The Institute of Management Services is the primary body in the UK concerned with the promotion, practice and development of the range of methodologies and techniques for the improvement of productivity and quality, known collectively as ‘Management Services’. This embraces the disciplines of industrial engineering, work study, organisation and methods, systems analysis, and a wide range of management information and control techniques as illustrated in our Body of Knowledge.

The Institute acts as the qualifying body for the Management Services profession in the UK, focusing developments in practice and knowledge and acting as a forum for information exchange. This in turn enables our members who work under a variety of job titles across the whole of the UK economy, to make a more effective contribution to the well-being of their own organisation and to the nation’s economy as a whole.

In addition to creating and upholding professional standards for the practice of management services through the adoption of a code of ethics and the provision of a system of qualifying examinations, the Institute of Management Services collaborates with national and international professional bodies in similar fields.

The Institute is a member of, or represented on, a number of other bodies including the World Confederation of Productivity Science, the European Federation of Productivity Services, and the European Institute of Industrial Engineers.

Institute of Management Services
Brooke House
24 Dam Street
Lichfield
Staffs WS13 6AA
Telephone: +44 (0)1543 266909
Fax: +44 (0)1543 257848
Email: admin@ims-stowe.fsnet.co.uk
IMS website: www.ims-productivity.com

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In this issue of Management Services…

Cover Story

Without research in Organisational Development and change management, Lean Six Sigma as a credible change strategy is incomplete, says Philip Atkinson

Chairman’s column 4

Who’s who in the IMS? 6
A warm welcome to Harry Hogg

Institute and Regional News 7

Productivity News 8

UK manufacturing continues to grow 11

Increasing productivity by improving staff health and wellbeing 12
Promoting a wellness at work programme really is a win-win situation, say Saul Bloxham and Carl Evans

Productivity and the role of industrial engineering techniques 17
By John Davies and Mike Ryan

Emerging technologies 20
Emerging technologies are set to revolutionise the field service industry

Hello Hello Africa 22
How mobile technology and e-services are enhancing the productivity of Africa. By Joan Deguerre and David Parker

How to be a leader with edge 28
Only a small portion of managers have the necessary skills to become strong leaders, says Annie Richardson

Change mastery: Lean Six Sigma and business transformation 30
By Philip Atkinson

Summer changes to employment law and tribunal rules 36
By Kate Boguslawska

Best practices in talent management to support Lean manufacturing 38
Adam Cobb gives advice on enhancing individual and organisational productivity

Office workers don’t want to ‘think outside the box’ when it comes to business jargon 40

Knowledge management and the high performance organisation 41
The findings of a new report suggest a very bright future for management services practitioners, says Colin Coulson-Thomas
I n the autumn issue, I made reference to a number of multi-nationals that have reduced their corporation tax liabilities in the UK by using subsidiaries in other countries. I also mentioned David Cameron’s determination to push for tougher tax transparency rules.

Therefore, I was interested to read that as a consequence of the government’s crack down on tax avoidance fraud and mistakes, it saved £6.5 billion last year. The vast majority (£6 billion) was saved by shutting down tax avoidance schemes.

Cabinet office minister Francis Maude said of the total: “That’s nearly £400 saved for every working family.” But this is only the tip of the iceberg as £23 billion was still lost to fraud and admin errors and more measures are needed.

The most recent revelation concerns Boots which, according to a joint report by the charity War on Want and the union Unite, has managed to avoid paying £1.2 billion in tax in the past six years. Parent company Alliance Boots allegedly funnelled cash to Gibraltar, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Cayman Islands. Unite’s leader Ken McCluskey said: “Tax avoidance is part of the DNA of corporate British culture” and went on to accuse Boots of “taking work from the NHS while avoiding its tax liabilities.”

Boots highlighted inaccuracies within the report and stated that “it conducts its affairs in compliance with all applicable law.” But merely complying with the letter of the law is different from doing the right thing – morally, it is indefensible!

**Mark of appreciation**

On the domestic front, I was pleased to host a Past Chairmen’s Dinner in October (see opposite). The event recognised the contribution made by each chairman during their period in office. Having now been in post for two years, I appreciate the time and effort that goes into the role with no real reward apart from the gratification that you are putting something back into the profession that has provided the platform upon which to build a successful career. Therefore, on your behalf, I’d like to once again thank all of the past chairmen for the contribution they have made to the Institute and indeed, the profession as a whole.

October’s AGM saw a change in personnel on Council of Management. Harry Hogg (see page 7) and Kevan Kelly were elected and it gives me great pleasure to welcome them on board. I’m sure they will have a fresh input and I look forward to working with them over the next few years.

We also saw the departure of Dr John Lucey who has decided to stand down after 25 years on Council, including five years as chairman. Our treasurer, David Blanchflower, has paid tribute to John (see opposite page), but I feel it would be remiss of me not to add my own personal tribute. John is a highly respected colleague and his contribution during his many years on Council is immeasurable. He has held every position on Council and I hesitate to consider where we would have been without his input. Certainly his drive and determination will be sadly missed. I’m sure, along with me, you would like to thank him for his contribution and wish him well in whatever he chooses to do in the future.

Finally, I’m sure everyone would agree that 2013 has been a very challenging year in many ways, so I’d like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very happy Christmas and a productive and prosperous New Year.

**Dr Andrew Muir, chairman**
John Lucey retires from IMS Council

After almost 25 years as a member of the Institute’s Council of Management, John Lucey (pictured below, right) has decided to stand down. John first joined the Institute in February 1970 and successfully completed the IMS Certificate in August 1971, followed by the Diploma in September 1974.

John was active in the IMS managers’ group before being elected to Council. Over the years, he has held a number of positions, including chairman of the membership committee during the period that the Institute’s region and branch structure was reorganised.

John served as deputy chairman and national chairman between 2000 and 2008, and it was during these years that the Institute made some radical changes, closing the office in Enfield and out-sourcing the admin to Lichfield. The journal was revamped and went from a monthly publication to the present excellent quarterly publication. The Institute also introduced life membership and it’s true to say that John played a major role in all of these initiatives.

John served as company secretary, chairman of the media committee, treasurer and as council delegate to both the East and West Midlands regions, throwing himself with gusto into every role. He has always been a man with tremendous energy – no challenge was ever too big for him – and the Institute has benefitted tremendously from his active involvement.

In June 2010, the IMS Council recognised John’s major contribution when it awarded him an Hon Fellowship of the Institute.

We will miss John’s enthusiasm and drive at Council and also his support and caring nature. John can be a hard task master but he is also a kind and considerate man. We wish him health and happiness in his future life and thank him sincerely for all his work on behalf of our Institute.

David Blanchflower, national treasurer

Formal dinner honours past chairmen

In October, Dr Andrew Muir hosted a dinner for past IMS chairmen at Netherstowe House, Lichfield. The purpose of the dinner was to formally recognise their contribution to the Institute during their period in office and to present them with Past Chairman medals and certificates.


Also honoured, but unable to attend, was Ron Whitley (1991-1995).

The evening was a great success and, although formal, was very relaxed with many hilarious anecdotes and reminiscences shared.

Particular thanks to the staff at Netherstowe House for helping to make the evening so memorable.
Who’s who in the IMS

The Council of Management recently welcomed Harry Hogg, an active IMS member who brings a wealth of experience to the table.

Recently elected to the Institute’s Council of Management, Harry Hogg has been active within the organisation for many years and is currently chairman of the North West Region.

Harry joined the Institute in 1989. By 1992, he had completed a full time course in work study at Fielden House Productivity Centre in Manchester and gained the IMS Diploma at Wigan College where he had previously obtained a Diploma in Polymaths.

Joining the IMS North West Region, Harry served as Treasurer, then Secretary, before becoming Chairman of the Board. In 1998 he became a ‘Fellow’ of the Institute.

Throughout the 1980s at Wigan College, Harry assisted disadvantaged students and adults as a volunteer tutor in literacy and numeracy. He continued his voluntary work into the 1990s, acting as a business advisor for Young Enterprise, a charity set up to provide young people with an exciting and imaginative practical business experience.

In 1988, Harry was promoted to Work Study Officer at a well known Wigan hand tool manufacturer, and assisted the company in installing its MRP and quality systems. Attending Scott Grant, he obtained the MTMX qualification and during this period, also trained to use the Tectime electronic time study system.

In the early 1990s, Harry’s employer took ownership of a large tool company based in Wolverhampton. Unlike the Wigan site which used the traditional forging method of tool manufacture, it made hand tools mainly via press machines. The combined company underwent a major restructure, coupled with the rationalisation and standardisation of the product range.

During the mid 90s which were financially turbulent times for manufacturing, and due to the company being taken over and subsequent downsizing, Harry sought employment elsewhere. He gained consultancy work for ACAS, successfully helping major companies resolve disputes between management and unions.

Until the early 2000s, Harry worked in various industrial engineering positions. He became employed as engineering buyer for the Standish Company which was a part of Coat’s Viella. His main duties there included imports and inventory stock control, the monitoring of energy usage, waste management and engineering budget control.

Harry moved on to become a senior production engineer for ERF Trucks in Cheshire. The company eventually relocated from Sandbach to Middlewich where Harry was involved with major capital investments, plant layouts and the installation of specialist equipment, as well as the design and implementation of new jigs and fixtures.

After being trained and registered with Lloyd’s Quality Assurance, Harry was appointed internal auditor of the company’s quality assurance system. The shop floor work procedures were compiled and operator training was accomplished to improve the consistency of output. At a later stage, Harry became involved with training and operatives were assisted in gaining their NVQs.

Because of the further decline in the manufacturing industry, Harry decided to move towards the finance industry and successfully became a qualified self employed mortgage advisor, gaining the Diploma in Energy Assessment, conducting home surveys and issuing the energy performance certificates.

Currently Harry attends and gives support to cancer care groups for the local NHS Trust which provides an advocacy service and help to individuals who have been affected by cancer.
East Midlands Region visits £750 million power station

In October, a party from the East Midlands Region visited the Staythorpe Power Station, near Newark in Nottinghamshire.

The site, adjacent to the River Trent, has a 60 year history as the location of giant power stations. Staythorpe ‘A’ plant was commissioned in March 1950 and Staythorpe ‘B’ in May 1962. Both were solid fuel fired using coal from the nearby mines in Nottinghamshire.

The two plants were demolished in the 1990s, leaving the site clear for the construction of Staythorpe ‘C’, one of the most modern and efficient gas turbine power stations in the UK. Built at a cost of £750 million, it was officially opened in May 2011.

The reduced manpower requirements (80 men per day as opposed to 500 per day at the old plant) and increased capacity are the result of the latest designs, computerisation and the use of modern gas technology.

The plant consists of four generators – Gas Turbine Alstom G.T 26 – which are highly efficient with a maximum loss in transmission of only 4%.

The site is owned by RWE of Germany, a company with a total generating capacity of 40,000MW in Europe, 70 different sites and employing 18,000 people.

John Davies, secretary

Scottish Region News: Jack Vettriano was trained in management services

In the last issue, reference was made to Sir John Harvey Jones who said, “your training in management services is the finest introduction to business life one could possibly have and the habits and the way you look at things never leave you.”

It was also stated that ‘the fundamentals are the same whether you remain a practitioner or strive to become a captain of industry:’

Well, some of us neither remain a practitioner or become a captain of industry but go on to make their mark in other professions.

For example, a certain Jack Hoggan was employed in the work study office at Fife County Council in the early 70s. Jack adopted his mother’s maiden name ‘Vettriano’ in 1987, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The habits Jack learned in the office have certainly never left him, as prints of his paintings have outsold Monet and he is reputed to earn in excess of £500,000 a year from royalties.

Some of his colleagues in the work study office were lucky enough to acquire a Jack Hoggan painting – they may be interested to know that one was recently valued on the BBC’s Antiques Roadshow at between £15,000 and £20,000.

Andrew Muir, Scottish Region Secretary

West Midlands Region goes potty over Wedgwood

A party from the West Midlands Region visited the Wedgwood visitor centre, museum and factory in the Staffordshire countryside.

The factory tour took us from the initial preparation of the china clay, through to the finished products, the majority of which are exported. Wedgwood has always maintained its reputation for attention to detail and we were shown individual items with a retail value of thousands of pounds.

Its founder Josiah Wedgwood, born in 1730, used a combination of entrepreneurship and scientific application to develop new processes and methods for producing pottery.

An almost priceless collection includes fine examples of Wedgwood’s experimental and development work – from the early primitive products to the finest bone china and sophisticated ornaments including the iconic blue and white jasper ware.

John Hopkinson, chairman

In September, the North West regional board members and their partners met for the annual lunch at The Owls in Standish near Wigan.

Eastern Region

I attended a meeting at Lichfield to discuss a range of issues on the current and future operation of the Institute and to explore the possibility of getting the regions and regional board members more involved in the Institute at a higher level.

Progress on a range of the initiatives in support of the Institute’s strategy, including media and marketing, education and development and membership and recruitment, were addressed. In the spirit of widening the consultation progress, I would welcome your views on these, or any other initiatives you think we should be addressing. Please contact me if you would like more information.

