN RESOURCES | PROCUREMENT | SALES |

The framework introduced the concept of domains, placing technical skills at the centre with skills related to management practice, standards and policy supporting. Enabling domains supported the structure, but were not considered at the core.

Whilst the framework mapped to SFIA successfully, it identified some variation in emphasis with SFIA, especially regarding the relative place of enabling skills in IT. The SFIA strength in the practice domain was not found in associated national IT qualifications.

Since the report was completed, PriceWaterhouseCoopers have taken responsibility for working with the vocational IT industry in Australia.

Discussion Paper is available here: http://bit.do/ITskillspaper2015

Contact Dennis: dtrev@ability.com.au
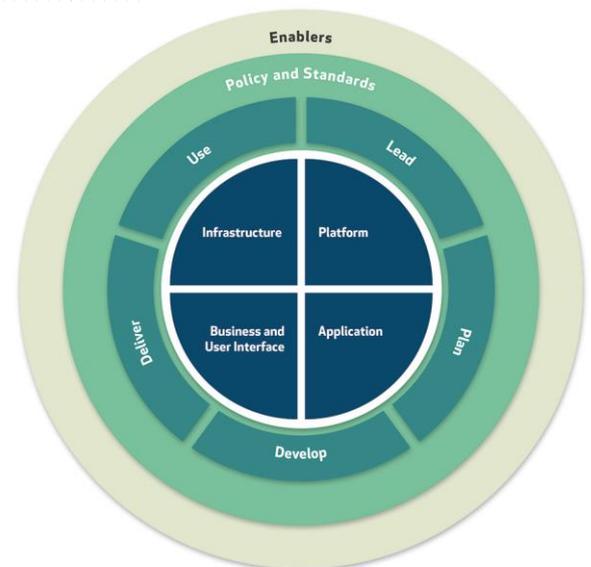
# From IT Specialist to Business Leader *By Kevin Tibbs*

When climbing the slippery career slope in IT, at what point do you put your IT specialist knowledge to one side and concentrate on a leadership path?

In my time as a SFIA consultant, which has involved me conducting countless 'skills evaluation' interviews with IT staff, I have noticed that people have, rightly, often been keen to highlight the technical qualifications that they have and the courses that they have attended, and so on.  But building up an impressive technical CV does not always open the door to a management role.

In a recent skills evaluation interview I was faced with a difficult conversation that is no doubt common in IT. The person who was presented to me was very technically competent to the point where he was a specialist in his field and seen by the business as the key person in that specific area of IT. He was determined to climb the career ladder and had applied for a number of managerial roles. His specialist technical knowledge leads him to believe he should be sitting at the top

table. He came over as personable, passionate about the role and the organisation and was therefore, on the face of it just the person you would think could be the ideal candidate for a leadership role.

However, he felt that he was being unfairly overlooked and cited his technical knowledge, for which he was widely respected, as proof that he should be elevated to a senior role with leadership responsibilities.

It is not uncommon, in IT disciplines, to hear of a person with great technical knowledge and skills being promoted to a team leader or middle manager role and then finding themselves in a very different world.  Suddenly, they are confronted with the uncomfortable reality that their undoubted technical excellence is not enough.

A technical specialist needs to look beyond their area of expertise if they wish to progress in management.  Using the SFIA Framework helps as it highlights that an abundance of technical ability is key at certain levels but less crucial as you start to climb the seniority ladder. After all, a conductor of an orchestra does not need to be a brilliant player of every musical instrument – or even an average one! As you reach SFIA levels 4 and 5, team leader and managerial responsibilities will start to emerge as a necessary part of your role.

Achieving team leader status is often the start of a managerial career. However, those newly promoted team leaders are often chosen because of their technical abilities. That's understandable especially if you are leading a team within your specialist area. But at this early stage of management you are already starting to become embroiled in leadership techniques, people management, relationship management, financial management and more.  Your technical qualities are starting to become less significant.

