The West Midlands Region is planning a free afternoon seminar and workshop later this year at Stratford upon Avon with the theme of ‘Improving the Customer Experience’. This is the current aim of many private and public organisations and companies and so should be of interest to a wide audience. The project leader for this event is Steve Cullen a member of the West Midlands Region Board, and the topics will include: how your service is currently perceived, what can be improved, managing customer expectations, getting useful feedback from customers and putting the improvement plan into action.

If you are interested in this event in either attending, or being a guest speaker based on your own experiences in this area or have particular issues in this area, please register your interest or contact Steve Cullen by e-mail.
Editorial...The Chair’s message:

On behalf of the West Midlands Region Board I hope it is not too late to wish you a happy, prosperous and peaceful 2014.

At last it seems the economy is recovering and this is supported by the latest forecast by the British Chambers of Commerce that by later this year the nation’s GDP will have recovered to pre-recession levels. The work force has surged by 250,000 to a record level of over 30 million workers in the UK.

While these statistics are very welcome, many people are still lacking the ‘feel good factor’. There is also the popular misconception that Britain doesn’t manufacture anything anymore even though the West Midlands is still the manufacturing centre for the UK and closely associated with the rapidly recovering and expanding motor industry.

According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Britain’s car plants are expected to have made 1.5 million vehicles in 2013 and production is expected to continue to rise and by 2016 production will be at an all time record exceeding the peak year for vehicle production of 1972.

In the West Midlands Jaguar Land Rover continues to expand with new models and the vast new engine manufacturing plant being built alongside the M54 motorway. The new model Mini is being produced at Cowley, Oxford and the BMW engine plant at Hams Hall, Birmingham produces engines for the Mini and other BMW models. The new Honda Civic model is being assembled at Swindon, and at the luxury end of the car market Bentley cars manufactured at Crewe are in high demand. JCB have also announced expansion plans in north Staffordshire for their construction vehicles and equipment.

All this is important news for the West Midlands not only to the primary assembly businesses but to the scores of component manufacturers and suppliers throughout the region. 2014 should be an optimistic year for UK economy as a whole and for the West Midlands in particular.

Visit and tour of the Wedgwood Visitor Centre, Factory and Museum

On Wednesday 23rd October a party from the West Midlands Region visited the Wedgwood Visitor Centre, Museum and Factory situated in the open Staffordshire countryside, south of Stoke on Trent.

An introductory film outlined the history and ethos of the Wedgwood company and this was followed by a tour of the factory. The factory tour under the supervision of our guide took us from the initial preparation of the china clay through to the finished products.

Wedgwood has always maintained its reputation for attention to detail to produce high quality products. In the finished products area we were shown individual items which had retail prices of thousands of pounds. The majority of the output is exported.

The Museum outlines the history of the company from its founder Josiah Wedgwood, who was born in 1730, the youngest son to a Staffordshire potter and who by a combination of entrepreneurship and scientific application developed new processes and methods for producing pottery which satisfied the needs of the newly emerging middle class and the aristocracy.

Wedgwood’s cream ware was bought by Queen Charlotte of England and became known as ‘Queen’s Ware’. Catherine the Great of Russia ordered a dining set of over 800 items for her palace. These royal endorsements helped to establish Wedgwood as England’s premier pottery producer.

Examples of all the various products produced by the company over its history are displayed, from the early primitive products to the finest bone china and sophisticated ornaments including the iconic blue and white jasper ware. The museum contains an almost priceless collection of unique items.
Ailsa Bell in conversation with John Hopkinson

JH: Thank you Ailsa for taking the time to talk to us. May I start by asking why and when you originally joined the IMS?
Ailsa: I joined in 1974 when I was working in the NHS in Bristol. I needed a career with better prospects and the NHS was offering IMS training as part of the new job.

I did the IMS Certificate as a full time live-in course at Leicester Polytechnic, funded by the NHS. The NHS needed new recruits with Work Study/Work Measurement qualifications to devise and install incentive bonus schemes for ancillary staff such as porters, domestic, catering, laundry etc and building and engineering works staff and ambulances. I then did the Diploma over the next few years as part time study and also did the O&M conversion course.

JH: Where did you work in the Health Service?
Ailsa: I stayed in the NHS for 17 years in Bristol, Gloucestershire and West Midlands. I then moved into management consultancy in health, still using some of the O&M/Work Study techniques supplemented with further training in related areas such as project management, presentation skills etc. I ended up in the Audit Commission for 10 years auditing value for money in health and local government until a change of government signalled the demise of the Audit Commission in 2010/11.

JH: I know the West Midlands Board invited you to join but what made you accept the invitation and what position(s) do you hold?
Ailsa: Having retired from travelling around the country for work, I found I had a little more free time. The Board wrote to me and I felt I had been specially selected so I thought it would be churlish to turn them down!! I am currently Secretary and have been Membership/Education Officer, although I found it a little difficult to be involved in Education since there is clearly a large national element to it which I feel unable to influence!

JH: What future challenges do you think face the IMS and what can the Region do to meet these?
Ailsa: The greatest challenge I think, is to remain a helpful professional body to support people working in management services and to continue to commission appropriate but modern training but funding seems to be the biggest hurdle. I think we need to find another institute to align with so that we update our rather old fashioned image. LEAN and other similar modern approaches are really just IMS techniques under a new guise and name. We should be looking at how we can refresh our image and techniques.

JH: Outside the IMS what are your interests and hobbies?
Ailsa: Classical Music including attending as many concerts as possible, reading, travelling, dog walking, dancing including ceroc (modern jive) and ballroom, visiting antique centres and collecting wooden animals and antique netsuke (small wooden toggles approx 2", in the shape of animals or people). Clearly I am not yet ready to move back into any ‘public’ service yet! I am too busy having some time off!

JH: Is there anything else you would like to add?
Ailsa: I have various publications in the nursing press relating to work I did on nurse staffing levels. These are very topical at the moment when the government is yet again asking how many nurses it needs!

Articles such as:

Co-authored a nurse benchmarking article in the Nursing Standard; Comparing Notes. November 15th 2000
Managed the development of and co-authored the production of the distance learning pack ‘RAINBOW IV – Using Clinical Information in Integrated Healthcare’ GCL and the NHS Executive 1996
Co-authored the textbook and distance learning pack ‘RAINBOW III - Using Information in Practice Management’ GCL and the NHS Training Division 1994

Authored an article in Hospital and Health Services Review, Dispelling the Alligators of Competitive Tendering, July 1986


I have a number of spare ‘Rainbow’ text books which I would happily give for free to anyone interested? They include:

Rainbow 1 – Using information in Nursing
Rainbow II – Using information in Contracting
And Rainbows III and IV as above.

If you need further information about the content of these I can supply it, so we can offer them to people?

JH: Thank you Ailsa for your time and generous offer.

Ailsa Bell
Region Secretary
**West Midlands Region Board Members Directory**

**Region Chair** –
John Hopkinson FMS

**Region Treasurer and Events Co-ordinator**—
Julian Cutler FMS

**Region Secretary**—
Ailsa Bell MMS

**Education and Membership Development Officer**
Stephen Cullen FMS

**Executive Members:**
- Bill Acres AMS
- Stephen Burchill MMS
- Peter Story FMS

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To contact the West Midlands Region of the IMS please e-mail: admin@ims-stowe.fsnet.co.uk and mark for the attention of the West Midlands Region, Institute of Management Services