On another matter, I am trying to locate a copy of the Institutes’s Certificate Distance Learning Package (circa1987). If you have any information, please contact me through our website imseasternregion.co.uk or on (020) 8366 2445.

Ray Martin, Chair Eastern Region
Workplace productivity affected by low literacy and numeracy levels

Language, literacy and numeracy skills in the Australian workplace are at a ‘disturbing’ level, impacting workplace productivity, according to new research from the Australian Industry Group.

The survey of Australian employers found that 93% reported that low level literacy and numeracy skills are impacting negatively on their businesses.

The report, Getting it Right: Foundation Skills for the Workforce, covered companies in various industries including manufacturing, services, construction and mining. It found that low literacy skills were significantly impacting the completion of workplace documents and reports at 21%, as well as contributing to time wasting at 17.7% and materials wastage at 11.5%.

Ai Group chief executive Innes Willox said that the data reflects recent findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which showed 44% of Australians aged 15-74 have literacy skills below Level 3, with Level 1 being the lowest.

Willox also stated that 55% had numeracy skills below Level 3. “While this represents a slight improvement in literacy and a slight deterioration in numeracy compared to previous results, it is clear that a major problem still exists.”

Agro-productivity in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh government is implementing a World Bank funded project to improve agricultural productivity and ensure food security for the people of Bangladesh. The project will directly benefit approximately 300,000 small and marginal farmers in agro-ecologically constrained areas.

The World Bank estimates that of those benefiting, around 175,000 would be crop farmers, 60,000 livestock farmers and 60,000 fish farmers.

The project will enhance the productivity of agriculture in the flash-flood and drought-prone northern districts of Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari, and Lalmonirhat; and salt-affected tidal surge areas in the southern districts of Barisal, Patuakhali, Barguna and Jhalokhati.

The forgotten workforce

Workforce management solutions provider Kronos Incorporated recently launched a new report, The Forgotten Workforce. The report highlights some of the most common issues affecting workplace motivation performance and outlines positive actions which UK management can take to address the concerns of Britain’s ‘forgotten workforce’ as well as increase productivity and profit.

In the wake of the credit crunch and prolonged UK recession, British businesses have had to make tough business decisions to ensure survival in challenging economic times. In many cases, managers have been forced to deliver tactical efficiency goals rather than business effectiveness. Amongst the biggest losers in this ‘efficiency and survival’ mentality has been the UK workforce. In particular, this has hit workers in key sectors such as retail, hospitality, contract services, and manufacturing.

UK workers have become the ‘forgotten workforce’. They have suffered a series of blows to morale, including cuts to their working hours, increasingly inconsistent working patterns, pay freezes, and introduction of zero hours. This, coupled with little or no investment in technology to support employees, has led to a UK workforce lacking morale and disengaged from the business. An efficient business needs an efficient workforce. If this cycle continues, businesses will face increasingly poor productivity and the UK economic recovery will suffer.

Neil Pickering, director, Kronos stated: “The effects of a long recession have resulted in the creation of a trudging, uninspired workforce, with a lack of desire to contribute to the success of the business.”
Official data indicates that Britain’s workers are producing less per hour than the average worker in other large economies, opening up the biggest ‘productivity gap’ between the UK and its peers for almost 19 years.

The data indicates that output per hour worked in the UK in 2012 was 16 percentage points below the average of the other G7 industrialised countries.

The data serves to illustrate the unusual behaviour of Britain’s labour market since the financial crisis of 2008. Companies appeared to have held on to workers through the 2008-2009 recession rather than fire them. They also hired extra staff in 2012 even though the economy was barely growing. High quality global journalism requires investment.

This so-called ‘productivity puzzle’ has meant UK output per hour in 2012 was two percentage points below its level before the recession and 15 percentage points below the level it would have been if productivity had continued on its pre 2008 crisis trend.

In 2012 output per hour worked in Britain was some 24 percentage points below Germany and France. Only Japanese workers were less productive.

Associated British Ports of Southampton has been ranked the most productive port in Europe and the number one performing container terminal in the UK, according to an independent industry study.

Based on confidential data charting more than 100,000 port calls at 400 ports during 2012, the analysis from the Journal of Commerce put Southampton’s productivity performance among a global elite.

The findings place Southampton at 20th in the world for productivity. It is the only port in Europe to feature in the top 20, with an average of 71 container moves per hour. This compares to 49 container moves per hour at the UK’s other major container port at Felixstowe.

Southampton named Europe’s most productive container port

Data shows productivity gap between UK and G7 peers
Better communication leads to five-fold increase in worker productivity

On average, small business workers lose more than one work week per year due to old PCs, according to a recent multi-country study commissioned by Intel Corporation and conducted by Techaisle.

The Intel Small Business PC Refresh Study surveyed 736 small businesses in Brazil, China, Germany, India, Russia and the United States to gauge the state of their PC equipment. According to the findings, small businesses are holding onto PCs significantly beyond the recommended refresh date, with more than 36% owning PCs that are more than four years old. These machines require more maintenance, exerting a greater toll on employee productivity and higher equipment costs than the purchase of a new machine.

“Upgrading to new PCs is one of the wisest choices a small business can make,” said Rick Echevarria, vice president of PC Client Group and general manager of Business Client Platform Division at Intel. “PCs are largely considered the foundation for many of these companies, and this study makes a clear cut case for refreshing them on a regular basis,” he added.

Older PCs negatively impact work performance. On average, employees lose 21 more hours by using a PC that is four years or older due to time needed for repairs, maintenance and security issues as compared to PCs that are less than four years old.

Repair and maintenance is 1.5 times more frequent on PCs that are four years or older, according to the report.

Worker productivity is nearly five times greater than it was in the 1970s and could increase by another 22% by 2020, according to a report by the Centre for Economic and Business Research.

The report attributes this productivity increase to the use of mobile phones, cloud computing, email and business software all of which have made it easier for people to communicate than ever before.

Author, Colm Sheehy, says employers will expect even more. “Essentially you’ll be able to get more productivity from the individual within the hours that they’re working.

“It will become a personal choice where the barrier is between the office and home life.”

Email and business software have made it easier for people to communicate than ever before.
UK manufacturing continues to grow

Manufacturing as an industry sector is continuing to show welcome signs of growth, according to reports in the national media. Survey compilers Markit published results in early November, which showed that manufacturing notched up its seventh straight month of improvement; manufacturing output is growing at a quarterly rate of around 1-1.5%. Making a ‘solid start’ to the last quarter of 2013, the manufacturing sector was helped by a rapid rise in export orders and provided a major boost to the UK economy in October, the survey revealed.

Manufacturing is often considered to be the ‘metal bashing’ side of engineering, but the sector is diverse and far more than the likes of automotive and aerospace. Manufacturing includes food and drink, packaging and print, ceramics, pharmaceuticals, textiles, clothing, footwear, electronics and electrics, timber, furniture and other wood products, processing of raw materials, oil, chemicals etc. No surprise then to read the comments of senior economist at Markit, Rob Dobson: “The UK is no longer being left behind in the chase to benefit from improving global markets. A strengthening domestic market, riding on the crest of a wave from recent positive economic news, also remains a prime driver of the recovery. This should help UK manufacturing remain one of the brighter growth spots in the world manufacturing economy, as highlighted by its position at the top of the global PMI (Purchasing Managers’ Index) rankings throughout the third quarter.”

As a supplier to manufacturing and indeed every other sector, productivity improvement specialist Scott-Grant Ltd has also seen evidence of this upturn in the sector. Managing Director Richard Taylor observed, “Upwards of 50% of our business comes from engineering and manufacturing organisations and we have seen during this year an upsurge of activity in that sector. For example in our training business our volumes have increased by 20% and within that, there has been a 15% rise from the manufacturing sector. To illustrate the diversity of the sector, we have helped businesses making shower cubicles, coffins, bread and cakes, ceramics, gas boilers, car seats, building products, books, advanced medical machines and military hats!”

Scott-Grant was keen to be active and support the sector on a regional basis and was a sponsor and exhibitor at the recent annual Durham Oktoberfest in the North East of England. Now in its sixth year, the Durham Oktoberfest has gained momentum year on year as the region’s premier engineering and manufacturing show. Over 120 companies exhibited at the event and visitors on the day totalled almost 1,500.

David Noble, Scott-Grant’s Operations Manager in the North East was delighted at the response to the company’s presence at the Newton Aycliffe event. “We received a number of good enquiries on the day which have lead to some interesting proposals. Scott-Grant has been well known to companies in the North East and over the years has helped many improve their productivity either by supplying people on a project or contract basis or via delegates on our training courses.” David was supported on the Scott-Grant stand by fellow Operations Manager Mark Cooper and John Brennan, Operations Director.

The show’s co-founder and organiser Darren Race, is also chairman of both South Durham Business Network and South Durham Engineering and Manufacturing Forum. He commented: “There has been a huge buzz at this year’s event, which has not just been about size, but about quality and promoting the excellent work that is done in both sectors. As a celebration of all things good in the engineering and manufacturing industries in the North East, I think we can say it has been a huge success.”
Increasing productivity by improving staff health and wellbeing

Promoting a wellness at work programme really is a win-win situation, say Saul Bloxham and Carl Evans
**Introduction**

Tight managerial control of operations focusing on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as throughput time, or adopting lean methodologies to reduce waste and duplication, can result in the human aspects of operations being overlooked. Yet, Brown et al (2013) cite numerous examples where the satisfaction of employees in operations can lead to high productivity and the careful management of human resources can be a primary source of competitive advantage.

Nonetheless, the focus on people in operations typically concentrates on more socio-technical aspects – job and organisational design, staff development and approaches to team-working – rather than on the intrinsic wellbeing of the individuals themselves. However, ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff can help contribute to high levels of motivation and productivity. This in turn, can help reduce the costs associated with sickness and absenteeism, and consequently lead to minimising staff turnover and the retention of key skills.

**What we mean by health and wellbeing**

The benefits of leading a physically active lifestyle are well documented, yet physical activity levels in the UK are low and the prevalence of hypokinetic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease are either high or increasing (see bit.ly/1SxjTT).

Historically, employee wellbeing was addressed through health and safety programmes for manual, often physically active occupations. For many workers these jobs have been replaced with low activity office-based work and as such, the type of health and safety interventions necessary to maintain a healthy workforce has changed. Unfortunately, in many UK companies, programmes designed to promote employee wellbeing have failed to keep pace, leading to rising levels of absenteeism, low productivity and high rates of staff turn-over, all of which can compromise corporate performance.

With demographic projections highlighting that 50% of adults will be over 50 years old by 2024 (bit.ly/1CG18hh), the abolition of a compulsory retirement age and many wishing to work for longer, ensuring a workforce in good physical and mental health becomes increasingly significant for managers.

**Why staff health and wellbeing is important**

The cost of ill health in the workplace is high. Thirty million working days are lost in the UK due to occupational illness and injury which cost the economy an estimated £32 billion a year (bit.ly/1fealK3). A workforce in poor health costs employers through increased absenteeism, high staff turnover, low productivity and performance. Employees suffering from stress are more likely to be absent due to depression, anxiety and other psychosomatic complaints.

In addition, smokers cost employers 64 minutes a day in lost productivity and according to the Confederation of British Industry, sickness absence can cost in the region of £495 per employee per year. Chronic diseases like obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and depression cost the NHS £5 billion each year (ind.prn/fe5LKp) and £16 billion in the wider economy. Much of these diseases are caused by lifestyle factors that can be modified, including poor diet and lack of exercise.

**In many UK companies, programmes designed to promote employee wellbeing have failed to keep pace, leading to rising levels of absenteeism, low productivity and high rates of staff turn-over, all of which can compromise corporate performance.**

Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption has also been associated with sickness absence at work. In contrast, employees with low level work-related stress are more productive and report high levels of job satisfaction.

As UK workers spend more of their time (60%) than most other EU countries, it is unsurprising that the most common barriers to taking more exercise and healthy eating are reported as lack of time and access to facilities. Wellness-at-work interventions have significant potential to improve physical activity levels, dietary habits and promote weight loss.

In addition, interventions may lead to secondary improvements in lifestyles of employee’s families, friends and local communities outside of the workplace.

**Research**

Research has shown that low intensity, low cost worksite wellness interventions can have significant and positive effects on employees, whilst at the same time reduce work absenteeism by up to 20%.

With physically active employees taking on average 27% fewer sick days, promoting such wellness at work programmes really is a win-win situation. Other benefits include higher productivity, reduced injuries, decline in workers’ compensation/disability, increased employee morale, loyalty, and sense of self responsibility (Ickes 2009). See Table 1 (over page).
In the financial world, a recent report found that FTSE 100 companies which implemented wellness at work programmes enhanced financial performance on average by 10%. In addition those companies focused on creating a happy and engaging work environment demonstrated a total shareholder return of 61% compared to average return of 51% for those who did not (Peacock, 2010).

In the USA, further benefits include improved standing and reputation in the local community (Wellness Councils of America, 2006) which can raise the bar for health and wellbeing aspiration of the community overall. Whatever the wider social benefits, employees tend to view wellness programmes positively and as an indication of the employer’s commitment to their wellbeing (Ickes and Sharma 2009).

