

## Case Study – SME Preparation for Audit

Our passion for technical excellence and commitment to our clients' business success results in practical solutions to complex problems.

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### Subject Area/Specific Service:

Comprehensive Audit preparation workshop for large US based electrical utility for their Subject Matter Experts.

### Date of engagement:

Q3 2010

### Brief description:

A major US Utility was facing an upcoming NERC CIP Compliance audit. While technically astute, many of the personnel associated with their NERC CIP implementations had little or no experience with the audit process. These Subject Matter Experts ("SMEs") lacked the "soft skills" that must properly be used during an audit. The Utility wanted to 1) prepare its people for the rigors of the audit and 2) ensure the highest probability of a successful audit.

### N&ST Recommended Solution(s):

N&ST recommended a one-day workshop to prepare the SMEs on how to handle and respond to evidentiary questions posed by the Regional auditors. The SMEs participated in role-play exercises designed to help ease the anxiety and stress associated with an audit that requires the Utility to provide proof of compliance. Each exercise focused on specific skills that give the SME experience and feedback for a best response to the regional auditor.

Audits of this magnitude require not only technical expertise, but skills such as Composure, Professionalism, Responsiveness, Discretion and Organization, all of which N&ST emphasized in its solution.

### Client actions:

Client has been able to improve its planning for the upcoming audit and is better prepared to meet the demands of the audit process.

### Problems remaining:

The audit is forth coming, but the client feels well prepared. Many, but not all of the SMEs took the workshop, and the client thinks they would have been better served by having everyone attend.

### Lessons learned:

Audits require not only technical expertise, but other skills as well, and it is worthwhile to exercise these in advance of a live audit.

### Client Comments:

"N&ST provided us an understanding of the expectations – what to expect of the regional audit team, what was expected of us, and how to best address those expectations."