

## An Announcement from the SFIA Foundation.



After many years of loyal and professional service as Chair for the SFIA Foundation, and following retirement from his position of Head of Registration and Standards at the IET, The Institute of Engineering and Technology, Mike Bridgefoot has now stepped down as Chair of the SFIA Foundation Board. Mike continues to support the foundation and remains a director of the SFIA Board representing the IET and will do so until the end of the year.

The Board is unanimous in its thanks to Mike for his part in driving SFIA forward during the last four years and for everything that he has achieved on behalf of the Foundation within this time.

The SFIA Foundation is pleased to announce that Adam Thilthorpe, Director of Professionalism at BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, has been elected as the new Chair of the SFIA Foundation Board.

"SFIA provides the IT profession with a common framework that allows us to have relevant conversations within our organisations as digital technology continues to drive almost every business, no matter what sector. As SFIA Chair, I'm looking forward to meeting and collaborating with partners who share this vision as SFIA version 6 launches next year" Adam Thilthorpe,

We are sure you will join us in wishing Adam every success.

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## SFIA V6 Update

SFIA aficionados everywhere will be aware of the consultation which has been underway this year, to identify where SFIA needs to be updated to stay in line with current practice.

The SFIA framework has always been a focal point for documenting good practice across the broad spectrum of the IT profession.

The IT profession is always evolving and transforming; not just because of changes in information technology (which are not difficult to identify), but because of the changing attitudes, views and fashions in how we *use* technology across every sector of business and social interaction.

Somewhat belatedly, the world has noticed that we have a digital future (not to mention a digital past which goes back to the 1940s!) So to be inclusive, we have to look at how we articulate the portfolio of Skills within SFIA, to satisfy current perceptions. Some of the language is felt to be a bit dated.

To justify changes, we are using a two stage approach. First we have collected suggested **requirements**, by asking:

- What's the problem (or opportunity)?
- How does it affect you (e.g. you cannot evaluate what level of skill someone has)?
- How should it be dealt with?

We wanted to capture this reasoning, in order to understand the need for each proposed requirement.

The validation of requirements has been done by members of the SFIA6 Project Board. Each of them, in their (shared) role as a Senior Stakeholder, has received an unedited sub-set of the suggested requirements. Together, they have determined whether to validate or reject each item, as a necessary change to description of SFIA Skills or Tasks. Where an item has been rejected, they have explained why this is so. Please note that "rejection" does not mean that the comment

has been ignored - it may simply be that it does not suggest a change to SFIA content, but to a broader issue such as presentation, marketing, or structure.

We have posted the **validated requirements** on the consultation site (<http://sfia.textmatters.com/>) and are now seeking **suggested solutions** from anyone who has the necessary knowledge and expertise. Once we have these, the Project Board will review them and then they will be edited prior to final sign-off.

As the changes (which will become SFIA version 6) are drafted, they will be shown on this site, where you will be able to see them evolve, and comment on them. We hope to publish SFIA version 6 around the end of the first quarter of 2015.

Mike Chad [Mike.chad@btconnect.com](mailto:Mike.chad@btconnect.com)

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## SFIA Conference

Spring 2015



The SFIA foundation is delighted to announce that the next UK SFIA Conference is being scheduled for spring 2015 to coincide with the release of SFIA Version 6.

Additional information will follow soon. In the mean-time please contact the editor if you would like to contribute to the conference, or if you have any suggestions. We would especially welcome presentation submissions for online and physical delivery. We look forward to hearing from you and to hosting another successful event! Lucy Ryan: [busadmin@sfia-online.org](mailto:busadmin@sfia-online.org)



## Using SFIA for role definition and development

John Godsell Managing Partner goBlueinternational EuropeLtd Email: [john@goblueinternational.com](mailto:john@goblueinternational.com)

I have worked with many clients over the past years. It still amazes me that so many people and organisations are not aware of SFIA. It is also sad to find that where SFIA has been introduced and used, some of the basics are misunderstood and the framework is misapplied. Many organisations use SFIA for skills assessment and development; however they often confuse ROLE skills requirements with those of the individual. There also exists a tendency to ignore the Generic Levels of Responsibility, which are the heart of the framework. So some key guidance points for all users:

- Always establish the generic level of a role first. This is the baseline. No SFIA skill can be at a higher level than this **for the role**.
- Usually the skills associated with a role are no more than one level apart
- The Total skill is the Generic level of Responsibility (Autonomy, Influence, Complexity, and Business) plus the skill description. All should be used for assessment/development discussions.
- Distinguish between
  - Core Skill for the role
  - A skill that is Contributed to by the role holder but usually performed by others
  - A skill that one needs to be **Aware** of in the role
  - A skill that one is **Responsible** for ( e.g. as a manager) but does not perform
  - A skill that is a **Building block** needed prior to starting this role
- Individuals may be at a higher skill level, the same skill level or lower skill level than the role requires and they may have more skills than the role requires
- Job Descriptions can be built from the SFIA Role by adding technical skills, education, qualifications, context and in some organisations additional/mainstream behaviours

If anyone would like further help or advice please contact a qualified SFIA Instructor: <http://www.sfia-online.org/find-an-expert/training-providers/>

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### Bridging the gap between HR and IT

A language barrier between IT and HR departments could lead to poor hires when recruiting IT professionals into business critical roles, according to talent solutions company, Hudson. Work undertaken by the company has shown there is a disconnect between IT roles HR teams seek to fulfil within their organisations and what the existing IT team requires, often leading to the IT team having to take the lead in the recruitment process. Gary Fay, Regional IT Director at Hudson believes it starts with a poorly structured job specification for the role.