Suggestions for ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff (a suggested approach for managers)
To plan and implement an effective wellness at work programme, careful planning and preparation is required. It is all too easy to offer one off events such as health days, health checks or fun runs that have no longevity or lasting effect. Even time limited interventions for a series of months can only provide short term improvements and typically preach to the converted by attracting those already interested in healthy behaviours.

Wellness programmes woven into the fabric of the company with designated health professionals and supported by managers at every level are more likely to reach those in need. Comprehensive guidelines for small and large size companies wanting to establish an effective wellness at work programme have been published (Ickes and Sharma, 2009; Healthy Workforce 2010) and include seven key areas (Table 2).

Although a comprehensive ‘seven stage’ programme implemented in one may be preferable for maximum impact, small and medium size businesses may wish to embark on a more modest and manageable affair. Implementing stage one, with

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Increased productivity</th>
<th>Reduced absenteeism</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increased staff morale and loyalty</td>
<td>Prevention of disease and injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced staff turnover, training costs</td>
<td>Increased company reputation and prestige</td>
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Table 1. Benefits of a wellness at work programme.

1. Health education, which focuses on skill development and lifestyle behaviour change, along with information dissemination and awareness building, preferably tailored to employees’ interests and needs.

2. Supportive social and physical environments. These include an organisation’s expectations regarding healthy behaviours, and implementation of policies that promote health and reduce risk of disease.

3. Integration of the worksite programme into the organisational structure.

4. Links to related programmes to help employees balance work and family.

5. Worksite screening programmes, which can be linked to medical care to ensure follow-up and appropriate treatment as necessary.

6. Support for individual behaviour change with follow-up interventions.

7. Evaluation and improvement processes to help enhance the programme’s effectiveness

Table 2. Areas to consider when planning a wellness-at-work programme.
a focus on health education and behaviour change or policy development, could suffice to get things moving.

It’s better to start small and build momentum as budgets and time allow. The main consideration is to ensure the wellness programme is well planned, is here to stay for the long-term and is designed for all employees (irrespective of role, contract or position). The extent of the programme is not necessarily the most important factor in the early stages of delivery.

As a guide for employers, the Partnership for Prevention (2001) recommended a 10 step approach when planning, implementing and reviewing a wellness-at-work programme.

Establish a planning committee
The committee should include personnel at all levels that have a vested interest in employee health. It should also be the ‘voice’ of the employees through which concerns and questions can be expressed. Senior management support, in addition to the provision of time and resources, is essential if the planning committee is to gain real traction.

Pre-assessment: Assess the interests and needs of the business and its employees
It’s important to gain information on perceived barriers, interest and preferences of employees. Considering organisational issues specific to the employer, such as the working day, types of injury, illness or diseases that the workforce is susceptible to can help inform the type of programme required. Simple questionnaires or focus groups can help gain information and reduce employee scepticism. Overall, the planning process should help to ensure the programme can be accessed by all, is well perceived, user friendly and confidential.

Develop a programme mission statement, goals and objectives
A mission that encompasses the employee needs, the programme goals and values of the organisation will need to be crafted. Setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) objectives, measured using both quantitative and qualitative data, will best reflect the impact of the programme and enable it to be developed and enhanced over time.

Develop a timeline and budget
Publishing a timeline that spans planning, implementation and evaluation phases can help ensure the programme is promoted from the outset and ensure tasks are completed on time. Agreeing a budget in advance should ensure the programme roles out smoothly.

Select incentives
Incentives have been shown to increase participation and small incentives are likely to be more effective than large ones. Incentives should reinforce rather than contradict healthy behaviour and could include gym membership, equipment, healthy foods or activity days. Some employees may respond well to interdepartmental or workplace competition, but other may find this offputting. Any incentives package should be thought through and integrated carefully into the programme.

Acquire resources
Key aspects of a wellness programme will require specialist resources or skilled professionals to conduct health checks, provide education or implement physical activity and diet programmes. These can sometimes be provided free of charge or at a low cost through voluntary organisations, charities, local government, business networks or even universities with health and exercise expertise.

It is worth doing your research on local providers to keep cost to a minimum.

Promote the programme
Creating a name or logo for the programme is usually a good start. Circulating a range of publicity material – flyers, emails, a website presence, posters and newsletters – can help. Including the programme as a standing item on team meeting agendas can also ensure a high profile is achieved. A launch activity or day can also get things moving.

Ensuring the programme is fun but meaningful,

“Wellness programmes woven into the fabric of the company with designated health professionals and supported by managers at every level, are more likely to reach those in need.”
“There is increasing evidence that creating time for teams to reflect on how they work together can help raise care standards.”

includes choice, opportunity for feedback and has involved employees at the planning stage will help to maximise participation. Removing perceived barriers and including incentives is also necessary.

Implement the programme
Starting the programme with activities that are most likely to succeed and at a sustainable pace with plenty of scope to raise the bar is likely to be most effective in the long-term.

Issuing safe walking routes and pedometers can attract all age groups and interests. The provision of basic health checks (blood pressure, cholesterol, resting heart rate and lung function) can also reassure or ‘shock’ employees into action. Such techniques can help prevent major health incidents by flagging up symptoms that would otherwise go unnoticed. Any concerns should result in an immediate referral to the employee’s GP for verification and treatment.

Other examples include personal training, gym membership, healthy canteen choices, back care workshops, organised staff sports, activities and exercise classes. A feature list of activities that are often present in successful programmes is highlighted in Table 3.

Evaluate the programme
To ensure the programme is working, a number of performance markers need to be monitored. These include participation rates and satisfaction, changes in health related knowledge and behaviour, changes in physiological and psychological health, changes in productivity, staff training and turnover costs.

Environmental and workspace changes. Local universities or colleges could be approached to help evaluate the programme, reducing bias and ensuring objectivity. Such institutions have the skills and resources (final year or postgraduate students) which if used creatively, can deliver a high quality evaluation at a fraction of the cost.

Modify the programme
Information collected from the evaluation should inform future shaping and changes to the programme to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of employees and the organisation.

Workplace champions (better if not management)
Free health checks
Newsletters
Emails
Workshops
Lunch time activities
Website presence
Posters
Health fairs
Walking programmes
Team approach
Challenge activities
Basic equipment and incentives

Table 3. Features of a successful wellness-at-work programme.

Potential challenges when implementing wellness-at-work programmes
Wellness-at-work programmes can be met by scepticism if insensitively implemented with a perception that they are being imposed or used to control or initiate a workforce restructure.

Lack of funding, senior management support, adequate resources and staff interest may also need to be addressed in the design and implementation stages of a wellness at work programme. Providing gym membership and lettuce leaves (Peacock, 2010) is likely to misunderstand the complexities and sensitivities that surround the wellness at work agenda, while preaching to the converted, is all too easy and those at most risk and with the greatest need, might be overlooked.

Conclusion
The benefits of wellness-at-work programmes can be wide reaching if implemented carefully. They can improve profitability whilst simultaneously improve the quality of life of employees through measurable improvements in physiological and psychological health. In turn, staff training, absenteeism and turnover can be reduced whilst staff morale, loyalty and co-operation can be increased.

Wellness programmes do not have to be either expensive or complex, but they do need careful planning and longevity if they are to succeed. Periodic evaluation and monitoring to demonstrate impact is essential for continued investment, relevance and enhancement. Wellness-at-work programmes can truly be a win-win situation.

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About the authors
Saul Bloxham and Carl Evans work at the University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth. Saul is Head of Sports Development, Outdoor Learning and Management, while Carl is the Academic Lead for Business & Management.
Productivity and the role of industrial engineering techniques

By John Davies and Mike Ryan.

What is meant by productivity?

Production is the process of making goods and services to be traded or sold commercially to other organisations at home or abroad. It is essential that production meets a public or private consumer need and satisfies a demand in terms of Quality, Cost and Delivery (QCD).

Productivity is the amount of output created (in terms of goods produced or services rendered) per unit input used, i.e., it is the arithmetical ratio between the amount produced and the amount of resource used in the course of production: in general, these resources may include a measure of one or more of the use of people, materials, machines and land. Labour productivity is commonly measured as daily output per employee or output per labour hour.

A higher rate of productivity of an undertaking or a nation should be reflected in a higher standard of living of those who make contributions to the output. Higher earnings should be reflected in the larger supply of consumer goods, improved working conditions and reduced weekly working hours.

Economic background of productivity

A government must have a balanced national programme of economic development so as to maintain levels of employment, with the implication that it incorporates plans for encouragement for the continuous development of skills' level of the working population.

Management and trades unions have key roles in this raising productivity by recognising and using effectively specialist skills that are available on the market and generating good human relations between employer and employee to secure cooperation and participation essential for successful outcomes.

Competent industrial engineers have a key role to play in effective implementation of change in raising levels of productivity through such aspects as the incorporation of new technologies and methods.

Some human causes of the loss of productivity

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Absence Management Survey estimated a figure of 7.7 days absence per employee during 2011, which resulted in costs estimated at £8.4 billion.

The major causes of short-term absenteeism are:

- Minor illnesses (colds, headaches);
- Stress;
- Musculoskeletal injuries (strains);
- Back pain;
- Home/family responsibilities.

Stress is seen as the major cause of long-term absence, along with acute medical conditions such as heart attack, stroke. Recurring medical conditions such as asthma figure in both long and short term absence rates.

Direct costs related to absenteeism include:

- Wages paid to absent workers;
- Wages paid to replacement workers (and agencies);
- Management time in administering absence;
- Indirect costs may include;
- Potential safety issues due to inexperienced staff;
- Training;
- Reduced production rates;
- Poor quality goods/services (reduction in QCD);
- Ineffective use of management/supervisory time.

The 2013 CIPD Report
indicated a fall in absenteeism rate to 6.8 days per employee. However, this does not necessarily reflect in increased productivity. Employees have reported an increased attendance rate for sick colleagues worried about job security. This could have serious adverse effects, eg, the US Centres for Disease Control estimate that sick food handlers are responsible for 53% of norovirus cases.

Absenteeism is a difficult issue for employers in that there are legitimate and poor reasons for the absence. Companies may incorporate policies to reduce absenteeism by focusing on worker ‘wellness’, eg, physical and psychological health, home/work balance, and environmental issues. The implication is that healthier, happier employees are more motivated and hence generate greater productivity.

**Strategies that can lead to improved productivity**

- A culture of continuous improvement of products services and processes.
- Adopting ‘lean business methods’ whereby wastes in an organisation are systematically eliminated in a calculated planned manner. The major wastes in most companies include overproduction, ineffective quality practices, use of outdated manufacturing equipment and tools, duplication of activities, and poor purchasing management.
- Standardisation of procedures and production practices can lead to operational savings and cost reductions as well as regulating quality and ensuring timely delivery.
- Long term productivity improvements will be prejudiced without a cooperative, well-educated/skilled/trained workforce.
- Communication and data sharing are key factors. Equipment must be continually updated to ensure maximum effectiveness of the use of the latest technology.

**Tools and techniques which are used to improve productivity at the corporate level**

These are numerous, and many have been in use for the last half century. Some have been used to solve minor problems and others have been disused due to the national deindustrialisation processes. However, ignoring reasons for current apparent lack of popularity, the following are brief mentions of available techniques.

- Cybernetics is the study of communication and control mechanisms in people, machines and organisations. These techniques are used to initially fully understand a situation and subsequently coordinate, control and regulate the systems. A key concept is the use of feedback in regulation.
- Operational Research is the application of mathematics and science to complex problems in industry, business and government. The purpose is to help management determine the most productive policy and actions scientifically. The techniques include modelling, simulation, linear programming and statistical techniques.
- Network Analysis is a technique or a collection of similar techniques, that are used in planning and controlling complex projects and for scheduling the resources required on such projects.
- Ergonomics is concerned with the relationship between the person and his/her occupation, equipment and environment, eg, the effects of noise on the activities in the workplace.
- Variety Reduction is the analysis of the range of products or components manufactured by a company with the view to minimising the variety of products, parts, materials or processes.
- Value Analysis has two objectives: it is a cost reducing activity and simultaneously improves the products’ function. The procedure is arbitrary but it has produced spectacular results throughout the world, in particular with fields of design and innovation.

**Application of Value Analysis in the design of a product**

Value Analysis is a team analysing technique which uses a systematic procedure to progress from stage to stage. There are various versions of this technique which may be selected and/or modified to meet the individual circumstances of the project. Engineers are usually well placed to understand the complexities of processes and to inform the VA process. There are six basic stages or phases of study/research which must be implemented in all cases.

1. **Selection**

The detail and depth must reflect the potential improvement of the product, eg, the life cycle may be very limited and replacement products are expected in the foreseeable future. The completion of a selection chart is required (see Table 1 below).

2. **Information gathering**

Collect all relevant information such
as specifications, drawings, weights, costs, and methods of manufacture, working conditions, maintenance history, failure rates, and client feedback concerning the selected product or component.

3. Analysis of function and cost
This is the key part of the overall objective of minimising the cost of the product whilst at least maintaining its function or use. It is necessary to establish both the basic and secondary functions of the product as a whole and of its component parts and to associate costs with all these functions.

