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## Culture Change B Improving Your People

There are many techniques available to support business and quality improvements: six sigma and lean to name but two. The success of these programmes is dependent on the knowledge and motivation of the people who are involved in them, and the results are only as sustainable as those people want them to be.

(See May's issue of the QM&T newsletter B Autonomous team working)

How often have you heard the phrase *Our people are our greatest asset*? Countless times no doubt. However the number of organisations actively improving their people are few and far between. Often *training* is seen as an expense with very little benefit. By cultivating the right culture in your company, it is possible to greatly increase the rate and the effectiveness of business improvement programmes, and ensure that the results are sustained. Savings, improvements to process and service, waste reduction etc., can be delivered earlier, with significant benefits to the organisation, by first investing in the development of the people in that organisation.

One of the innovative differences with this programme, compared to other business improvement initiatives, is that the organisation's senior management do not need to spend vast amounts of time developing visions and values and then attempting to communicate these to their staff. Each team or department work through a process to create their own agreed set of behaviours, designed to improve the way it works internally and with other teams or departments. The processes itself is designed to be enjoyable and motivational, with some aspects being very structured and others conducted as an open forum. The end result is a focused, motivated team with clear goals and a desire to take part in further continuous improvement activities, using their own ideas and skills, to improve every aspect of their work.

Laura Allan, has spent the last four years designing, refining and delivering Culture Change Programmes, with significant success, both in production and support functions within Boots Manufacturing (part of Boots plc).

If you wish to learn about these programmes, please contact [help@qmt.co.uk](mailto:help@qmt.co.uk)

## **Food Technology Focus**

The September version of the ISO Focus magazine looks at food technology and collates all that is happening on standardisation in the food industry. The core standardisation is based on the work of the ISO Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, Food Products, and covers all the basic food products (tea and coffee, milk and milk products, rice and cereals, meat, fruit and vegetables, fats and oils) as well as new issues such as GMOs and food chain traceability.

Currently ISO is working on ISO22000, *Food safety management systems - Requirements throughout the food chain*. This area has become increasingly important because of concerns over BSE and dioxins etc.

For more information please see [www.iso.ch](http://www.iso.ch)

## **Anti-Salt Campaign**

September 12<sup>th</sup> saw the launch of the food standards agency's attack on salt. The campaign will include television and radio advertising in an attempt to raise public awareness of the dangers of excessive salt intake. Too much salt in the diet can lead to all sorts of health problems. The increase in the consumption of fast food and ready meals which include high levels of salt means that more of the population than ever are in danger of suffering from high salt intake related diseases. For more information please see BBC news.

## **Food Inspections**

At the recent annual meeting of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, plans to push for the compulsory display of food-safety certificates at restaurants and cafes were considered. The CIEH are also considering

calling for the adoption of an A-E graded system. A similar scheme has been introduced in Canada and was welcomed by consumers and regulators.

However, the British Hospitality Association are not so supportive of these ideas. They feel that it would soon become subjective and would cause confusion.

Information from BBC News

## **Two Strikes for Customer Service**

According to research US consumers will withstand a maximum of only two negative customer service experiences before they will take their business elsewhere,

One thousand customers were surveyed about their experiences in the financial, retail and telecommunications industries. The results showed that consumers valued good customer service, and that they held companies accountable when they lacked in that area. The survey also found that over 75 per cent of consumers would hang up when they left holding for more than five minutes on the telephone.

Over 80 per cent of consumers would prefer to visit the dentist, pay their taxes or sit in a traffic jam than deal with an unhelpful representative. Eighty-five per cent said that a negative customer service would encourage them to change their provider.

As Michael Couture, vice president of Amdocs, the Company who carried out the research put it: 'If today's consumers aren't treated well, they will take their dollars elsewhere. As organisations offer their customers more differentiated services, presenting a single "storefront" to the consumer becomes even more critical.' For further details please visit [www.Customer.satisfaction.co.uk](http://www.Customer.satisfaction.co.uk)

## Hangovers Give UK Firms a Headache

The cost to the UK economy of employees' hangovers has been estimated to be £2.8 billion a year, according to research by employment agency Reed. Workers spend an average of 2.5 days hung over on the job, while nationally an average of 2.3 days is taken off sick as a result of drinking. A third of people admitted taking up to five days off. The poll was conducted across a range of industries with almost 8,500 workers taking part. More than half of those polled said that longer pub opening times hit their productivity levels. For information on Managing Absenteeism please visit [www.customer.satisfaction.co.uk](http://www.customer.satisfaction.co.uk)

## 'A New Standard for LINUX

LINUX is emerging as a viable alternative to Microsoft Windows and associated products. Its rising popularity has been its lower TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) such as; no proprietary licence fees, lower specification hardware requirements and stronger security against computer viruses and trojans.

