

JUNE 2001 NEWS

BSI CENTENARY

The British Standards Institute celebrated its centenary on 26th April 2001. One hundred years earlier a structural engineer called John Wolfe Barry persuaded the Institute of Civil Engineers to initiate a committee to look at the issue of standardisation. This became the Standards Committee, the earliest incarnation of the BSI. From those early days, it has gone from strength to strength. The BSI is now a global organisation with 4,200 staff in 112 countries. It is a world leader in management system assessment, together with product and commodity testing. As the national standards body it facilitates the writing of national and international standards. It has published 20,000 standards and turnover in 2001 is £210.8m, rather more than the £3,659.15s 6d it turned over in 1901.

BSI have a full programme of Centenary Events which can be found on their Website www.bsi-global.com

UK BUSINESSES ONLINE

The UK Government has exceeded its targets of having 1.5m SME's online by 2002, with 1.7m businesses already using the Internet, which means that approximately 80% of all UK businesses are now online. As more companies use the Internet, the value of business carried out online is also set to rise. However, although 80% of all businesses are already connected to the Internet, only 26% are actually trading online, possibly due to lack of IT skills and fear about the security of the Internet.

The Government has been trying to amend this balance and has increased the level of funding to UK online for business, which is a partnership between the Government, industry and the voluntary sector, aimed at getting UK businesses trading online. The organisation received £10m in 2000 Budget, and more recently the Government announced a £5.5m Internet Mentoring Initiative to help SME's that want to make the Internet their primary means of doing business. Patricia Hewitt, E-Minister, has reported to say, "The challenge for businesses now is not simply to get connected, but to succeed in the online world using new e-business practices".

QUALITY AND TEAMWORK

The key to competitive advantage is to take away fear in the organisation and give power to multi-skilled teams. This has been demonstrated by nearly half a century of evidence. This modern concept must replace the old-fashioned practice of ordering people about and the constant obsession with costs. If people are trusted with taking responsibility for the quality of their work, then not only are they more satisfied but also the quality of the product improves.

This concept arose out of the teachings of an American named Deming. He argued that companies should banish fear from the workplace. Fear discourages responsibility and inhibits communication. It was taken up by companies such as Toyota, Sony and Honda and helped build their success. In the UK it was originally tried but was usually unsuccessful. This was because the UK managers liked the ideas of quality but found it too hard to bother with the necessary training and the release of authority. Quality was viewed by the workforce as yet another thing to struggle with and was not seen as a way to improve their own "quality of life".

It is now time to re-assess the approach to quality, train and trust staff and equip them with the right skills and watch the team provide the quality improvements.

Further information on treating people well and improving profits can be found at www.unshrinkthepeople.com by Philip Whitely and max Mckeown.

QUALITY OF NHS CANCER SCREENING

In a recent report the NHS admitted that one in three women with cervical cancer had been wrongly given the all-clear. This puts a serious doubt on the quality of national cancer screening. An audit of cervical smear test results in Leicestershire found that 14 women died and a further 64 needed hysterectomies or other surgery, because the early signs of cancer were not detected. These results suggest the 120 women in England die every year after receiving the all-clear from cervical smear test and another 550 have to go through more serious surgery due to early signs being missed. The Leicestershire audit of all 403 women suffering from cervical cancer between 1993 and 2000 found that 324 had been given smear tests. 84 of those had been given a false all-clear result and a further 38, which had shown some abnormalities, were told there was nothing to worry about. Professor Richards has apologised to the patients and relatives and has said that Leicester cancer service is performing well on all qualitative assurance measures”.