4. Idea gathering
It is necessary to consider as many relevant ideas and avoid focusing in detail on a single approach at the initial stages. The group must consider the analysis of the function and cost aspects as seen in stage three. This will spotlight attention on action to improve areas of low value. This stage should unite the value-analysis team who ideally will have different skills and disciplines from a variety of industrial/business backgrounds.

The systematic generation of ideas can be assisted by a number of aids, the most common of which are simple check-lists. Items on such lists can include:
• Are all functions essential for correct working? Can functions be achieved in another way?
• Can minor design changes reduce material waste in manufacture? Can the dimensions be reduced or less costly materials be used?
• Are the finish requirements essential or can the finish be produced in a different way?
• Can a standard part replace a component or can raw materials used in all parts be standard?
• Can labour operations be eliminated or reduced by using changed methods and can assembly operations be reduced?

4. Evaluation
It is important to ascertain that the ideas, or groups of ideas, generated do eliminate a problem or weakness in the selected product. The team should then focus on the lowest-cost idea(s) and devise tests to ensure that benefits are obtainable and acceptable to the requirements of the client.

5. Implementation
At this stage, the potential solutions should be small in number but with each having great potential for improving productivity. Implementation depends on the particular culture within the company. The Substance (type and scale), Context (internal and external historical perspective) and Politics (internal and external policies, power relationships) relating to the required changes all impact on the Relevance (what it really has to offer), Readiness (the ability of the individuals and institutions to react to the change) and Resources (encompassing all forms of support) allocated for implementation.

6. Documentation
It is advisable to use pro formas, the content and layout of which, will vary according to the nature of the project to apply value analysis to a project. The pack of forms used in a project design could include:
• Sales and VA information for a product range;
• Product selection form;
• Gathered information summary sheet;
• Cost analysis form;
• Analysis of functions form;
• Function cost analysis form;
• Idea gathering form;
• Evaluation tee chart;
• Report summary form.

Summary of Value Analysis
This technique gives special emphasis to:
• The definition and valuation of functions;
• Teamwork;
• Generation of less costly/more cost-effective alternatives;
• Planning of the implementation activities.

Conclusion
When used in conjunction with other improvement techniques, Value Analysis can contribute substantially to improved productivity and subsequent profitability of the organisation.

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About the authors
John Davies MSc, MA, CEng, FMS originated from heavy industry and is a Chartered Mining Engineer. He has subsequently been involved in consultancy and education/training. John is currently the East Midlands Regional Secretary of the IMS and was a branch chairman of the CMI.

Mike Ryan BSc(Hon), MSc, EdD, FIfL, CEng, MIET graduated in electrical/electronic engineering at Bangor University. He has a background in engineering projects and later as a senior lecturer in higher education. Mike has undertaken research into managing change and work-based learning.
Emerging technologies set to revolutionise the field service industry

The challenge of achieving field service excellence in today’s marketplace is getting tougher as spiralling customer expectations, rising fuel prices and restricted budgets continue to mar business efforts. However, the emergence of new and developing technologies have the potential to radically shift the way field service organisations operate and transform the way work is performed to dramatically improve service.

Omar-Pierre Soubra of Trimble Field Service Management (FSM) explores the upcoming technology trends field service businesses need to think about today on how these will impact their work in the future.

Self-driving cars

Engineering in the motor industry is developing all the time with many of the larger car manufacturers offering a steady stream of niche products, such as electric and hybrid vehicles. Self-driving cars are also coming to the fore, which will have a major impact in the field service industry, looking forward.

For the field technician, the availability of a self-driving car will not only allow them to drive from one job destination to another, stress-free, but it will also enable them to complete other tasks while the vehicle is driving, boosting their productivity.

Some of the major features on self-driving cars include that it will halt for pedestrians and could take over the tedious parts of driving such as negotiating traffic jams or regular commutes. By just the press of a button on a screen, the driver can let the computer take the strain.

Self-driving cars also have the ability to improve driver safety. Currently, around 10,000 accidents take place, on average, every day, on Britain’s roads. However this statistic could be mitigated with a self-driving car, either through drivers’ attention wandering, or through driving too close to other cars and being unable to react. Traffic
“Augmented reality in the form of glasses is an upcoming technology trend which could significantly benefit the field based workforce.”

would also flow with fewer interruptions, resulting in minimal interruption to a technician’s work schedule.

It may seem that the availability of self-driving cars is very far away but technologies such as GPS, collision avoidance and logging distances between vehicles, which will be used inside self-driving cars, are already being embedded to existing cars and vans today. Search engine giant, Google, has been working on self-driving cars for years, and has now won approval for their use in the US states of Nevada and California.

**Augmented reality glasses**

Augmented reality (AR) is a live, direct or indirect, view of a physical, real-world environment whose elements are augmented by computer-generated sensory input such as sound, video, graphics or GPS data. For field services, augmented reality in the form of glasses is an upcoming technology trend which could significantly benefit the field based workforce.

Augmented reality glasses provide the ability to send information to a worker, record what’s happening in the field and document how a job was done. They can also be used for training purposes. For example, if a technician needs to be trained on how to complete an installation which they may not have encountered before, augmented reality glasses can provide the user manual or information they need to complete the install successfully.

Essentially, augmented reality glasses provide the eyes to the mobile workforce to obtain information to understand what needs to be done in an all-encompassing quick and easy method, whilst providing the decision makers back in the office complete visibility of what is happening in the field.

**3D printing**

3D printing is making its mark in the field service industry as it reshapes product development and manufacturing and turns individuals into ‘makers.’

3D printing is a process of making a three-dimensional solid object of virtually any shape from a digital model. Such a machine used to cost a small fortune but today they are widely available for a reasonable price and could prove to be a valuable asset to a field service operation.

For field services, customer satisfaction is ranked as the number one priority however AberdeenGroup report that 57% of organisations say that their biggest customer complaint is that the technician does not resolve the issue first time, and a reason for this may be due to not having the right part or tools. By having a 3D printer fixed into a technician’s van, any unavailable parts would be able to be printed on demand, achieving the ‘first time fix’ and maintaining customer satisfaction.

Additionally, 3D printers feature M2M technology and this feature can be used to prevent a breakdown. An appliance is able to send information to a 3D printer notifying it to print a part to avoid a breakdown. So when the technician arrives at the job, he is there, with the necessary tools and parts, to prevent a breakdown instead of fixing a problem that already happened.

Ultimately, 3D printing has the potential to eliminate the problem of not having the right part when you get to a job or not being able to dispatch a technician because he doesn’t have the necessary part in his van. Asset management technologies are also available today that offer businesses visibility into where parts are, solving the issue of location and avoiding sending a technician with the wrong part to a customer site.
Introduction
It was not long ago that Africa was known as a grossly underdeveloped continent, plagued by political and economic instability, poverty, illiteracy and epidemics such as HIV-AIDS. It was no surprise that Africa was underperforming in terms of development compared to other low-income regions.

However, in a few short years things have drastically changed. In 2012 Africa was recognised as the second fastest developing region in the world, second only to Asia.1 Roughly two-thirds of the region are now middle class2 and technology has grown at an exponential rate with access to information communication technologies (ICT) estimated to be at 90% in some countries such as Nigeria.3,4

This rapid growth is underpinned by the development of the e-services sector and the economic and social opportunities these services provide – while simultaneously tackling the complex developmental challenges that the continent has.

African growth and economic potential
Africa has no shortage of obstacles to overcome. One of the most pressing among these is uncontrolled population growth caused by lack of access to health services and contraception, cultural preference for larger families and lack of women empowerment – all of which contribute to the region possessing the highest birth rates in the world of 4.94 births per woman.5

These unaddressed issues consequently result in the total population of the continent reaching the 1 billion mark in 2011; which threatens to further entrench the continent
How mobile technology and e-services are enhancing the productivity of Africa. By Joan Deguerre and David Parker, the University of Queensland Business School, Australia

in poverty and destabilise the region with more competition from an already limited resource-base.7

However, this same issue that jeopardises development and growth also offers prime opportunities to organisations and multinational corporations. Children below the age of 15 constitute 40% of the total population of Africa.8 In some countries such as Uganda, the number of children under the age of 14 represents 43% of the population;9 while in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia youth under the age of 25 account for 70% of the population.6

These demographics provide a guaranteed consumer base for organisations for many years to come; in direct contrast to many developed nations with shrinking populations, an aging demographic and declining economic growth.2

At present, although the World Bank suggest that the middle class now account for about two-thirds of the population,10 the classification of relative poverty results in international purchasing power remaining limited.

In economic terms, relative poverty is defined as an individual living below the income required to satisfy their basic needs.11 Subsequently the UN classifies that the African middle class needs a daily income of between $2 to $20 USD.2 This figure allows purchasing parity with other African countries but little economic leverage internationally. Despite these issues and many others, such as lack of infrastructure and the political-social and economic instability, affecting many countries, Africa still has enormous potential in the global market – in part due to the dramatic up-take of e-technology by the youthful population.2 The continent could quite possibly become an economic superpower alongside India and China in the near future.8

African technological growth and impediments

Technological growth in Africa in the past decade has been unprecedented. Technological growth between the period 2000 and 2011 was 2,527% in Africa compared to the global average of 480%.3 This growth can be attributed to changes in governance and adopting trade liberalisation; with the trend moving from bureaucractic state-owned and controlled enterprises to a competitive private sector embracing ICT.8

Between 2008 and 2012, 68,000km of submarine cable and 615,000km of national backbone networks were laid, increasing internet bandwidth access by 20-fold. Currently ICT directly contributes to 7% of Africa’s GDP.1 However, there are still some countries that severely lack ICT infrastructure, such as newly independent South Sudan which relies on slow, out dated and prohibitively expensive satellite links.1

The vast majority of technological growth in the continent is directly related to the mobile technology sector. In 2000, there were fewer than 20 million fixed-line phones with penetration at 2% – servicing the foreign (mainly European) population. However by 2012, there were almost 650 million mobile subscriptions on the continent, which equates to more mobile subscriptions than the US and European Union combined.1

More people in Africa have mobile phones than bank accounts, clean water or electricity. This unparalleled growth is attributed to a lack of traditional infrastructure, as services such as healthcare, news, education and financial services are increasingly delivered through mobile technology. This results in increasing the value of mobile phones in Africa compared to other countries.1 Moreover, mobile innovation offers a return 12 times higher than that of PC-based internet.10 Consequently mobile internet usage is growing substantially faster than desktop usage,11 with smartphone sales surpassing PC/laptop/tablet sales.12

Increasingly, there are e-services appearing that address the needs of the continent: such as health, natural disaster relief and provision of government services. Ethiopian government and donor sponsored e-services creates increased access to health and diagnostic services.1

In Kenya, M-Pesa, an online application designed for small businesses, processes payroll information with a low-cost pay per employee model.10,13 While in Nigeria, Hei Julor (Hey Thief) a community based sms system alerts residents and neighbours when there are break-ins nearby and encourages them to go and help – substituting a notoriously ineffectual police force.13 Innovations such as these drive further demand for ICTs. Nevertheless, in terms of service delivery there are still many issues. Mobile phones are generally not smartphones, but older more simple models with service delivery there are still many issues. Mobile phones are generally not smartphones, but older more simple models with basic text and communication capabilities. However, with the advent of cheap manufacturers from India and China14 coupled with rising incomes and a youthful, aspirational population who culturally prioritise material possessions, this will change in the coming years.2

However, a potential impediment to growth is the knowledge gap in the region as the brain drain is experienced. Skilled workers currently choose to emigrate to developed

“The vast majority of technological growth in the continent is directly related to the mobile technology sector.”
countries seeking higher wages and improved living standards, resulting in a lack of qualified workers.15
Financial aid is a temporary alleviator of this problem with support to the continent around $44 billion USD per year.16 Most the aid provisions are in food and health services, apart from technological exchange/aid which comes from BRIC countries.17 It is argued that technological aid is more effective in alleviating poverty than food or health support as it involves skills transfer and developing self-sufficiency as opposed to dependency.17 Moreover, the globalised world economy is widely regarded as a knowledge-based economy signifying that information underpins productivity and economic growth.7 In many developing countries, it is the poor that lack the knowledge and information to be able to improve their living conditions. With the internet, ICT technologies can play a crucial role in alleviating poverty and bridging the knowledge divide by increasing information access as well as provision of products and services. As Ahmed and Al-Roubaie argue,7 the world is increasingly beginning to divide between the ‘information rich’ and the ‘information-poor’ nations. Furthermore, without e-literacy and technical knowledge it would be very difficult for young people to obtain employment. Thus it is crucial for the continent to adopt a technology-driven national strategy to compete in the world market.

