

Focused on You

By Rob Macleod, MD of Assessment North East

At Assessment North East we never underestimate the value of meeting the needs and wants of our clients. I am pleased to say we have a number of you working very closely with us to deliver our services. Your input is vital if we are to play our role in continuously developing North East organisations.

The same can be said for the Investors in People Standard, which has celebrated its 15th anniversary this November. It is amazing to think that IIP started in 1991, with twenty eight organisations receiving the award, and now involves over 61,000 organisations world-wide. It is one of the longest running initiatives of its type, having survived successive Governments, numerous ministerial changes and economic events. But it's not just the Government that keeps IIP going and growing - it is you, our customers, and your enthusiasm for it! During Investors in People Week recently, Dickinson Dees and Frank Haslam Milan very kindly agreed to throw open their doors and share their stories and experiences of Investors in People with others. Over 40 representatives from other organisations in the region took up the opportunity. One delegate commented: *"It has been really interesting to hear about the journey they have gone through and the benefits they've gained. It's inspired me to do more in our organisation."*

This was great feedback and a great acknowledgement to the organisations, their achievements and Investors in People. Now in its fourth version, the Standard itself is driven by comments and feedback from you, our customers. Over 150 of you participated nationally in workshops, seminars and pilots to determine the current, more stretching version. This opportunity will occur again in a few years time, as it is reviewed again to keep pace with our changing world.

You may not be aware that we have twenty five of our clients working with us as recognition panel members. Every month, they meet in their panel teams to review reports on new organisations wishing to achieve the Award. In addition, we have three of you on our Board as non-executive directors to guide and advise on the services and direction of our company.

A sincere thanks to you all for whatever role you play with us and the support you have given for our work. We endeavour to provide you with services that will enable you to develop for the next fifteen years and we always welcome your feedback.

And finally, from all our staff and practitioners, can I be amongst the first to wish you a very Happy Christmas and a successful, productive 2007.



Balancing Work and Life



Joanna Wastell, of Conyers School, Stockton, attended the Improving Work-Life Balance course run by ANE's Tony Kirlaw. Joanna now talks to ANECDOTE about her experience:

"Conyers School is an 11-18 community comprehensive with 1400 students, 84 members of teaching staff and approximately 100 support staff. I have worked at Conyers School for four years and have been lucky enough to have four different roles in that time. I am currently the Personnel Officer, and enjoy the variety and diversity that working in a school has to offer.

Working in a school is very pressured and constantly ruled by the clock because of lesson times and term times. Teaching and support staff often have to complete work outside of normal school hours which can affect work-life balance. For this reason, Conyers decided it would be useful for me, in my role as Personnel Officer, to attend the Work-Life Balance training and feed back what I had learnt to other staff members.

Attending the work-life balance course has allowed me to identify problem areas in my life where the balance is not right, and helped me to understand how important it is to have a good work-life balance. In particular, I found the '168 hours' task very useful. It enabled me to see exactly how I spend the 168 hours in a week and to address how much time is spent in each area of my life, e.g. at work and with my family, to ensure there is a good balance between the two. It was also interesting to hear about Tony Kirlaw's personal experience and how he addressed his work-life balance. As a result of taking the course, I have been able to achieve a better balance between home and work. Consequently, the school has benefitted as when I am more comfortable with my work-life balance then I am definitely more productive at work. I would have no hesitation in recommending this course and in fact, found it so useful, that we arranged for Tony Kirlaw to come to Conyers and run the course in school for the benefit of other staff."

Tony Kirlaw, Work-life Balance specialist, runs the one-day 'workshop' style course which is aimed at helping individuals improve their own work-life balance. The course applies the five-step risk management approach of the Health and Safety Executive's Stress Management Standards.

For further information please contact TonyK@aneltd.co.uk

for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

Workshop Dates

WORKSHOP	DATES
ISO	
Internal Audits - 1 day workshop	27 February 2007 22 May 2007
Plan, Do & Review - the Links between ISO and lip 1 day workshop	13 February 2007 24 April 2007
Care Sector Share & Learn 1/2 day workshop	19 March 2007 (am & pm)
Investors in People	
Revised Standard	16 January 2007 15 February 2007 13 March 2007
Preparing for your Review	15 January 2007 19 February 2007 19 March 2007 9 April 2007
Internal Champions	24-26 January 2007
Profile Workshop	11 January 2007
Improving Individual Work-Life Balance	19 January 2007 23 February 2007 23 March 2007
Overview of Work-Life Balance (1/2 day)	22 February 2007 (am)
Overview of Leadership & Management (1/2 day)	10 January 2007 (pm) 3 April 2007 (am)
Overview of Recruitment & Selection (1/2 day)	16 January 2007 (pm) 5 April 2007 (am)
Improving Evaluation	12 April 2007
Health & Safety (1/2 day)	26 January 2007 (am)

Workshops held in Sunderland but available in house. For bookings and further information, contact KayL@aneltd.co.uk

Celebrating Success

In September, Assessment North East hosted a celebration event to congratulate organisations who have achieved Investors in People for the first time, those who have been successfully reviewed and those who have made a commitment to work towards the Standard. In addition two schools were acknowledged for their achievement of the Investors in People Work-Life Balance Award.