To help organisations improve the quality of their IT recruitment, Hudson has developed a new approach that bridges the gap between HR and IT, leading to a quicker recruitment process with only strong candidates being put forward for interview and a greater quality of hire rate.

Hudson's 3D approach assesses a candidate's professional skills, technical knowledge and cultural fit. It uses the SFIA logical two-dimensional skills framework defined by the area of work on one axis and the level of responsibility on the other – an approach that has gained industry wide recognition.

For further details visit: [uk.hudson.com/3d-it-skills-assessment](http://uk.hudson.com/3d-it-skills-assessment)

Hudson have recently written a number of blogs to accompany the 3D launch. They focus on the challenges hiring manager's face with IT recruitment, a commentary on the industry as a whole rather than just a focus on 3D. Follow the links for further information.

[If IT is from Mars, is HR from Venus?](#)

[Taking too long to find the right IT professionals](#)

### Hudson 3D Skills Assessment

[www.uk.hudson.com/3d-it-skills-assessment](http://www.uk.hudson.com/3d-it-skills-assessment)

**The challenge of IT recruitment**

- It takes too long to hire the right IT professionals first time.
- The cost of hire is potentially too high.
- There's a need for a common language around IT recruitment.

**The 3D approach**

- A development plan for employee induction and retention
- Providing a common language
- Automated job description, initial screening and validation
- A clear distinction between technical, behavioural and professional skills

**The benefits of 3D**

- Reduced time to hire from 8-6 weeks
- Reduced cost of hire
- Full integration with your established recruitment process

**Our track record**

- RSPB
- Foreign & Commonwealth Office
- SUCCEED WITH PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY
- AutoRestore

**Meet the team**

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# Using SFIA for Recruitment and Job Interviews

One of the most expensive mistakes a business can make is hiring the wrong person. For instance, the time and effort involved in the recruitment process; agency fees; the investment in on-boarding; the disruption caused to the team/business of a 'wrong hire'; the potential loss of a better alternative; the cost of 'letting someone go' to name just a few of the Issues involved.

At Lexonis we have long advocated the need to identify and hire for behavioural competencies as well as IT professional and technical ones, so SFIA alone is not the answer. However SFIA can be used to clearly articulate the IT professional skills required to be successful.

Here are some suggestions on how SFIA can help with recruitment and with interviewing job candidates in particular:

- In the first place, SFIA and specifically SFIA assessment tools (<http://www.lexonis.com/sfia>), can be used to determine which skills are needed for each job.
- SFIA clearly articulates the skills and levels that people need in order to be successful; the skills are well defined, consistent and the level descriptors are expressed as action verb statements that are conducive to evidence-based assessment e.g. consider one of the indicators for Business Analysis are level 4: "Investigates operational requirements, problems, and opportunities..."
- SFIA provides a common dictionary of what 'good looks like'; in other words, the business, the HR recruiter, the recruitment agency, the interviewer and the applicant use exactly the same language when referring to a skill. Furthermore, there is now an increasing trend for IT organisations to use SFIA to match candidates to positions.
- Whereas traditional job descriptions can be ambiguous, versions that include SFIA-based skills profiles are far more effective for specifying the skill and skill level required for a particular job. Note that increasingly more public sector organisations and recruitment agencies are using SFIA-based job descriptions and advertisements.
- Use of Interview Questions associated with each of the SFIA skills can add significant benefits to the interview process. At Lexonis we have developed evidence-based questions for each of the SFIA skills. Our software allows organisations to pre-build a job profile and generate an Interview Guide containing Interview Questions that are relevant to the skills required for the job.
- This dual approach (Interview Questions and Interview Guides) provides a number of benefits. The most common feedback that we have received from our clients is that this approach helps by:
  - allowing interviewers to improve their preparation for the interview (rather than having to prepare from scratch each time);
  - providing interviewers with a common and consistent approach to interviewing regardless of function, locale etc.;
  - assisting the interviewer to elicit evidence-based responses to their questions;
  - Providing transparency of interview methods and process for IT candidates.

For instance, here are some example questions associated with the Business Process Improvement skill:

- Summarise the steps involved with analysing and improving business processes;
- Provide some examples where you have personally introduced significant improvements and measurable benefits by identifying, proposing, initiating and leading significant programmes of improvement;
- Suggest ways in which a technology solution can contribute to business process improvement;
- Explain how to identify the factors which must be addressed as part of a change implementation'

Figures 1 and 2 provide an extract from an example Interview Guide generated from the Lexonis software. Note that the Interview Guides are entirely configurable and these examples are provided for illustrative purposes only.