Opportunities for e-services – avoiding logistical issues – uniting Africa
Considering the economic potential of the continent and the exponential explosion of technology in the region, businesses will be well justified in pursuing opportunities in e-services. By pursuing technological services, increased economies of scale are experienced, they generally have comparatively low set-up and operational costs, and it can reach a larger slice of the population bypassing the logistical problems that afflict the region. Sumesh Rahavendra head of marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa for DHL, has said on local radio that logistics is one of the main issues impeding economic growth. Corporations lack established distribution bases in the continent; and to ship to African countries most organisations base their distribution hubs in the Middle East and then transfer to South Africa to consolidate and distribute from there.18 However, the long distance and fluctuating revenue creates problems with production capacity and inventory management. This coupled with poor transportation infrastructure and areas of social/political instability results in greatly inflated prices for getting the product to its final destination. E-services eliminate such problems by delivering information-based services to a much larger market than previously imagined.
Projected growth in e-services can be attributed to a drastically improved interconnected Africa. Improvements in technology have resulted in Africans being more connected as a whole; facilitating intra-African trade and a growing trend of African-based services. This is reflected by MXit, a South African social network (along the lines of Facebook) which currently has 50 million users.1 This has provided small businesses interested in expansion with access to a larger less aggressive regional market, as opposed to an international market which has highly developed business models and uniquely differing preferences.1 Less than a decade ago, it used to be cheaper to make a call from a country in Africa to Europe or the US than to a neighbouring country, but due to a highly competitive market that has changed.19 In 2002, a network provider took advantage of licences in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the end of international roaming charges. Literally overnight calls between Brazzaville and Kinshasa changed from being prohibitively expensive international calls to local calls.19 In 2006, another network operator, Zain, replicated this strategy in an attempt to gain market share and abolished all international charges to calls made between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Other network providers adopted the same practice in East Africa, achieving in a few short years what the European Union has strived to do in decades.19
In Africa, most mobile phone users are prepaid due to very limited expendable incomes; and often users have multiple sim cards – frequently changing between them to take advantage of promotions and gain higher value.19,20 These practices result in network providers being highly competitive and delivering better value to their consumers. The proliferation of cheap data
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packages and access to free wi-fi are projected to increase while smart-phones with the computing capabilities of a laptop worth $3,000 a decade earlier can now be purchased for under $100.\(^1\) This delivers enormous potential in driving demand in e-services, as the capability to start a business or find a job will literally be at a persons' fingertips.\(^1\)

**Providing opportunities in business and employment**

It is forecast that there are enormous potential of e-services\(^2\) and many entrepreneurs are already taking advantage of this situation. In Kenya, government examination results are going online,\(^1\) in South Africa ICT’s are increasingly used in education,\(^2\) agricultural market information is available through internet-enabled mobiles in Ghana.\(^1\) Fisherman in remote villages use their mobile phones to communicate to the market and secure sales of the days catch before it has even reached the shore.\(^14\)

**Technology hubs**

There is also evidence of global technological companies starting to set up a presence in Africa, including SAP, IBM and Hisense who are dedicating significant resources to exploring how to cater to the African market.\(^18\) There is also an emergent proliferation of technology clusters on the continent which further aid growth,\(^1\) including iHub and Nailab in Kenya, CoLab and Applab in Uganda, Activespaces in Cameroon, Bantalabs in Senegal and InfoDevs mLabs in Kenya and South Africa. With increased international funding, clusters are developing rapidly hoping to capitalise on the African ICT market - forecast to be worth $150 billion USD by 2016.\(^2\)

**Considerations and conclusions**

Despite this technology boom there are still considerations to take into account that could impede growth and have significant influence on the e-services sector. It is widely recognised that most developed nations have over 70 per cent of their GDP from services.\(^2\) If, therefore, Africa was to leap-frog the incremental industrial development experienced by other countries, it has the potential to be at the forefront of e-service innovation. Moreover, access to mass open online courses (MOOCs) will bring education and training to millions of people at virtually no cost.\(^2\)

Clearly there is a need for government support of ICT infrastructure development and setting consumer friendly initiatives and so preventing companies from monopolising, price fixing or overcharging consumers. Governments can pursue initiatives such as recommendations for price limits on call termination charges by companies to stimulate competition.\(^2\) In some countries, a lack of infrastructure can be a critical barrier to e-service growth, as poor internet access and a lack of stable electrical supply can result in issues with reliable service delivery and access. In light of this, organisations should focus on simpler interfaces, smaller data loads and prioritising fast delivery. Furthermore a lack of mobile and LTE standardisation could result in difficulty in implementation and reach. Governments are able to issue frequency standardisations, as they do in many developed countries such as Australia and the US, and as the market grows and difficulties in consumption are raised, there is a probability that governments will react.\(^14\)

Furthermore, for organisations to take advantage of the African market there is a need for e-services to be at free or low cost to the end user. Africa is a highly cash-based economy and due to low home ownership and high unemployment, many people do not have bank accounts let alone credit cards.\(^1\) This presents payment difficulties and can present a problem for companies looking to earn a direct profit from e-services in the immediate future. Unless there is an extremely high adoption of a particular service, revenue must primarily come from other sources, such as advertising or company sponsorship. However, for MNC’s looking to take advantage of this trend, companies can still exploit the market by entering a market long before the region can afford its products, thus creating an aspirational brand image and delivering the company first-mover advantage in anticipation of when the region has a higher disposable income and can earn return on investment. These are strategies that were employed by Ikea in China and Vodacom in Africa.\(^19\)

The type of e-services provided in the country should take into account local needs and values.\(^7\) Information technologies and e-services are often designed without consideration of the needs and social/environmental realities of developing countries. This is in line with the Diffusion of Innovation theory that suggests that innovations are created by the frontier economy (developed countries) and then gradually spread to the follower economy (developing countries). In contrast to this and other theories such as Vernon’s International Product Life Cycle, it is necessary to develop e-services specifically for the needs of the continent, as the fragile personal finances of most of the population, the unique development, and the role of e-services in solving them is the primary driver of growth. Davis’ Technology Acceptance Model\(^2\) highlights the importance of this. In this model the probability of system use is equal to the perceived usefulness combined with the perceived ease of use. In a study of South African e-banking adoption – based on this model – these authors concluded that technology adoption in the country is strongly influenced by factors of perceived usefulness, perceived benefit, social risk and performance risk. It has also been argued\(^1\) that any detriment to any of these factors could critically impair e-service adoption. The risks for underdeveloped countries aspiring to compete on a global scale are also much higher as they are required to adopt advanced technologies without the gradual adoption rate experienced in developed countries; and all while often lacking a mature infrastructure that is able to cope and exploit market potential.\(^7\)

Despite, potential problems with service delivery, as internet-enabled mobile phone usage increases in Africa, researchers are able to use tools to identify trends and usage and to be able to better target and deliver services to the market.\(^2\) Organisations should bear in mind that innovations and eservices developed in the African continent can also have a global reach and can be spread well beyond the region. Examples of African innovations already exported include dual-sim phones and mobile remittance payments;\(^1\) and as more e-services are developed they have the opportunity to contribute to both the developed and developing countries.

**Conclusion**

Africa is indubitably on the rise and will soon have significant
economic potential. The youthful population and the rising middle class have resulted in technology adoption being at an unprecedented level and have proven to be a significant driver of development. However, technological development and reduction in poverty are closely tied. Therefore, the development rate of Africa is largely dependent on technology investment. E-services play a critical role in this process providing access to services and information to enable consumers to improve their lives, driving adoption of ICTs and encouraging intra-African unity and trade. The unique role of e-services in responding to the development challenges Africa presents provides an opportunity to export those services to other developing regions around the world, thereby potentially creating a revolutionary change in technology consumption as well as enhancing standards of living.

About the authors
Joan Deguerre is a postgraduate student completing study at The University of Queensland Business School Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Her focus of research is in service operations management – with a particular interest in entrepreneurialism.
David Parker is a senior lecturer at The University of Queensland Business School Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. His research and publications are in service operations management (d.parker@business.uq.edu.au)

References
How to be a leader with edge

Only a small portion of managers have the necessary skills to become strong leaders, says Annie Richardson.

Strong leadership is intrinsically linked to business success, yet many organisations fall short of their potential because they do not equip their staff with the necessary skills to lead effectively. While all leaders have the ability to manage, only a small portion of managers have the necessary skills to become strong leaders, leaders with edge, and this is stifling business growth.

I recently sat down and had a discussion with a CEO of a large multinational company. He was explaining to me how at first he thought it was a compliment when others said how ‘nice’ his staff were. However in reality, and something that soon dawned on him… his people were too nice. They had a soft touch, were missing opportunities, and were being taken advantage of. From our discussion, it was concluded that he needed ‘leaders with edge’.

So what is a leader with edge?
In my opinion there a seven characteristics and traits that a leader with edge must have...

1. Self awareness and awareness of others
Although it is probably one of the least discussed leadership competencies, self-awareness is possibly one of the most valuable, and truly shapes a leader with edge.

   It’s easy to see how pretending to know everything when you don’t can create situations that can be problematic for your entire organisation. On the other hand, when you take responsibility for what you don’t know, you benefit both yourself and your organisation.

   On an interpersonal level, self-awareness of your strengths and weaknesses can net you the trust of others and increase your credibility – both of which will increase your leadership effectiveness.

   On an organisational level, the benefits are even greater. When you acknowledge what you have yet to learn, you’re modeling that in your organisation. It’s okay to admit you don’t have all the answers, to make mistakes and most importantly, to ask for help. These are all characteristics of an organisation that is constantly learning and springboards to innovation and agility – two hallmarks of high performing organisations.

   Remember, organisations benefit far more from leaders who take responsibility for what they don’t know than from leaders who pretend to know it all. Self-awareness and being aware of others is therefore a vital trait for a truly effective leader.

2. Ability to challenge – have ‘difficult’ conversations
When handled calmly and with respect for the other person, even the most challenging conversations can lead to an improved state of affairs for all involved.

   When you practice the art of handling difficult conversations, you learn valuable lessons about interpersonal communication that can be applied in many different circumstances. In addition, your ability to influence others grows, and so does their respect for you.

   It’s about having the ability to challenge, but not let the person you’re engaging with feel threatened. Difficult conversations happen all the time. A leader with edge needs to be able to conduct these conversations so that all involved feel their views have been heard, and will be actioned, but also the recipient respects and appreciates your response.

3. Skills to negotiate with a clear direction, focus and purpose
Almost every aspect of the business landscape is negotiable. In recessionary times, this can work in your favour, as the pressure to get the most out of relationships and realise value from deals is higher than ever.

   So whether you’re faced with suppliers looking to hike prices, clients extending their payment terms, fixing a price

“Self-awareness of your strengths and weaknesses can net you the trust of others and increase your credibility”

About the author
Annie Richardson is managing director at Quantum Corporate Coaching Ltd, a people development specialist that helps companies unlock the resources and hidden talents of their most valuable assets – their people. It provides one to one coaching in board executive and leadership coaching, as well as development programmes on leadership and management skills. Visit www.quantumdp.com
for new business or dealing with an employee’s request for a pay rise, understanding the art of negotiation will considerably increase your chances of a positive outcome. Being able to negotiate with a clear direction, focus and purpose is a must have characteristic of a leader with edge.

4. Resilience and resourcefulness
A good dose of resilience has been essential for most individuals and businesses over the past few years.

Churchill once remarked: “If you are going through hell, keep going.”

The sense of keeping going is important, but so is being smart and imaginative. A leader with edge won’t just stand there like a punch-drunk Rocky, soaking up the punishment. They will be able to recover quickly from difficult situations, being resourceful and getting results.

5. Adaptable and be able to deal with ambiguity
In the business world, a rigid ‘five year plan’ is no longer appropriate – the world is simply moving too fast. Leaders with edge will have to learn to operate in a context where there are constantly shifting priorities as organisations adapt to survive, or to pursue opportunities.

It’s difficult to feel you’re acting without a detailed map, but it’s the world we now live in. While dealing with ambiguity, you’ll need to develop a greater ability to analyse and adapt to the environment as it changes, which it most certainly will. Things move at a rate that’s sometimes hard to comprehend: good leaders need to be able to match that speed of change. However, while they’re dealing with ambiguity, and demonstrating adaptability, they will also need to improve their decision-making processes and make swifter, more accurate commercial judgments. To do that, they will have to get better at collecting and understanding information, and see their priorities and goals in the context of the organisation’s goals.

6. Confidence and presence to engage at all levels and in all environments
Self-confidence is the fundamental basis from which leadership grows. Trying to teach leadership without first building confidence is like building a house on a foundation of sand. It may have a nice coat of paint, but it is ultimately shaky at best.

Not only does confidence allow you to make the tough decisions that people expect from a leader with edge but it’s reassuring to your employees. It allows you to lead meetings with authority, to accept frankness and open communication, and the greater they perceive your force of will, the more faith they will have in your company and its mission.

7. Mental toughness
Mental toughness does not mean to be ‘tough’ – it means the above qualities of resilience, tenacity and flexibility to achieve best possible outcomes in often difficult and complex situations.

Mental toughness is a term commonly used in sports — a term many begin to hear from coaches in youth athletics. Tuning out the noise or pressure and performing to potential in an otherwise difficult situation is what fans admire the most astute professional athlete.

It’s not that the cyclist was able to cycle a record lap, but the fact that he or she was able to do so under the tight and uncomfortable circumstances of the situation. While sports stars grab the majority of headlines in the mental toughness arena, this trait has become essential for leaders to be successful in business as well.

In essence, a leader with edge is sharp with distinction, and has a clear sense of purpose. Have you got what it takes to be a leader with edge?
Change mastery: Lean Six Sigma and business transformation
“Does the traditional curriculum of LSS meet the needs of organisations competing in a tight economy with limited resources?”