AEROSPACE STANDARDS

In 1998, major aerospace primes, suppliers and associations from Europe, Asia and America met together within the International Aerospace Quality Group (IAQG) to assist and develop initiatives for quality improvement for the benefit of the whole global industry. One output has been AS/prEN/SJAC. This is a standard that harmonises the quality system requirements of some of the largest aerospace companies and suppliers, including Airbus Industries, BAE Systems, The Boeing Company, General Electric Aircraft Engines, Pratt and Whitney and Rolls Royce. The standard is based on the quality system requirements of ISO9001:1994 with sector specific requirements for aerospace. Revised versions of the UK, ASCS TS 157 (Issue 4) and the Americas, AIR 5359 were launched in January 2001 and these schemes require certification to the new standard.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SGS AND CETECOM

SGS Group and CETECOM Network have agreed to explore a long-term cooperation in the field of emerging global standards for short range wireless communication called Bluetooth TM. The SGS Group is involved in verification, testing and certification. CETECOM provides consulting, development, testing and certification services to the telecommunications and information technology industry. The Bluetooth TM trademarks are owned by Bluetooth SIG, Inc USA.

ROAD SHOWS IN SCOTLAND HELP RAISE PROFILE OF ISO14001

Electronics Scotland, the Institute of Sustainable Technology and the BSI have run a series of road shows in Scotland to educate small companies about the benefits of ISO 14001, the environmental management standard. Interest in this standard is growing for several reasons. There is new legislation from both the UK Government and the European Union, and it can provide a competitive advantage. When companies can demonstrate to existing clients and future customers that they are committed to efficiency and then by passing this efficiency on to clients through competitive costs, it means that both supplier and customer can benefit significantly from adopting ISO 14001. Thus, it gives cost savings, increased efficiency and improved public perception. The road shows were an opportunity to demonstrate to smaller companies these benefits that can be gained and provided an overview of the registration requirements.

Further details on ISO14001 can be found contacting help@qmt.co.uk.. Electronics in Scotland environment@electronics-scotland.com.

PACKAGING

Two UK bodies, the British Retail Consortium (BRE) and the Institute of Packaging are working together to develop a technical standard. The aim is to ensure that all packaging suppliers are aware of their legal obligations. There is a legal obligation on UK retailers and their suppliers to take all reasonable precautions to avoid product contamination throughout the whole process from development to advertising and sale to the consumer. Suppliers of packaging share this responsibility and the new standard will assist both food manufacturers and retailers to fulfil their legal obligations. The technical standard is expected to be published later this year. For further information on the scheme contact the Institute of Packaging on h.emblem@talk21.com.

WEB WATCH

These 2 interesting sites are worth a visit:

www.100.nist.gov

The National Institute of Standards & Technology (NIST), is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, founded March 1901. It was originally called the National Bureau of Standards.

www.camc.com

The Canadian Association of Management Consultants site has a comprehensive listing of worldwide consultants according to industry, language and their area of speciality. The site also contains information about professional development courses and articles about consulting tip.

US HEALTHCARE IN NEED OF REFORM

According to the American National Academies Institute of Medicine, their healthcare system is in urgent need of reorganisation and improvement. The US Health industry has failed to provide safe, high quality care consistently. Healthcare organisations are encouraged to focus on improving care for some of the most common chronic illnesses, such as heart diseases, asthma and diabetes, etc. It is suggested that Healthcare professionals and hospitals should develop procedures and action plans to improve their care for each of the priority conditions over a period of five years. The report recommends; teamwork among healthcare workers; an information technology system that would eliminate most handwritten clinical data within the next ten years; and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should still monitor the quality improvements in safety, efficiency and effectiveness. For further information on this report, please visit www4.nationalacademies.org

SOLICITORS HAVE BEEN WARNED

According to a report in the Daily Telegraph, The office for the Supervision of Solicitors, the Law Society body that deals with complaints against solicitors in England and Wales, has failed to meet all but one of the targets it agreed in July 1999. Solicitors have been told that unless they improve the way they handle complaints, the profession's unrestricted right to regulate its affairs could be removed. The Lord Chancellor's Department minister, David Lock, has reported to say, that the Government has not yet decided whether to appoint a complaints commissioner, which would have the power to fine the Law Society if the standards were not met.