# lexonis

## Business Analyst (SFIASD-BA1)

Investigates and analyses business activities and processes in order to make them more efficient through the use of IT resources (both hardware and software).

### Key Responsibilities

- Reviews and analyses the organisation's business, including its business goals, services, processes and information needs.
- Acts as a conduit between the business units, organisational stakeholders and solutions delivery teams.
- Liaises with key stakeholders to develop an understanding of, and documents how the business is currently operating and its future requirements.
- Assists the business with identifying the best way to effect change in order to meet the organisation's business goals.

Figure 1: The Interview Guide Builder includes a description of job responsibilities.

### Competency: Business process improvement

The identification of new and alternative approaches to performing business activities. The analysis of business processes, including recognition of the potential for automation of the processes, assessment of the costs and potential benefits of the new approaches considered and, where appropriate, management of change, and assistance with implementation. May include the implementation of a process management capability/discipline at the enterprise level.

#### Behavioural Indicators

Required Level: *Level 5: Ensure, advise*

Listen out for the following behavioural indicators in the candidate's response:

- Analyses business processes; identifies alternative solutions, assesses feasibility, and recommends new approaches.
- Contributes to evaluating the factors which must be addressed in the change programme.
- Helps establish requirements for the implementation of changes in the business process.

#### Questions

<b>Knowledge: Summarise the steps involved with analysing and improving business processes.</b>	
Situation	
Action	
Result	

Check one:

Below Level	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Level	<input type="checkbox"/>	Above Level	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Figure 2: Interview Questions and evidence indicators.

As already noted, a wrong hire – whether it is in the IT function or not - can be an extremely expensive exercise. Take advantage of SFIA to help improve your recruitment and interview processes.

### Survey of Users

In September this year, I conducted an online survey of members of the SFIA User Forum. The survey got a great response with a total of **175 respondents from 32 different countries**.

#### Survey Highlights

- The survey clearly demonstrates the global use of SFIA with respondents from all continents. The **UK and Australia** are the hot spots for SFIA usage but there is significant use in the **Asia Pacific, Europe and Americas regions**.
- The survey highlighted the wide range of both users and uses of SFIA. This confirms that because SFIA is non-prescriptive and extremely flexible; it easily adapted and used by a wide range of organisations in many different ways. **So in addition to employers (47%) and individuals (16%); there is a wide range of other uses (37%)** such as education, training, recruitment agencies, product design, architecture, IT process improvement.
- **78% were satisfied or very satisfied** with the structure and content and **72% found it was easy or very easy to use**.
- The growing longevity in the use of SFIA is seen; **23 % have been using SFIA for 5 years or more and 24% between 3 and 5 years**.
- Within employing organisations the most popular use of SFIA is to support **Organisation / Role design** followed by **Training & Development** and **Career Development**.
- The most frequently asked for resource to share with other users is **Role mappings / SFIA skills mappings**, followed by **Case studies** and **Standards for good practice in using SFIA**.



Of course not everything is perfect and there were lots of great ideas put forward to increase the take up of SFIA and also to improve the User Forum itself. The main talking point is the need to **improve the marketing and promotion of SFIA across the industry**. This is something I am sure will be on the agenda for the SFIA Foundation's 3 year business plan.

If you wish to see the full survey; please visit the SFIA User Forum LinkedIn ([www.tinyurl.com/linkedin-sfiausers](http://www.tinyurl.com/linkedin-sfiausers)) site or contact me directly.

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### The IT skills gap webinar



BCS The chartered Institute for IT, IT Skills gap webinar

As more and more organisations realise the benefits of high value technology (think cloud, big data, mobile...), employers are struggling to recruit and retain qualified tech talent.

With technology changing daily, the business potential of IT is immense. Yet the lack of education and investment in this area has resulted in a serious and widespread IT skills shortage posing very real risks that this potential will not be reached.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October, BCS The chartered Institute for IT held a webinar looking at what can be done to prevent business leaders being forced to rethink their strategy.

The panel of prominent figures from industry including: Philip Black, COO, Emergn , Chris Shaw, IT Director for Sales & Marketing in EMEA and Asia, Intel and Sara Hill, CEO, Capability Jane discussed how to bridge the gap between business and technical skills - from the role of universities and knowledge transfer partnerships, to facilitated job rotations and on-the-job training. [Watch the webinar](#)

### The Last Word

Things continue to prosper and we are looking forward to some positive changes. Since the birth of the new website in 2012 over 13,000 new subscribers from across the Globe have registered to SFIA information. With the changes to the SFIA Board, On-going work towards the completion of SFIA Version 6 and a SFIA Conference planned for spring 2015 exciting times are ahead for us all.

We are always looking for new implementation stories, white papers, case studies, as well as articles so if you would like to share details of your experience of SFIA please get in touch.

Remember to comment on the requirements produced during the first stage of the V6 consultation at: <http://sfia.textmatters.com/> your views and proposals during the second stage of consultation are vital to ensure the continued relevance of SFIA.

Until the next edition of 'Skills Update' we thank you for your on-going support and wish you a prosperous few months



**Lucy Ryan**  
**Business Administrator**

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