

Change for the future

I would like to use this opportunity to review the work of the Institute's Council of Management over the past six years and outline the steps taken to ensure the Institute operates in a cost effective and efficient manner for the benefit of its membership.

Over the past few years the Institute has gone through a period of profound change. We have looked in depth at the way the organisation operates and tried very hard to produce a blueprint for the future. In the last six years the Institute's Council of Management has taken a number of decisions that have been radical in concept. In 2001 we recognised that the office we had in Enfield was very costly and we took the decision to close it down and outsource our administration to Lichfield. The move to Lichfield has been very successful and many members have even commented that they were receiving a superior service to that previously provided by Enfield. The move to Lichfield actually resulted in savings exceeding £100,000 per year.

Life membership

One problem we have not succeeded in resolving has been our declining membership. Basically we have an ageing membership profile with few new members joining but older members leaving as they retire or die. In 2004 Council took a radical decision to recommend to the membership that we should offer life membership. The strategy of met with opposition who actually campaigned against it offering a viable alternative. We even had one former member of Council insisting we merge with another Institute, which was actually on the verge of bankruptcy.

The Council of Management did look at merging with other Institutes and carried out feasibility studies on three possible partners. The in-depth investigations concluded that those interested in merging were actually very inefficient and had little in the way of financial reserves. This lack of reserves was in stark contrast to IMS which had more than £400,000.

The thinking behind life membership is simple; it will enable us to further reduce our admin costs, as collecting membership fees each year are costly and very labour intensive. The aim is to use our current high reserves, now in the region of £600,000, to finance the Institute into the future. I am pleased to say that on present predictions we have a life expectancy of 15 years.

The Institute's membership helped build up the financial reserves by their



subscriptions, so it only seems logical that the same membership should benefit by using these funds to finance the Institute's future running costs. By taking out life membership you will save yourself thousands of pounds in subscription fees over coming years.

Management Services Journal

The other major change in 2005 has been the introduction of a quarterly Journal. The production of a monthly Journal was very costly and was becoming a real drain on Institute finances. In taking the decision to move to a quarterly Journal, the Council decided that a key element must be that the membership received the same number of pages of technical articles in the four issues per year as they previously received in the old system of 12 editions.

The new frequency of has been greeted with universal approval from the membership. We have been very lucky in obtaining the services of the Deeson Group to produce the journal for us and they are doing a most professional job. The new quarterly Journal has resulted in an annual cost saving exceeding £60,000 and still contains the same number of pages of technical articles.

Management Services Certificate

Over recent months, members of the Institute's Council of Management have been active in devising a new structure for our examinations. After extensive discussions with our education providers, September 2005 will see the introduction of a much more flexible approach to how students can study for the Management Services Certificate. The Institute will still retain overall control of the examination system, but will pass day-to-day responsibility for course content and setting examinations to the education providers.

Institute website

The Institute recognises that increasingly the Internet is playing a key role in people's lives and is perhaps unequalled in the way it can disseminate information. Currently a new Institute website is being designed and we hope to have it up and running by the year-end. We hope to establish an e-mail forum to enable members to exchange information and seek support from other Institute members on productivity related issues. It is also intended to place Journal articles on the website so that members have a permanent reference source.

Whilst at this time it is not considered that the Internet can replace the publication of the Institute Journal, it is not unrealistic to conclude that in future years paper publications may well be replaced by the electronic distribution of technical information and articles. May I hasten to reassure members that the Institute currently has no plans to do away with its quarterly Journal, which will be published way into the future.

Change and the future

The changes and innovations detailed above have involved many hours of work by the members of the Institute's Council of Management, all undertaken on a voluntary basis. Twenty years ago Council consisted of 27 members and today we have just eight. This reduction has really benefited the Institute as each member has to assume responsibility for a specific area of operation and this has played a key part in our being able to reach speedy decisions and to be innovative in our approach to the management of the Institute.

I will, without hesitation, suggest that it would be extremely difficult to find another professional Institute that has introduced such radical change and operates as efficiently and cost effectively as the Institute of Management Services.

I hope that the above information helps you understand the changes that have taken place in your Institute and to appreciate the logic behind those changes. As a professional body, we expound the virtues of change and the need for efficiency, so is it only right that we operate our Institute in the most efficient manner possible. I sincerely believe that many other professional Institutes could learn a great deal from studying the changes within our own over the past six years.

David Blanchflower
Deputy Chairman