Philip Atkinson contends that as demand for equipping organisations with the methodologies and tools for implementing Lean Six Sigma increases, the traditional training underpinning this role is being revolutionised. If Lean Six Sigma is to be taken seriously at a strategic level and as a business transformation process it needs robust support from the application of Organisational Development (OD) and research taken from the fields of the applied behavioural sciences. Without research in OD and change management, Lean Six Sigma as a credible change strategy is incomplete.

Do you have the credibility to bring about real organisational change?

Effective change in organisations is based upon understanding the hard, tangible elements and additionally the intangible, softer elements of the organisation, including leadership, behaviour change to ease transition and reduce conflict. These ‘softer’ or intangible elements of leadership and behaviour are vital and much more difficult to change. Organisations persist in focusing on the relatively easier elements to change of structure, systems and processes to the detriment of organisational culture. It is useful to know that culture, values and core behaviours bind everything together and are central in making Lean Six Sigma (LSS) work.

Where is behaviour change in Lean Six Sigma?

Effective change is brought about through the synergies of planning the integration of the ‘hard’ and the ‘soft’ elements of the organisation. That is achieved through Organisational Development (OD) through the implementation of research in the applied behavioural sciences. This being the case we find it nowhere in Lean Six Sigma literature and in subsequent training.

No matter how much effort you put into the design of systems and processes, their effectiveness will always be in doubt if you don’t have the committed and sustained leadership and behaviours driving it.

Understand that challenging the values, attitudes, mindsets of top team members, installing new leadership behaviours and working seamlessly across functional silos is much more difficult. The problem is that top teams are relying on Lean Six Sigma (LSS) solutions to fix complex organisational challenges that are beyond its scope.

If, however, you are going to steer your organisation and deliver serious business transformation using Lean Six Sigma you need to ensure that you are implementing best practice and achieving the outcomes you desire. But are the traditional training strategies that support Lean Six Sigma (LSS) actually fit for purpose?

Is current Lean Six Sigma training fit for purpose?

Having worked on major business transformation projects for over two decades, our questions are:

• Is the current provision of training supporting Lean Six Sigma sufficiently broad to deliver effective short and long term change?

• Is the content of such training too focused on its traditional curriculum based on statistical measurement, neglecting best practice in OD?

Also, is the foundation for much of the training based on the Toyota Production System (TPS) and the work of Womack and Jones on ‘Lean Thinking’ relevant today as it was in the 1990s? It brought about significant improvement for Motorola, General Electric, Allied Signal,
Microsoft and many other blue chips, but is it still credible in a service sector economy?

**Traditional Lean Six Sigma L&D**

In today’s marketplace, will the focus on the traditional curriculum of LSS take you further towards your organisational change management goals or further away? It may be the right time to review the basic curriculum and its delivery and ask whether it meets the needs of organisations competing in a tight economy with limited resources.

Traditionally, many change practitioners have steered clear of training in LSS simply because its focus relies on application of statistical techniques in manufacturing operations. Nowadays, does the average ‘service oriented’ organisation have sufficient confidence to invest in such large scale interventions and be heavily reliant on applying manufacturing jargon and associated tools and techniques?

Will NHS hospitals, local authorities or government bodies, banks, insurance companies, retailers, etc, engage and be comfortable in applying these techniques? Although exceptionally valuable, tools such as re-engineering using value stream mapping could take anywhere between the minimum of 9-12 months, if not 24 months, to deliver results. Will they be welcomed by staff at all levels and do they instil confidence in delivery? Can organisations wait so long for change, and can management teams be confident that the results will deliver the ROI?

**The politics of change**

Realistically, application of basic principles and methodologies of LSS will not bring change about per se. Both W Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran recognised this, writing that leadership and behaviour change were as important as applying a robust methodology such as LSS. So is Lean Six Sigma a 1990s solution, looking to solve today’s problems?

Real change happens and takes place against a backdrop of competing interests and managerial egos, hidden political agendas, horse trading and negotiating over resource allocation. Any change projects that neglect the behavioural and political elements of change and rely on a strictly logical-rational change process, are not going to work.

Change does not happen by ticking boxes and passing neatly through a cycle or sequence of stages. Change is a dynamic and systemic process and each change implemented will generate unidentified consequences which have to be resolved, but are not taken account of using traditional LSS methodologies.

**New thinking is required to take organisations to the new level of performance**

Effective business transformation can really benefit from LSS, but, in many organisations, it is seen as applying overly rigorous and time consuming methodologies, enforcing the use of advanced statistical techniques – which very few people use in organisations today, if at all. The over reliance and inappropriate use of advanced statistics is intimidating for many, especially in the service sector, where the delivery of services bears little resemblance to improvement logged in Japanese industry, the US automotive industry,
manufacturing operations and the factory floor.

**Japanese terminology does not sell continuous improvement**
The traditional LSS training offered by many suppliers is overly reliant on Japanese labels such as Kaizen, Kanban, Poke Yoke and the 5 S’s and has little resonance with the average 25-35 year old who attends our Yellow, Green and Black Belt training. So what do we do? We deliberately avoid the ‘folk lore’ that surrounds LSS. We don’t dwell on its history. We acknowledge these are powerful concepts and tools, but we don’t overplay them, because they don’t appeal to the typical employees within local and central government departments, banks, insurance companies, NHS hospitals and many other types of organisation.

Good advice for trainers is to present the ideas to your audience without the Japanese historical translation. Traits which are attributed to the Japanese national and business culture do not flourish in Western Europe or the USA, so why use them when you invariably get a negative response?

**How do ‘Generation Y’ people adapt to traditional Lean Six Sigma?**
There has to be a realisation that manufacturing in the UK does not, and has not, dominated the economic landscape for several decades. For instance, continually using manufacturing terms from a bygone age in Lean training workshops in financial services in 2014+ does not do any favours to the robustness of the LSS concepts and tools. Traditional LSS does not travel well. For those receiving the message, continual use of a redundant language only relegates LSS to a world of yesteryear which has no relevance for today or tomorrow.

Further, the future management of commerce and service delivery will be reliant on the input, skills and competencies of ‘Generation Y’ managers. Their values and behaviours are very different to their ‘Generation X’ and ‘Baby Boomer’ counterparts who preceded them. ‘Generation Y’ managers and staff core values need to be reflected, not just in the content of the training but also how it is delivered. It must be remembered that the vast majority of people do not work in manufacturing but in the service sector.

**Change in creating a Lean Culture is about Organisation Development (OD)**
There is a pioneering trend to integrate the best of Lean Six Sigma with Organisation Development (OD) – LSSOD, building on development of best practice in cultural and behaviour change and transformational leadership in the last 20+ years.

**What is Organisation Development (OD)?**
OD is the application of the behavioural sciences to the resolution and prevention of organisational problems. It is not to be confused with organisation and methods (O&M) which is an outgrowth of Scientific Management and Work Study. OD is an objective and serious approach to apply relevant research findings from the applied behavioural, sciences, to improve organisational effectiveness.

**Change management is political and behavioural change**
OD practitioners recognise that in order to support organisations in changing, they need to understand the system and processes of the organisation. OD focuses on transformational leadership and behaviour of senior players, the cultural norms and stated or unstated corporate values that drive key behaviours. OD recognises also that change is complex and has to accommodate individual motives, conflicts, negative emotions, thwarted ambitions. Often, the change process is ridden with irrational political motives, ambitions and bruised egos not shared with others who have competing interests, including those who have their own team norms and agendas for change. In change management terms it is certainly not easy or tidy, but it is real.

The change process, unfortunately, is not clinical and neither is it clean. It can be quite messy. In the majority of change initiatives, change professionals will tell you there are always winners and losers, victors, victims and villains, who have competing agendas that confuse the rational model of change. They are right. To be blunt, the majority of organisations coldly applying traditional LSS will, at best, generate partial or short term change, if not active resistance. LSS can still deliver, but only if it has the flexibility of being able to adapt to changes as they happen in the real world. LSS has to embrace OD and the sensitive management of culture change.

What is important is that by using OD, we can still use LSS methodology and techniques...
to bring about the change and that happens because OD gives greater choice.

**Traditional LSS – ‘all the gear but no idea’**

Does LSS give you the choice to tailor the interventions and respond to uncertainty? We don’t think so. You can plough through the DMAIC methodology and learn dozens and dozens of tools and solutions. You can then look for problems where you can strictly apply the tools according to the disciplines and stages of DMAIC. But, you must be honest and ask: ‘Have you brought about a planned sustainable change project focusing on people, behaviours and culture?’ Probably not!

You can have all the tools (the gear) but still be unable to implement them effectively because they may not equip you with the facilitation skills, behavioural flexibility and the sensory acuity to manage the key actors, their competing agendas and the politics of the situation. Without changing behaviour, you will change nothing. Long term change gains momentum only when you engage with the ‘Ying and Yang’ of the organisation. Change starts with a firm background in OD promoting a more spontaneous and expansive approach to LSS.

**Origins of OD and how it integrates with Lean Six Sigma**

OD comes from the initial work of the human relations movement and the work of the socio-technical school and the British Tavistock Institute. Much of the work grew from practitioners – such as Chris Argyris, Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Edgar Schein (guru of leadership and organisational culture change), Warren Bennis and Richard Beckhard – leading organisational change.

Organisation development is best defined as planned, organisation wide, managed by leaders from the top, focused on increasing organisation effectiveness and health, through planned interventions in the organisation’s systems and processes, using knowledge and research from the applied behavioural-sciences. There are five elements which best illustrate OD.

**1. Planned change initiative**

OD is a systematic process that focuses on diagnosing organisational effectiveness and health which enables a strategic plan for improvement to be created. In contrast, much of LSS work is undertaken in small parts or functional areas of the organisation and does not permeate functional silos.

**2. Total system change**

OD focuses upon the wide cultural or organisational change in managerial strategies which could include CRM, Post Integration activity, Matrix Management. Overall, this is a wider system change than anything to do with LSS. Many Lean Six Sigma projects are concerned only with partial change using such tools as 5 S, process mapping, FMEA, Quality Circles, etc.

**3. Leadership from the top**

OD is led from the top of the business and senior management have a personal commitment to the process. Ownership may well be shared and various sponsors will be driving strategic and tactical processes. They are participants in the process and have a personal investment in making the change real – whereas many traditional Lean Six Sigma projects have distinctive one person ownership which is not shared with the top team and often proves unsustainable.

Owners of the process in LSS often have little real leverage to bring about change in other functions or silos which is central to re-engineering work required often in Value Stream Mapping and Analysis. Without senior management commitment to open doors with other functional heads, the LSS cross-functional project is at best only achieving partial success.

This is well illustrated in the following example. We have four functional areas, all adding value to the customer or consumer: customer services, logistics, delivery and billing. They all overlap in the process of serving the customer – but when a problem arises you have to ask yourself: ‘Who will actually resolve the problem?’

True ownership is when the person who is most ‘hurt’ by the unresolved problem is the person who will ‘open doors’ committing to take on ‘ownership of the problem’. In this hypothetical case, it is customer services. Integrating LSS with OD brings credibility to change implementation.

**4. Designed to increase organisational effectiveness**

It is important to know the characteristics of a healthy
organisation before one can assess or diagnoses its current state. By defining the current state of health, it is then possible to focus on the gap that exists between the ‘current’ and the ‘desired’ state. It is also useful to know what parameters you are measuring against. This ‘health check’ is critical to understand the nature of organisational culture, how it is initially formed and created, and then how to move from the ‘current culture’ to the ‘future desired culture’.

It helps to have some behavioural understanding of culture change, and here the work of Edgar Schein is useful, and will be expanded upon, for those undertaking the more active roles in change. Schein defines organization effectiveness in relation to what he calls the ‘adaptive coping cycle’... that means ‘does the organisation have the capacity to effectively adapt and manage the changes in its environment?’ Suffice to say a great methodology for assessing culture is using a variant of the McKinsey 7 S’s.

There are several versions of the 7 S’s approach to managing change in an organisation. We tend to focus on hard and soft S’s. Hard S’s are the tangible elements of the organisation which are probably easier to measure and see and include Strategy Structure and Systems. The Soft S’s tend to be the more intangible areas of culture and people relationships. They include Style which relates to leadership style, Staff which relates to motivation and working with others, and Skills which focus on the core learning and core competencies that staff require to do their job and fulfil their role. Shared values is a soft S, but is also the integrating process of bringing both the hard and soft elements of the culture together.

5. Planned interventions
OD is focused on developing strategic and tactical plans to achieve its goals through consultative planning, and applying a methodology which is similar to Six Sigma’s DMIAC (Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control).

Overall, Lean Six Sigma and OD appears to follow the same process, but OD relies extensively on a multi-disciplinary approach to diagnose problems and to implement changes. OD relies on the research and applications of the behavioural sciences. Lean focuses very much on group problem solving using a consultative or participative style and Six Sigma focuses on the objective collection, interpretation and analysis of data and statistical evidence.

Summary and opportunities for the future
Clients, researchers and commentators agree that there is no one best way to manage or create and implement change. Clearly, a multi-disciplinary approach to bring about change is required. Integrating the three schools of thought is critical to deliver training that is relevant now and in the future.