The Free Standards Group, a non-profit organisation dedicated to developing and promoting open source software standards, has announced the availability of the Linux Standard Base (LSB) 2.0.

The LSB has support from companies supplying computer systems and Linux. Among them are IBM, Dell, HP, Intel, Red Hat, SUSE LINUX. The main advantage of the LSB is to prevent the fragmentation of the operating system producing a variety of proprietary products. With this baseline, it's expected that there will be an increase of applications written to run on this operating system.

Distributors that comply with the LSB achieve interoperability with application software written to the standard. This is crucial for the on-going success for Linux as it simplifies the development and porting of applications and

guarantees end users will not get forced into a closed operating platform.

More information is available at [www.freestandards.org](http://www.freestandards.org).

## World Standards Day

World Standards Day takes place on 14 October 2004 and this year's theme is *Standards connect the World@*. In their World Standards Day message the Presidents of the IEC, ISO and the Secretary General of the ITU say *From the simple to the complex, from the minute to the massive, from the local to the global, international standards are omnipresent in products and services and in the components of the global supply chains for which they provide the backbone.....Standards provide solutions, get the job done, connect people. Standards connect the world@*

For further information on World Standards Day and a down loadable poster please visit [www.iso.ch](http://www.iso.ch)

## Health & Safety at Work

The British standard for occupational health and safety has been revised and it should be of more help to small and medium sized businesses. The new standard - BS8800:2004 has better guidance on risk assessment and risk management and takes account of the changes in national and international OH&S issues since the last version BS8800:1996. Mike Low, Director, British Standards says *Following its update, BS8800 will provide a number of key benefits to SME's. Firstly it will help reduce risk to employees and others by developing good working practices to prevent accidents and work-related ill health. Business performance will improve through saved costs and better productivity and it will help create a positive and responsible reputation* For more information on BS8800:2004 *Occupational health and safety management systems* please visit [www.bsi-global.com/healthandsafety](http://www.bsi-global.com/healthandsafety).

## **Cars are bad for our Health say Air Quality Experts**

Two reports recently published by the UK's Air Quality Expert Group, show that the UK will not meet key air quality standards set by the European Commission for 2010. Michael Pilling at Leeds University, director of the group, believes Europe's cities and heavily polluted areas like roadsides will also fail to meet these standards. 'We clearly have to look at improvements in technology,' says Pilling, who presented the reports' findings at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Festival in Exeter earlier this month. 'But it's not going to take us all the way. We have to look at other factors, in particular our use of cars.' Over the past 50 years, air quality in industrialised countries has generally improved due to technologies such as catalytic converters. Levels of air pollutants are not improving fast enough to allay health fears. High levels of nitrogen dioxide gas can cause severe respiratory problems and contribute to global warming. And particulate matter (PM) B tiny particles of dust, soot and metals - has been linked to heart disease. For more information please see BBC news.

## **Visitor Attractions gain Quality Approval**

Visitor accommodation providers throughout Britain can be quality assured. VisitBritain operates a National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) scheme and is urging more businesses to participate. Over 22,000 accommodation providers are already members and it is designed to reflect the preferences of visitors and offer them the reliability of a set

level of quality at the accommodation they have booked. The assessments are carried out by Unicorn Tourism Limited and each assessment includes a full de-brief and a comprehensive report with objective feedback. A free leaflet is available from VisitBritain that outlines the different quality standard available in England and explains the benefits of taking part in the scheme and how to enter. This leaflet is available free, please email [feedback@visitbritain.org](mailto:feedback@visitbritain.org).

## **Institute of Quality Assurance Annual Awards**

IQA's first ever Awards dinner will take place on World Quality Day - 11 November 2004. The venue will be the Shakespeare Globe Theatre, London with dining taking place in the UnderGlobe. The John Loxham Seminar will take place on the day with guest speaker Mike Low, the BSI's recently appointed director British Standards. Events will take place through the day including, exhibition, tours and a reception. The Awards being given out include the IQA National Award for the best thesis or work-based project on a quality related subject - and it is still possible to enter for this award, the Outstanding Service Award, which is presented to those who have worked to further the interests of the IQA. And the Wilkinson Sword Award for the IQA branch that has done most to promote the IQA's objectives and which has had the most impact in educating and serving the business community. To book a place contact [www.iqa.org](http://www.iqa.org)