The Best Person To Write a SOP

Standard operating procedures have two lives. The first life starts with its writing by the original author. The second life starts when the people working with it put it into use and begin to improve it.

The first author ought to be the current 'expert' on doing the job. If the job is presently being done and a SOP is to be written for it, then the person who does the job best should be the author. If the person can write well give them time to draft the SOP along the lines explained in this book. If the person cannot write well then select a suitable writer and have them interview the person who does the job best.

A more senior person with the relevant experience then checks the draft SOP to confirm and endorse the documented steps. If the SOP is critical to health or to the success of a business initiative it should be thoroughly reviewed and analysed by resident and invited experts. This may include having meetings where the SOP is analysed in great detail to establish the consequences of it being done wrongly.

If the consequence of an error when doing a work instruction is catastrophic it is necessary to include control points and third-party checks to keep full command of the situation.

If the job has not been done before then it will need to first be designed and a SOP written for it. In this case the 'designer' of the job is the proper person to write the initial SOP. If the job is similar to existing jobs the SOP can be based on them with changes to suit the requirements of the new tasks. Here again, if you have people experienced in similar work, they should either write the SOP or be interviewed for their suggestions.
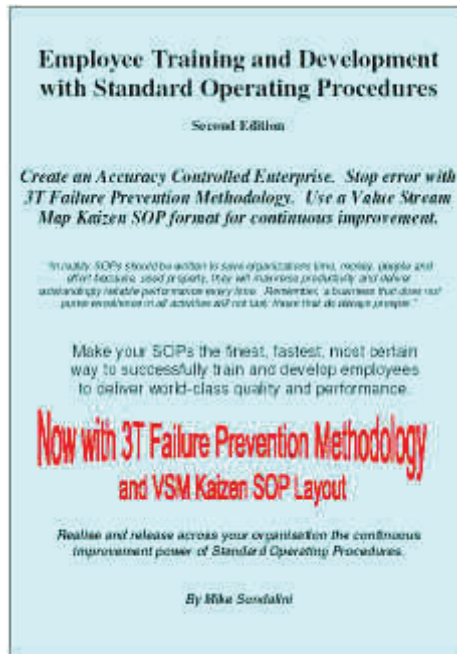
Where the job has never existed before, the SOP reflects the job designer's expected tasks and methods. A SOP for a never previously done job will contain many less than ideal ways and methods. But it is a starting point from which refinements and improvements will occur in its second life. Where possible existing experience should be used to refine the draft SOP and improve the chance that it will work well from the start.

The previous pages where just a sample of …

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