Finally, we believe that change is fundamentally a cultural issue and unless we address the core OD issues of how to create the right culture and leadership style to create significant change, the application of the myriad of Lean techniques and advanced statistical use will only prove partially successful in preparing organisations for the future.

“A multi-disciplinary approach to bring about change is required.”

About the author
Philip Atkinson is a consultant, executive coach and a Master Black Belt tutor in Lean Six Sigma specialising in strategic, behavioural and cultural change. He consults in the UK, Europe and US, has written seven business books and published over 300 articles, is a frequent conference speaker and designer of learning strategies to support personal and organisational change. Visit www.philipatkinson.com or his new website www.lean-six-sigma-OD-training.com, featuring his new accredited learning management systems in Lean Sigma OD.
Summer changes to employment law and tribunal rules

By Kate Boguslawska, Solicitor, Saunders Law Ltd.

“If workers blow the whistle about breaches of their own contract of employment, they will not be entitled to protection from detriment or dismissal.”

2013 has been an important year for business owners, HR specialists and employment law practitioners. This is because we all have witnessed staged implementation of various changes to employment law and tribunal rules. The changes were introduced by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 and the Employment Tribunal (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) Regulations 2013 which have come into force this year.

The changes are partly in response to mounting costs of the employment tribunal system. In the financial year 2011-12, employment tribunals accepted a total of 186,300 claims. The annual cost of running employment claims is said to be approximately £74 million. The changes also aim to reform the old Tribunal Rules of Procedure and make the system more efficient.

The main changes that have already taken place this summer
• Removal of qualifying period for political belief dismissals
If an employee is dismissed because of their political beliefs or affiliations, they do not need to demonstrate that they were employed for a qualifying period (two years, or a year if they were employed before April 2012) in order to bring an unfair dismissal claim.
“A unified fee remission system for claimants in receipt of certain state benefits or on low gross income is expected.”

- Changes to whistle blowers’ protection
  Workers making a protected disclosure are now only protected if the disclosure is ‘in the public interest’. Consequently, if they blow the whistle about breaches of their own contract of employment, they will not be entitled to protection from detriment or dismissal. However, they do not have to make the disclosure in good faith any more, although, if they do not, a tribunal may reduce their compensation by up to 25%.

- Introduction of the tribunal fee paying system
  On 29 July 2013 we observed the introduction of a two-tier fee paying structure, payable by claimants. It divides claims into ‘minor claims’ (Type A claims) such as unlawful deduction from wages or statutory redundancy payment and ‘complex claims’ (Type B) including unfair dismissal, discrimination and whistle blowing. Type A claims now require a lodging fee of £160 and a hearing fee of £230; Type B claims require a lodging fee of £250 and a hearing fee of £950.
  However, employers are not immune. The new system requires a fee for a counter claim of £160, and £400 to lodge an appeal with the EAT (plus a further EAT hearing fee of £1,200).

- New employment tribunal rules
  In order to make the tribunal system more time and cost efficient, pre-hearing reviews and case management discussions have been combined together into a single hearing, now referred to as a preliminary hearing. The new rules have given the judges powers to strike out weak cases and, in certain circumstances, to order that a deposit be paid by the claimant in respect of individual allegations within claim particulars. Also the judges will now, more actively, encourage parties to use alternative dispute resolution.

- New cap on the unfair dismissal award
  The Compensatory Award for unfair dismissal is now subject to a cap of £74,200 or 12 months’ salary, whichever is the lower.

- Settlement agreements
  This is a new name for good old compromise agreements. The change is not only in the name. Before, employers were wary of offering compromise agreement to their employees, in case they complained that their dismissal was predetermined and therefore unfair. Now, in the spirit of pre-termination negotiations, employers are able to offer a settlement agreement at any time, regardless whether there is an existing dispute. Because these negotiations are on a without prejudice basis, if no agreement is reached neither party can refer to it in any ensuing proceedings. The move is a result of a drive towards encouraging parties to reach settlement without recourse to the tribunal. It is also in line with the spirit of reconciliation and extended role of ACAS. Worth noting though is that this rule only applies to unfair dismissal situations and not where a claim for automatic unfair dismissal or discrimination may arise; furthermore employers must comply with the new ACAS Statutory Code of Practice.

- Employee shareholder contracts introduced
  1 September 2013 introduced employee shareholder contracts – a scheme which allows employees to give up their employment rights such as a right to claim unfair dismissal or a redundancy payment in return for at least £2000-worth of shares in the employer’s company. In order to take advantage of the scheme and understand it, an employee must obtain independent legal advice before signing up. This is to give protection from undue influence on the part of the employer.

What the future holds?
- Removal of third party harassment provisions
  1 October 2013 marked the day on which the third party harassment provisions of the Equality Act 2010 was repealed and the employer was no longer vicariously liable for harassment of employees by a third party (such as a customer or contractor).

- Increase in national minimum wage
  This increases annually and this year’s figures are as follows:
  - 21+ years – £6.31
  - 18-20 years – £5.03
  - Under 18 years – £3.72
  - Apprentice – £2.68
  Next year we will, no doubt, continue to be busy as more changes are announced such as the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations marked for January 2014. In April 2014, ACAS Conciliation will become compulsory before lodging a claim with the tribunal. Also, in 2014 an extension to the right to request flexible working for all employees is planned.

About the author
An experienced commercial litigator, Kate advises business and individuals on contentious and non-contentious employment and other business litigation matters. Email kate.boguslawska@saunders.co.uk or 020 7632 4300.
Best practices in talent management to support Lean manufacturing

Adam Cobb gives advice on enhancing individual and organisational productivity.

Despite increases in employment and hours worked, recent data from the Office of National Statistics indicates that productivity in UK manufacturing remains low. Lean Manufacturing principles have been shown to be effective in increasing productivity but they demand a different kind of workforce. Finding, developing, managing and retaining an effective Lean labour force doesn’t just happen – it requires attention to talent management best practices.

Lean competencies
It all begins with competencies – the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours that employees must exhibit to successfully deploy Lean Manufacturing principles. Some Lean competencies might be the same for everyone – such as team behaviours, while some are specific to certain roles – such as technical problem solving. According to Gerry Ledford, a nationally recognised expert on HR issues, Lean-oriented competencies include:

• Knowledge and use of Lean quality principles and tools;
• Flexible skill set adaptable to various jobs as needed;
• Ability to follow standardised work requirements while evaluating and improving them;
• Problem solving skills and continuous improvement orientation;
• Holistic orientation toward work flow rather than limiting focus to one part of the operation;
• Team skills;
• Ability to work independently, monitor and take responsibility for results;
• Customer service orientation.

Once Lean competencies are identified and prioritised for critical roles, they should be defined clearly enough that employees understand what is expected of them and supervisors and managers can use them to observe, coach for improvement and measure performance levels. These competencies become the basis for all other aspects of talent management.

Competency-based recruiting for Lean manufacturing
Incorporate well-defined competencies into job descriptions and selection tools to ensure that new hires possess the competencies that will advance Lean manufacturing in your organisation. An influx of new talent already exhibiting...
Lean skills and behaviours is a great way to kick-start a Lean culture. Just be sure new hires are carefully integrated into the existing workforce so they are viewed as positive role models.

**Lean goal setting**

Lean principles demand alignment throughout the organisation to enable on-demand processing and elimination of waste. Talent management can help. Begin with the strategic goals of the organisation and cascade them to the various departments that enable their achievement. Then leaders, supervisors and individual contributors can set their own SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) that support organisational priorities and build on Lean manufacturing principles and competencies. Some advantages of Lean goal setting are:

- Gives employees at every level a line of sight to larger organisational goals and strategy;
- Motivates employees as they see how their work matters;
- Aligns priorities and focuses effort on what matters most;
- Increases flexibility by providing a process for realignment as priorities change;
- Enables individual contributors to manage their own work;
- Provides objective criteria for measurement and improvement.

**Monitoring performance**

Lean principles of observation, measurement, communication and problem solving for continuous improvement can also be applied to employee performance. Equipped with well-defined competencies and performance goals, supervisors and even team members can observe and evaluate employee performance on an ongoing basis. Train and hold supervisors accountable to provide employees with regular and constructive feedback on their performance. Reinforce success by celebrating and encouraging employees and teams as they exhibit Lean competencies and move toward achieving their goals.

**Lean development**

Many organisations deploy training programmes as the universal antidote to employee performance issues. But Lean talent management applies measurement and analysis here as well.

From their observations of employee performance compared to pre-defined goals and competencies, managers can identify the most important developmental needs of individual performers. In organisations where talent management processes are automated and integrated, HR professionals can also analyse organisation-wide performance data to identify larger gaps in performance. Further analysis can then determine the most efficient and effective method of intervention.

For example, if employee performance is consistently low in a certain department, apply troubleshooting techniques to identify whether leadership, resource, competency, motivation or other barriers impede performance and which tools will be most effective in mitigating them.

The competency models described above are also useful in helping employees and their managers identify and develop the specific competencies that will enable them to progress towards career goals. Thus, employing the principles of Lean manufacturing to talent management enhances both individual and organisational productivity.

About the author

Adam Cobb is a regional sales manager at Halogen Software. Connect with Adam on LinkedIn.

“Organisations with automated and integrated talent management processes can analyse data to identify larger gaps in performance.”
Office workers don’t want to ‘think outside the box’ when it comes to business jargon

Office workers are becoming increasingly frustrated with the excessive use of business jargon in the workplace, a survey has revealed. It seems they are far from ‘thinking outside the box’ when it comes to communicating in the workplace, with over a third (39%) of office workers regarding the excessive use of business jargon as their number one pet hate in business.

And it appears junior workers aren’t being kept ‘in the loop’ with regards to this unfamiliar language, with management being considered the most excessive users of business jargon (23%), followed closely by the sales department (21%).

However, over half of office workers (55%) admit to using business jargon themselves, with ‘close of play’ being the most used term (16.2%), followed by ‘thinking outside the box’ (16.1%). ‘Going forward’ (15%) is the third most popular phrase, with ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’ (14%) taking fourth place. ‘In the loop’ is also frequently used by over one in 10 workers (12%).

‘Strategically’ trying to climb the career ladder, 25-34 year olds are the age group most likely to use business jargon, with almost two thirds (61%) admitting to using it frequently. Struggling to get their ‘ducks in a row’, the over 55s are the most frustrated by business jargon, with 55% choosing it as their biggest pet peeve in the workplace.

The survey of 2500 respondents was carried out by Jurys Inn Hotels and CrossCountry.

In an attempt to assist those who wish to avoid using business jargon ‘moving forwards’, Jurys Inn has created a Business Jargon Prompt Sheet (available at www.jurysinns.com).

For example, the guide explains ‘close of play’ can be translated simply to ‘by the end of the day’. ‘Ping it over/on’ can be translated to ‘email it over to me’ and ‘getting your ducks in a row’ to ‘ensuring everything is clear and organised’.

Marc Webster, head of sales at Jurys Inn and spokesperson for Jurys Meetings, says: “As our study shows, business jargon is becoming even more commonplace in the office. Many use this language subconsciously, following years of studying textbooks or by simply picking it up from colleagues. However, it can also be used to make people feel more important or in an attempt to climb the career ladder.”

He continues: “We believe business meetings are better when attendees, young and old, feel comfortable to speak clearly without the need for jargon, and for this reason we have created our business jargon prompt sheet.”
Knowledge management and the high performance organisation

The findings of a new report suggest a very bright future for management services practitioners, says Prof Colin Coulson-Thomas.

Knowledge in certain forms from registrations of patents to website pages appears to have been growing in volume terms at an exponential rate. There has also been an increase in the proportion of knowledge workers within many labour markets and the knowledge content of a wide range of goods and services has been rising.

Some areas of knowledge are more relevant, useful and valuable than others. Some areas are also better understood, shared and utilised than others. How a company manages its corporate know-how and the knowledge of its people can be a source of competitive advantage (Argote and Ingram, 2000). It can have a significant impact upon growth and development.

Alavi and Leidner (2001) have defined knowledge management as the end-to-end process of creating or acquiring, storing and updating, sharing and applying knowledge. All parts of the process are important. For example, there is little point creating or acquiring leading edge knowledge that is not effectively used.

Questioning and assessing knowledge management

Organisations vary greatly in how effectively they manage what they know and profit from intellectual capital (Perrin, 2000). Some approaches seem more expensive and time-consuming than others. How important are systems and information technology? What is the most cost-effective way of using knowledge to build a high performance organisation?

Knowledge management is not without its critics. Kim, Yu and Lee (2003) have suggested that many organisations have failed to derive the benefits expected from knowledge management initiatives. Where are organisations whose initiatives have delivered disappointing results going wrong? Is a shift of emphasis or a different approach required?

One should not jump upon a bandwagon just because an approach is much written and talked about. Wilson (2002) considers knowledge management to be ‘in large part a management fad, promulgated mainly by certain consultancy companies’ and suggests its use has been more limited than its proponents have suggested.

So what are the options? Where should management services and other practitioners who are seeking to achieve quicker and more beneficial impacts be looking? When knowledge management is discussed in the boardroom what are the key questions that a director should ask? Should directors challenge contemporary approaches? If knowledge management is not on the boardroom agenda should it be?

