# Annotated Topic Lists:
# Blueprints for Structurally Sound Documents

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# About your architect

## Comtech and CIDM

- Over 30 years providing consulting services to information development organizations in all industries around the world





## Myself

- 26 years in information development
  - 11 years managing a combined documentation and training organization
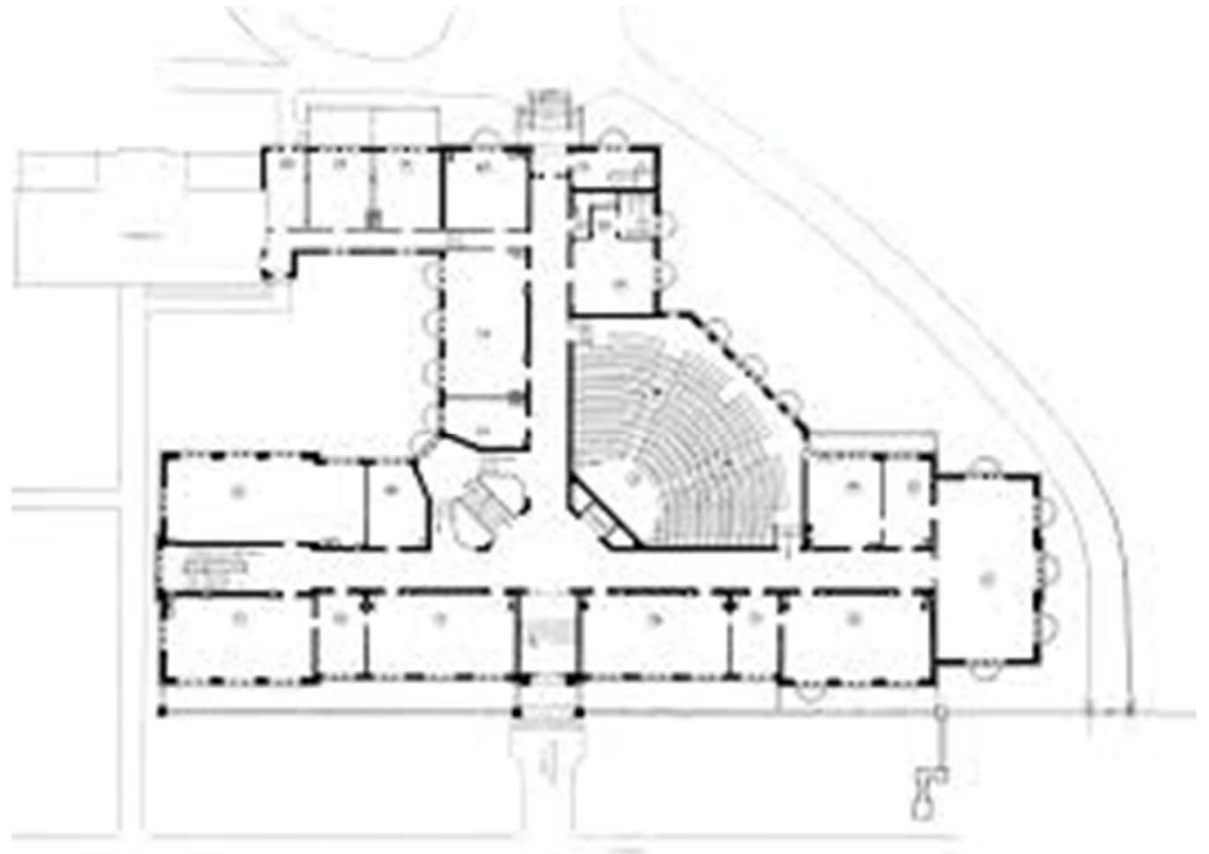  - 15 years at Comtech

# The importance of planning

- Define goals
- Establish scope
- Determine budget and schedule
- Identify risks
- Assign roles and responsibilities
- Communicate vision

# Planning considerations

- What am I building?
- What are its components?
- How do they interrelate?
- Have I done this before?

# Annotated Topic Lists

| Submap | Topic Title | Info Type | File Location/Name | Reused? | Links | Source | Confidentiality | Work Item | Category | Telecom Std | Product Name | Version | Component | Featnum | Platform | Variant | ResourceID | Status | Topic Owner |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

- Define the information you intend to produce
- Identify and classify components (topics) by information type
- Sort topics into logical groupings
- Define metadata for each topic
- Show relationships and reuse amongst topics

# Define the information

- ## User and task analysis
  - ### Who are your users?
  - ### What do they need to know or do?
  - ### What do they already know?
  - ### What common problems do they have?

# Define the information

- ## Critical Skills Analysis
  - What is the impact of not providing certain content?