As is illustrated in the diagram, a leadership or management role may start as early in the SFIA pyramid as level 3. Here, an individual may take some responsibility for certain team members, pass on technical knowledge, and even perform some coaching or mentoring. They can be seen by many as the person within a team people go to for technical advice and guidance. This is not leadership, but it can be, depending on the individual, the time when a person begins to think that a leadership role may beckon for them in the future. It is at this stage when you should think about undergoing an analysis of your management behaviours and seeking leadership development opportunities.  Tools such as the 'Winning Behaviours®' framework has a diagnostic process which will identify how and where your management skills need honing, giving you an important insight into where you need to focus your development.



SFIA Inverted pyramid of development
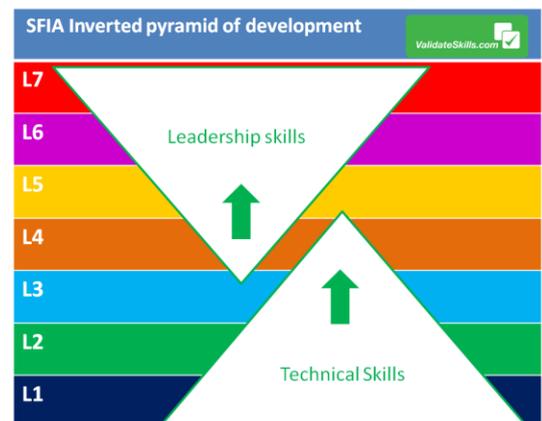
There is no clear point in the SFIA pyramid where a leadership role begins. Each organisation and each job role is different. However it is clear from what I have seen as a SFIA consultant that the leadership path for those who wish to develop into management emerges earlier than one may think.

Yes we will always need technical expertise and yes a number of specialists will turn into managers, often by accident with no training in leadership or people management techniques.
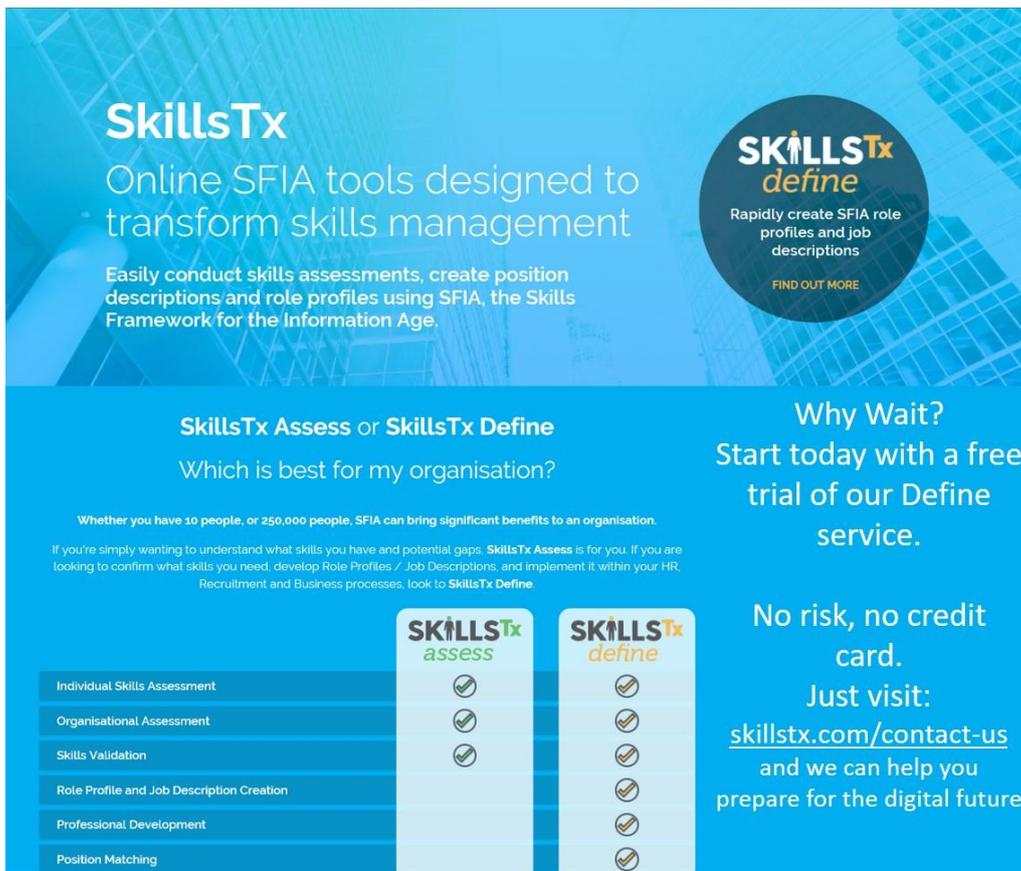
So to summarise, the questions are, when do you convert your technical skills into management skills? And do you want to remain specialist or do you have your eye set on management and leadership?