A five-year investigation led by the author suggests practitioners and boards should be concerned. Many knowledge management initiatives have been excessively general and overly complex, and they have not delivered hoped for benefits. Encouragingly, a more
In comparison with costly and protracted alternatives, performance support can be quickly adopted to address particular problems.

It does not differentiate or represent a source of competitive advantage. It might not be relevant to new priorities, challenges or opportunities. Past initiatives have often been expensive, time consuming and disruptive. Better and faster results may need to be achieved with limited budgets and with existing people, structures and cultures.

Does the focus of knowledge management in your company need to change? Many organisations are also capturing and sharing the wrong sort of knowledge (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e). Knowledge of how best to undertake particular tasks and confront specific issues can be more important than general understanding. This is especially so in relation to key jobs that deliver key corporate objectives sought by the board and senior management team.

A switch of emphasis is required from ‘knowledge about things’ to ‘knowing how to do things’, and from the storage of knowledge to its access and use (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e). More people should question whether the knowledge management team is serving the needs of C-suite executives or helping front-line work-groups to excel.

The management team and knowledge management practitioners may need to switch their attention from ‘top-down’ motivation and management to ‘bottom-up’ support and key work-group performance.

Changing the focus of knowledge management
How affordable and flexible are the approaches which have been adopted? Practitioners and directors should question the cost-effectiveness of knowledge management initiatives. More effort has often been devoted to implementing them than measuring their impacts. Data, information and knowledge collected is not always relevant or accessible as and when required. Some approaches also require ‘culture change’, while requirements and priorities can change during implementation.

‘Traditional’ approaches can require significant upfront investment in capturing and storing information and knowledge covering a wide range of activities. Much of what is assembled is often ‘commodity knowledge’ available to competitors.

Underpinning research and experience
The author’s underpinning research has identified critical success factors for important activities such as winning business (Coulson-Thomas, 2007 & 2013e). Twenty studies found a clear distinction between how ‘winners’ (top quartile performers when those examined were ranked in order of results achieved) and bottom quartile ‘losers’ tackle key jobs. Once determined, critical success factors and winning ways can be explained and/or built into work processes and various forms of performance support.

Has sufficient effort been devoted to capturing and sharing knowledge of how to excel at key tasks?

The evidence suggests there is considerable potential to boost the performance of even the work-groups in the top quartile of attainment. For example, in relation to winning competitive bids, those in the top quartile of achievement were only very effective at less than a half of the identified critical success factors (Coulson-Thomas et al, 2003). The performance of every organisation examined could be improved.

Knowledge-based performance support – whether simple paper checklist, mobile phone application or multi-media tool – can enable average performers to emulate ‘superstars’ by adopting the approaches of higher performing peers, and this can be done by working with the groups and teams one has, ie, without...
needing to replace people, or change attitudes, cultures or values (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e). Given the number of knowledge workers and professionals in the public sector, and the importance of helping those in demanding and stressful front-line jobs, better performance support can also enable and facilitate the transformation of public services (Coulson-Thomas, 2012b).

A board needs to ensure that management provides the people of an organisation with the tools to do what is expected of them. Performance tools can address identified issues, help people to do difficult jobs and boost the achievements of average performers. The use of information and other technologies should be considered and justified on grounds of cost-effectiveness, for example if 24/7 support is required to a scattered community of knowledge workers in various locations, including when people are on the move (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e).

Knowledge management and performance
Knowledge-based performance support addresses deficiencies of ‘traditional’ knowledge management and delivers additional benefits (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e). It is relatively easy to adopt and its implementation does not necessarily require a change of systems or structure. Its focus can be upon key work-groups, it can embrace channel and supply chain partners, and it represents an affordable route to a high performance organisation. It can also be personalised and adapt to changing requirements.

Performance support can build confidence and understanding, and may be easy to disseminate to business
partners in multiple locations. Directors should ensure that the support provided to people for whom they are responsible is current and relevant. This can be ensured by appropriate social networking and automatic updating when users are on-line. People can be helped to cope with change. Building checks into tools can help to ensure quality and compliance.

In comparison with costly and protracted alternatives, performance support can be quickly adopted to address particular problems. It can be provided in ways that best meet the needs of those to be helped, and can evolve as requirements change, new issues emerge, and additional funding becomes available. Applications can support mobile activities and new ways of working and learning, delivering commercial success for organisations and personal satisfaction for individuals.

A board could encourage the more strategic use of performance support. The unit costs of providing help fall with larger communities of users. Once set up, the cost of downloading, duplicating or otherwise sharing a support tool can be minimal. A social networking facility can encourage knowledge sharing. Automatic updates can help to keep support current.

**Responsibility for knowledge-based support**

Directors and the CEO should think carefully before allocating knowledge management responsibilities. Past initiatives have often been implemented by IT professionals and led by the chief technology officer. If a board feels there needs to be more focus on particular jobs that contribute to priority corporate objectives then others may need to be put into the driving seat.

While implementation may be delegated to management, a board should ensure its priorities are observed. Adoption involves assessing important roles and tasks; identifying steps in work processes that have the greatest impacts; and ensuring that people in these ‘key’ and demanding jobs are enabled to excel by providing them with appropriate performance support that captures and shares critical success factors and helps them to succeed (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e).

Directors should question whether new challenges could be handled by existing people if they were better supported (Coulson-Thomas, 2012a). Hiring people and/or using external consultants to support innovation or new offerings can be expensive, especially where developments occur on a regular basis. Dipping into the external market as a fresh requirement arises can be costly. It may also not be practical if a company wishes to launch a new offering at the same moment across a global marketplace.

**Supporting business development and new initiatives**

A company may not necessarily need expensive new hires in order to expand. Knowledge-based support can be much more cost effective than options such as external recruitment (Coulson-Thomas, 2012a). It can enable existing people to better understand, sell and support a new product or service and help customers to responsibly innovate and buy. Prospects can assess new options that better meet their needs. They can be helped to

“Traditional ‘top-down’ leadership practices in many companies are not delivering the advantages which a change of emphasis and focus could bring.”
help themselves. They may also feel in control and may order more than when sales staff are present.

Some boards champion innovation. Performance support is particularly suited to launching new products and initiatives (Coulson-Thomas, 2012a & 2013e). Details and animations and images showing new offerings in use can be quickly communicated around the world. Automating routine tasks frees up time for differentiation and tailoring that may justify a price premium, or for addressing implementation issues. Knowledge-based performance support can provide a solid base for future sales, service and corporate communications. In addition to speeding up adoption and cutting costs, it can reduce commercial, regulatory and quality risks. Presenting information in different formats can enhance understanding and the application of new knowledge.

Reducing risk and enabling compliance
Ensuring compliance is a concern of many boards. Knowledge workers and professionals often operate in areas that are intrinsically risky and where non-compliance with relevant policies, laws, regulations, rules and guidelines can have serious consequences. Performance support can help people to identify, assess and address risks, and take consistent, fair and compliant decisions (Coulson-Thomas, 2012a & 2013e). It can build trust, competence and confidence.

Risk-aversion can be counter productive. It can increase the chance of more effective options and approaches being overlooked. A desire to avoid risk may actually result in missed opportunities to achieve significant savings and deliver substantial increases in productivity and performance. The right knowledge-based support can liberate, facilitate innovation and enable responsible risk taking.

Performance support can help to ensure compliance and achieve a direct impact upon ‘front line’ behaviour and measurable outputs. When unfamiliar situations arise and re-skilling is required, performance improvements are therefore easier to measure than is the case with ‘traditional’ approaches in areas where costs - for example of training - are easier to determine than the benefits.

24/7 learning support of knowledge workers
A balance has to be struck between performance today and future potential, and between support of a selected few and ‘helping the many’ (Coulson-Thomas, 2012a). Many companies try to equip perceived high fliers for future roles. Knowledge-based performance support can help people to both excel today and tackle whatever might be encountered tomorrow. It can complement or replace ‘traditional’ approaches to mentoring and training, and provide assistance to scattered communities, as and when required.

Personal coaching and/or mentoring larger numbers of people can be a challenge. Performance support can overcome scalability barriers and cost-effectively provide good practice, and up to date and personalised help to people throughout an organisation, and internationally, on a 24/7 basis. Those supported can learn from each use, enabling them to remain current.

Are people in different locations and when out of the office and on the move receiving adequate assistance? Performance support is a form of 24/7 and on-demand mentoring. It can take help that is provided to a few and make it available to large numbers of people, wherever they might be, and whenever assistance is required. Individual users can benefit from the advice of not just one person, but many – if not a galaxy – of superstars, each of whom may excel in particular areas.

Knowledge-based performance support is

“Knowledge of how best to tackle important tasks can be the key to transforming performance and delivering multiple benefits.”
especially relevant to the problems confronting many public services (Coulson-Thomas, 2012b). With staff costs representing a high proportion of total expenditure and the time it takes to train new professionals, performance support can make the best of available resources and deliver multiple outcomes in a practical and cost-effective way. People usually see better support as helpful and implementation can be manageable, affordable and achievable.

**Communicating and building relationships**

Are mutually beneficial relationships being forged with key stakeholder groups? Performance support can have a significant and beneficial impact on corporate communications and engagement (Coulson-Thomas, 2013e). 24/7 support can be provided when and wherever required. Delivery can be via a laptop, palmtop, mobile phone, or via the internet, and integrated with web communications and social networking.

Customers are often unaware of the impacts of their buying decisions upon themselves, others and the environment. Sales and purchasing support tools can show buyers the implications of different courses of action, and enable them to select the option which has the least harmful effect. They can increase the performance of key work-groups such as front-line sales teams, account managers, service and customer support staff, and make it easier for people to tackle difficult buying decisions.

Many people and boards would like to address challenges such as sustainability and climate change, but they lack a practical way of doing so. Performance support represents a flexible and cost-effective way of demonstrating corporate social responsibility and quickly impacting upon behaviour. In doing what they feel is the right thing people can benefit themselves, their supplier and the planet. Corporate performance, and employee and customer satisfaction can all gain.

**‘New leadership’**

The findings of the five-year investigation also suggest that a different approach to leadership is required (Coulson-Thomas, 2012a & b, 2013a-e). ‘Top-down’ and ‘all encompassing’ central initiatives can be expensive and time consuming. They can result in more complex and inflexible solutions that take much longer to have an impact upon performance than ‘bottom-up’ applications of performance support to address particular problems and burning issues. Given the gaps that often emerge between rhetoric and reality and between expectations and outcomes, the investigation’s findings also suggest that more attention should be devoted to implementing corporate plans and policies (Coulson-Thomas, 2013a). Knowledge-based tools can impact relatively quickly upon key corporate objectives and can be used to both increase performance and generate additional external income. In an uncertain business environment helping people to cope with new challenges and opportunities can prove more effective than producing detailed plans that may be overtaken by events.

Boards should favour approaches that deliver multiple objectives. Traditional ‘top-down’ leadership practices in many companies are not delivering the advantages which a change of emphasis and focus could bring. ‘New leadership’ and a ‘bottom-up’ approach to creating high performance organisations and achieving simultaneous progress on several fronts are required.

Knowledge-based performance support, whether simple paper or electronic check-lists or more complex tools, offers financial, scalability, flexibility and sustainability advantages over ‘traditional’ options. Relevant and current support that shares the best way of doing difficult jobs and tackling new challenges can be provided wherever help is needed, at a place of work, out of the office, or on the move. Users can benefit from the advice of whoever has the most relevant and effective way of addressing problems that arise at each stage of a task.

**Conclusions**

Contemporary approaches should be challenged. A board should be vigilant when proposals for new knowledge, talent or change management programmes are received. An initiative that does not offer a quick payback, multiple benefits and a high ROI, or whose results are difficult to measure, should be questioned. It may not be focused, use contemporary tools, or be justified.

Knowledge of how best to tackle important tasks can
be the key to transforming performance and delivering multiple benefits. Directors should question whether the approaches of high performers have been captured in a form that enables them to be accessed by others whenever and wherever required, and shared, utilised and developed. They should ensure that people and teams delivering key corporate objectives are engaged and appropriately supported.

Performance-focused knowledge support could improve the implementation of board policies, ensure compliance, reduce risk, boost productivity, avoid trade-offs and more quickly deliver multiple objectives. It could also enable corporate leaders to set people free to innovate and bespoke responses to the changing requirements of customers and other stakeholders.

Further information
Transforming Knowledge Management, Talent Management 2 and Transforming Public Services summarise the findings of a five-year investigation into the most cost-effective route to high performance organisations. Published by Policy Publications

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About the author
Prof Colin Coulson-Thomas, author of 40 books and reports, has helped more than 100 clients improve director, board and corporate performance. He has held professorial appointments in Europe, North and South America, the Middle East, India and China, and a variety of private board directorships and public sector appointments at national and local level. He is also an experienced Vision Holder of successful transformation programmes. He currently advises organisations at home and abroad on transforming performance and knowledge, talent and change management, serves on private and public sector boards, and is a member of the business school team at the University of Greenwich. He can be contacted via colin@coulson-thomas.com or www.coulson-thomas.com and his reports are available from www.policypublications.com.
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