# Define the information

| Level 1 | The user can complete the task correctly the first time without this content | Do not document |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Level 2 | The user can complete the task with minor, recoverable errors without this content. | |
| Level 3 | The user can complete the task with help from a friend or colleague. | Basic task support only |
| Level 4 | The user can complete the task with occasional calls to customer support. | Detailed task support; basic troubleshooting information |
| Level 5 | The user cannot complete the task without extensive support, resulting in dis-satisfaction with the product, negative impact on company reputation, and possible harm to self or equipment | Detailed task support, troubleshooting, concept and reference information |

# Define the information

## Start with your task list

**Simple Task List**

- **Remember minimalism principles**
  - Use genuine tasks from the user's real world
  - Ensure that tasks are named from the user's point of view, not the system's

# Define the information

## Add related information

- Include only information that will assist the user in
  - performing tasks successfully
  - troubleshooting problems when they occur
- If content cannot be related to a user task, do not include it

# Define the information

| Tasks | Concepts | Reference | Troubleshooting |
|-------|----------|-----------|-----------------|
| Taking point-and-shoot pictures | Auto-focus | | My picture is fuzzy |
| Taking pictures in bright sun | Aperture Shutter Speed | | My picture is washed out. |
| Taking pictures in low light with a flash | Red eye reduction | Flash distance scale | My picture is too dark. My picture is washed out. |
| Taking pictures in low light without a flash | ISO Sensitivity Aperture Shutter Speed | EVValue EVRelationship | My picture is too dark. My picture is washed out. |

# Categorize information



- Clearly delineate content into distinct information types
  - Avoid intermixing of conceptual and reference information into task topics
  - Ensure all concept and reference topics directly support a task topic
  - Reduce or completely eliminate topics about the content itself
  - Evaluate the percentage of each topic type
    - Emphasize doing over knowing
    - Emphasize product content over transitions, organization, and conventions

# Group content

- Arrange required content into submaps and hierarchy
  - Are some tasks dependent on others?
  - Must tasks be performed in a specific order?
  - Are tasks performed by different audiences?
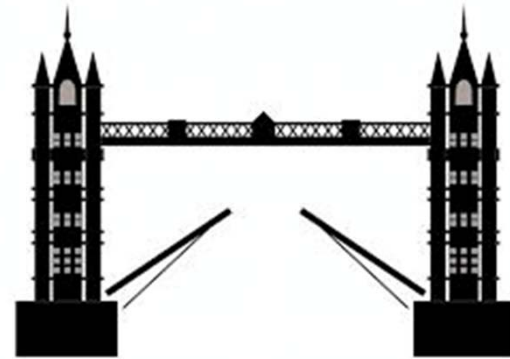  - Are all topics related to a specific task or subject area?

# Assign metadata

- Assists users in locating information in multi-faceted searches

- Assists authors in locating existing information

- Assists authors in assembling content into maps and deliverables

# Determine relationships between topics

- Link between
  - Pre- or post-requisites
  - Subtasks
  - Related concepts, references, troubleshooting
  - Nice-to-know information (you might also be interested in…)
- Try to limit to no more than 5 relationships per topic

# Locate reusable content

- Search repository for content that can be repurposed
  - Previous version of content
  - Similar product / feature / function
  - Reusable elements (collection maps)
- Indicate if content can be used as is or requires some modification

# Assign topic status and owners

- **Indicate topic status**
  - New
  - Major change
  - Minor change
  - No change
- **Identify topic owners**

# Add other information as desired

- Short descriptions
- Estimated hours
- Due dates
- Progress completion

# Example ATL

| Submap | Topic Title | Topic Location | Info Type | Status | Reuse | Related topics | Metadata | | | | | | | Topic Owner | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | Source | Permission | Product | Version | Component | Category | Workitem | | |
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Start DEMO

# Generating DITA maps and topics from your ATL

- Oxygen transform from Comtech's ATL template to DITA map
  - Source must be .xls (2004 Excel format)
  - Requires XSL 2.0 transform
- Creates map populated with topicrefs to all defined topics
- Creates stub topics of specified type
  - Title
  - Metadata

# Maintaining your ATL

- Change happens
- Updating the ATL is not high on your list when it does

Wouldn't it be great to round trip the ATL?

# Generating DITA maps and topics from your ATL

- Comtech transform from complete bookmap
- Populates blank ATL spreadsheet with topics and topic types based on bookmap information only:
  - Topicrefs
  - File naming conventions
- Forthcoming enhancements
  - Read topic files for file type, metadata
  - Interpret relationship table to record intertopic links

Start DEMO

# Want to know more?

- Ask me your questions!



- Contact me directly:

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