Whatever your answer, you should continue to develop your technical skills but if you aspire to become a manager where you will be leading people then look towards taking a managerial development path at the earliest opportunity.

Kevin Tibbs MBCS SFIA Partner/Consultant/Approved Trainer

## SkillsTx *Online SFIA tools designed to transform skills management*

How do you ensure that the outcomes from personal self-assessments are accurate and objective?

Sounds like a simple question with an obvious answer:

"*Ensure everyone completes the same surveys, use the same calculations for each result, and surely accuracy and objectivity will follow*"

Unfortunately, the answer is not that obvious, or that simple. Researchers and academics understand it takes a lot more to be able to fully rely on their results. They therefore invest a lot of time and effort in creating a 'research instrument'.

However, having said that, there are practical steps that, if followed, will improve the quality of the outcomes.

**Step One, the Survey:**

- Structure the questions very carefully.
- Remove ambiguity by reducing the use of the words such as 'and'.
- Ensure respondents have been suitably briefed regarding the objectives of the assessment and where possible, include guidance and instructions within the surveys.
- Include answer options with an 'opt-out' and graduated options such as 'I do not understand the question' and 'I fully perform this task' or 'I partially perform this task'.
- Opt-out answers can be used for quality control to improve question wording.
- Build-in question branching where appropriate based on the responses to previous questions. This improves efficiency and reduces unnecessary effort and time to complete.
- Provide accurate time estimates and progress monitoring that will allow the participant to schedule the surveys within their working day.
- Finally, consider the education value of the questions. It is often possible to include education content such as examples and explanations of technical terminology.

**Step Two, targeting:**

- Within every organisation there are a broad range of perspectives. To name a few, these can be related to aspects such as:
- hierarchy
- location
- experience and/or knowledge
- length of service

Take them into account when authoring the surveys.

- Ensure you understand the target participants and as far as possible, make the questions relevant to the audience.
o For example, you might use acronyms and more technical language if the surveys are appropriate for an expert group. If you construct long and descriptive questions for an expert audience, they will be frustrated by reading unnecessary content.
o However, the opposite would be the case for a non-expert group, where an educational approach would be more suitable.

**Step Three, validate and/or triangulate:**

While following the two previous steps will certainly help generate an accurate result, variances will occur and you need to cater for the real possibility that some surveys will be answered without sufficient due attention or time.

- Therefore, a detailed analysis of the recorded responses using an outlier approach is a useful method for identifying the self-assessments that should be considered for validation.
- The use of triangulation can also identify dubious results. Triangulation includes the equivalent of a 360° survey that enables you to compare the self-assessment against 360° responses, and then analysing the results for dissonance. If significant variance is identified, then those self-assessments should be considered for a detailed validation.
- Validation can include:
o Searching for evidence or observation and then adjusting the result accordingly, whilst retaining a copy of the original responses for future analysis and decision making.

Following these three steps, and retaining all recorded responses, will provide a much richer dataset with varying levels of accuracy that can be used for more granular and informed decision making.

http://skillstx.com/

# SFIA Event in London *BSMimpact's Free SFIA event in London 9th November*

**Learn how organisations around the world (private and public, large and small) are using SFIA to maximise value to both the organisation and its customers.**
This is a unique opportunity for thought leadership, networking and training.

