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Systems and software engineering — Developing user documentation in an agile environment

Ingénierie du logiciel et des systèmes — Développement de la documentation de l'utilisateur dans un environnement agile

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Foreword

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Introduction

Anyone who uses application software needs accurate information about how the software will help the users accomplish a task. The documentation may be the first tangible item that the user sees, and so influences the first impressions the users have of the product. If the information is supplied in a convenient form and is easy to find and understand, the users can quickly become proficient at using the product. Hence, well designed documentation not only assists the users and helps to reduce the cost of training and support, but also enhances the reputation of the product, its producer, and its suppliers.

Projects that implement agile development focus on providing rapid and frequent deliveries of high value software. These methods often involve detailed planning only for the short term, and the implementation of processes in parallel, rather than planning for an entire project in distinct phases.

Although agile development methods often advocate less life cycle documentation, the users of a software product still expect and require quality user documentation to be provided with these software products. Although the end results of the user documentation process are the same, the methods to get there may be very different in an agile environment.

Agile development methods may lead to the production of less user documentation, but the user documentation developed must be sufficient to meet the needs and requirements of the users. If the deliverables of user documentation and associated life cycle documentation are agreed in a contractual relationship between an acquirer and a supplier, then the deliverables that are produced are dictated by the terms of the contract. In these circumstances, the user and life cycle documentation deliverables that are agreed upon will depend on the demands of the acquiring organization regardless of the types of development methodologies used to produce them.

Technical writers and other personnel involved in the production of user documentation should understand the agile development processes used by their organization, and use the most effective agile development methods to produce relevant and useful user documentation.

Because of the nature of agile development methods, the traditional means of developing the end user documentation (both print and onscreen) as described in the current ISO/IEC 2651*n* family of International Standards are not entirely applicable.

This International Standard was developed to assist users of ISO/IEC 15288:2008 (IEEE Std 15288:2008), *Systems and software engineering — System life cycle processes*, or ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207-2008), *Systems and software engineering — Software life cycle processes*, and ISO/IEC 26514, *Systems and software engineering — Requirements for designers and developers of user documentation* (also available as IEEE Std 26514-2010, *IEEE Standard for Adoption of ISO/IEC 26514:2008, Systems and Software Engineering — Requirements for Designers and Developers of User Documentation*) and others in the ISO/IEC 2651*n* family of International Standards. It provides requirements and guidance to technical writers and related roles on how to adapt the processes described in the ISO/IEC 2651*n* family of International Standards to develop quality user documentation.

This International Standard is independent of the agile development methods and tools that are used to produce the software.

This International Standard will conform to ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207:2008) as an implementation of the user documentation part of 6.1: Documentation. The primary references for this International Standard are ISO/IEC 26514:2008 and ISO/IEC 26513:2009.

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