

Title: Comments on section 6.4 of proposed WID revision

Source: Nortel Networks

Agenda: 9 – Project Management

For: Discussion and Decision

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Section 6.4 of the proposed WID revision (SP-040361) includes a table to complete containing details of specifications related to the work item and the timetable for their completion. For each specification the following text is presented in the template:

To TSG for info in:
..... months
To TSG for approval:
..... months later
Frozen:
..... months later

This format of presentation raises two problems:

1. What is the starting point for the indicated periods?
2. How is information about completed milestones recorded?

Start Date

The proposal does not indicated what should be taken as the start date for the periods included in the WID.

“To TSG for info in.....months” could be measured from:

Case	Start Date	Comments
1	The date of creation of the work item	Simple when a work item is first created, but could be confusing for subsequent revisions as they are referenced relative to an arbitrary date in the past. The date of creation of the work item needs to be carefully recorded. Awkward values of months would have to be used to align with TSGs.
2	The date of initial approval of the work item	Similar to above except that the working group would have to anticipate when a work item is going to be approved in order to set the correct dates. If a work item is not approved on the target date it would have to be revised just to update the dates. The value would always be a multiple of 3.
3	The date of the last revision of the work item	Each revision of the work item (including draft revisions) would have to update the (relative) target dates even if they had not changed in an absolute sense. Could be confusing because dates are measured from an arbitrary datum. The date of revision of the work item needs to be carefully recorded. Awkward values of months would have to be used to align with

		TSGs.
4	The date of approval of the last revision of the work item	Similar to above except that the working group would have to anticipate when a work item is going to be approved in order to set the correct dates. If a work item is not approved on the target date it would have to be revised just to update the dates. The value would always be a multiple of 3.
5	The date of completion of the previous phase of the work	It is not obvious that there is a linear relationship between the completion date of one part of the work and the completion date of another part. Often work proceeds in parallel in several areas. The date of "completion" for each phase is not well defined. Calculating the absolute date when it is defined as a relative value on a date which is itself a relative measurement is a laborious process.

Which of these is intended is not clear, and all five options have significant disadvantages. In all cases it is necessary to collect data to determine the starting point before you can calculate the anticipated "for information" date.

It is assumed that "To TSG for approval..... months later" is measured relative to the "for information" date.

It is assumed that "Frozen months later" is measured relative to the "approval" date. However it could also be interpreted as meaning relative to the "for information" date.

Completed Milestones

The proposed template doesn't appear to offer an easy way of recording which milestones have been completed. The extent of this problem also depends on which of the options above is used for the starting point for date counting.

Consider the time line below:

2004											
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
WID first approved		Spec sent for info			WID revised			Spec sent for approval			WID revised

What value should be used for the "for information" date in the June revision of the work item?

For options 1 and 2 above it should be "6 months", but it is only by calculating that this date is already passed that you can tell this has been achieved.

For options 3 and 4 above it should logically be "-3 months" but this is a rather strange form of presentation!

For option 5 then it will depend on the status of the previous stage, but suffers from the same disadvantage as options 1 and 2 in the sense that there is no indication that the target is already passed.

In the December revision of the work item it is assumed that the "for approval" date is "6 months later" but again it is only by calculating the relative dates that a reader can tell if this date has been achieved.

While the intention of using relative dates is to help reduce the load of maintaining work items, they suffer in several ways from sources of confusion and error which will make them hard to work with in practice. It could also be argued that having to maintain accurate absolute dates is good discipline for working groups as they must then keep work items properly up to date.

It is proposed to continue to use absolute dates (in the form of TSG numbers) for tracking work items and to include in the WID the following:

To TSG#..... for info (planned/actual) <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
To TSG#..... for approval (planned/actual) <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
Frozen at TSG#..... (planned/actual) <i>Delete as appropriate</i>