Two sessions will be held on the day – Session 1 is focused on Practical skills management, and features presentations such as:

· The digital & cyber skills landscape – do we REALLY have a skills shortage?
· SFIA in digital transformation – integrating SIAM, COBIT, ITIL and SFIA
· SFIA in project management – using SFIA to support Agile and other project approaches

Session 2 focuses on HR and Talent Management, with presentations on:

· SFIA for People Managers – how does SFIA help you?
· Strategic workforce planning – organisational capabilities, development and career planning
· SFIA and the people supply chain – recruitment, procurement and supplier management.

Rounding out each session will be a panel session, where we invite you to ask questions and get answers from SFIA Accredited Consultants with a wealth of experience helping organisations implement SFIA in the real world.

Visit www.sfia.events to view the full agenda, plus find out about early bird discounted training!

**BSMimpact**
Business | Service | Management

# SFIA *an update from the Operations Manager, Ian Seward*

The SFIA Foundation has, for the last 18 years or so, led the development of the SFIA Framework and made it available for organisations and individuals to use.  It has been updated through a process of open consultation with the users to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of industry and business.  It has been for some years now well established globally and use continues to grow.  Through the various discussions I've had with partners and users and through the SFIA Council meetings the themes for the future include:

• SFIA Framework Updates
• Collaborations
• Promotion of the Framework
• Guidance Material
• Accreditation and Assessment

### SFIA Framework Update:
It is that time again - time to initiate the open consultation process for updates to SFIA V6.  What is being proposed is to establish a continuous consultation process rather than turn it on and off.  Any agreed changes will then be scheduled into future versions of the Framework as appropriate.  This is not to have more frequent updates per se, but to ensure that any change ideas are properly managed and where appropriate a release can be made when necessary.

### SFIA Collaborations:
A number of Countries and organisations have come to SFIA asking to collaborate on aspects of the SFIA Framework or their own framework, many of which are based on SFIA to some extent.  We are working through these and a number are in various stages of discussion.  One I can mention at present is with the International IT Service Management Forum; itSMF International and the Foundation have entered into a MoU where we will mutually support each other in

promoting professionalism and skills development in the service management area and itSMF will help to ensure the service delivery components of SFIA remain spot on.

We continue to discuss collaboration with the eCF project and as part of this I have produced a detailed mapping and comparison of eCF and the SFIA Framework.  This is likely to steer a number of changes to the frameworks.

Further collaborations are planned.

### Promotion of the Framework:

Historically the SFIA Foundation has been very poor at promoting the Framework; we have largely just left it up to individuals and organisations to use if they wish.  We have been asked to support a number of activities to promote the use of SFIA and are now doing so.  We have the intention of doing more in the future.  To that aim, if any organisation wishes to have support from the Foundation in supporting their SFIA activities they should contact the ops manager.

### Guidance Material:

Our users have asked for more guidance for the use of the SFIA Framework.  The Foundation has historically just provided the Framework and left its use to the user community and or the SFIA Partners and Consultants.  We have found that the Framework is used for so many different uses, the article by Peter Leather illustrates this, and so our users have asked for guidance material to be produced.  We intend to start doing this.

### Accreditation and Assessment:

It is time to update our accreditation process and work on this has begun.  As well as refining the criteria for accreditation at consultant level our users want to introduce a 'Practitioner Level' to give recognition for those, typically working within and organisation, who use SFIA and also provide a path to Consultant where appropriate.  We have also been asked to define an assessment process for those organisations that are now assessing skills.  This is now underway.

The Foundation is very fortunate to be able to rely on a number of individuals from the SFIA user community who volunteer to help progress these projects, if anyone wishes to be involved in these activities, discuss them or to find out more please contact ops@sfia-online.org

# The Last Word

I would personally like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of SFIA over the years and to those who continue to play a part in the development of SFIA. Without the on-going dedication of the SFIA Community, SFIA would not be the global success that it is today.

Help us keep up to date with User experience and to assist others with their SFIA Journey by sharing your story: either in the form of a case study or an article for our next edition of 'Skills Update' the SFIA Newsletter.

Whether it's a success story, a tale of trouble overcome, or unique SFIA implementation we'd love to hear from you. So until the next edition of 'Skills Update' Thank you again for your on-going support and I wish you a prosperous few months.