Assessment North East
Managing Director
Robert Macleod makes a
presentation to Liz Cornwell,
from newly committed
organisation J R Holland.

Forty two organisations from across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland were represented at the event, held at the striking Longhirst Hall in Northumberland. Every organisation had its achievement acknowledged with a presentation by Assessment North East Managing Director Robert Macleod.

Durham and Teesside organisations then enjoyed a similar event at Bowburn Hall in the south of the region at the end of November. Feedback from those who attended both events was really positive and future events are planned for 2007.

aimed at helping individuals improve
their own work-life balance

Rolling your Reviews

The University of Sunderland is using its Investors in People Reviews to drive forward continuous improvement across the organisation. It hosts a visit from an Investor in People Assessor three times per year and Development Manager Linda Bird is confident there are huge benefits in this approach. ANECDOTE spoke to Linda to find out more.



University of Sunderland campus

"We first achieved Investors in People in 1996 after making a commitment to do so two years previously. We knew that people development would be an important issue for us and saw that the Investors in People Standard could help us to focus on this.

Since achieving the Standard, we have found it integral to people development and a key element of our HR strategies and planning. For example, our appraisal system has vastly improved since we started to look at what we needed to get out of the process more critically, as has our ability to spot weak areas, in terms of people development, within the organisation and then fix them.

The University 'organisation' is massive and complex: there are 1600 staff working in five academic schools and seven services, which include planning & finance, HR, facilities management and student & learning support. An Investors in People Review every 3 years, or even annually, never gave us the depth we required to get a full picture of the University. We are now reviewed three times a year; with a different department being reviewed each time against the entire Standard so that every school and service within the organisation has a review within a 3 year period. Every manager in the organisation has to take responsibility for Investors in People; when it is their team's turn to be reviewed, they

want to understand what is directly affecting their staff and take ownership for making changes where necessary. When another team has the focus, the report is disseminated across the entire organisation as there is always something for everyone to learn. We have also experienced that the assessor's feedback is more specific when concentrating only on one area of the University, and so advice given is more practical and therefore more meaningful.

This approach is working really well as Investors has become a part of life and not just something that one member of the HR core team is delegated to manage every 3 years. We are really using the Standard to maintain a true culture of continuous improvement."

Rolling Reviews can be of tremendous benefit to organisations, particularly those with a complex structure. It can work, as University of Sunderland use it, with parts of the organisation being reviewed once every three years. Alternatively some elect to be reviewed against different elements of the Standard over time, so within three years all aspects have been examined. To find out more about Rolling Reviews contact Nigel Smith on NigelS@aneltd.co.uk

Welcome to Alison

Assessment North East welcomed a new team member last month with the arrival of Alison Davies as Head of Business Solutions. Alison is responsible for ensuring that clients have full access to ANEs organisational development tools when developing their business.

Alison began her career in Australia working for Unilever in several functions including sales, marketing, category management and special projects. After taking a year off to travel around Europe she joined a local business solutions provider in a CPD role where she has been for the last 2 years.

Alison can be contacted by email on AlisonD@aneltd.co.uk



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using the Standard
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Benchmarking with Profile



North Country Leisure first achieved Investors in People in 2003 and when time came around for its first review this year, it decided to use the Profile benchmark to highlight its strengths and identify areas for improvement.

ANECDOTE spoke with IT & Training Manager Shirley Brown to find out more:

"We have always valued external benchmarking, we hold the 'Quest' quality award, the sport and leisure management version of EFQM Excellence Model and use Sport England benchmarking in our operational activities. We hoped that IiP would give us a means to benchmark our staff development activities.

Since our original assessment we have worked hard to embed systems to provide effective staff development including annual reviews, the use of an essential training matrix and a structured system for requesting and monitoring training activities. We also recognised the need to improve management skills and spread these amongst the supervisory staff to avoid over reliance on a small core management team.

The last three years have seen tremendous growth for the organisation and the new systems have helped a great deal for both existing and new staff. We elected to use the Profile tool for the review this summer as we wanted comprehensive feedback on the effectiveness of our staff development activities. We didn't see meeting the Investors in People Standard as the end of our ambition; we want to continually improve.

"We were clear we didn't want to overly prepare for the review. We wanted an honest assessment of our practices rather than just a 'pass'.

"It was a really useful exercise. One of the big challenges for us is how we relate to the large group of casual employees who work for us occasionally. Guiding, supporting and motivating this group in a way that makes good business sense is a difficult balancing act.

"We have now developed an action plan to respond to the feedback we received and will use this to target further improvements over the next couple of years."



North Country Leisure is a charitable leisure management organisation which has operated since 1999. It is a not-for-profit company established for the benefit of the community aiming to offer 'excellent Sports and Leisure experiences for all'. Originally established as Leisure Tynedale to operate the leisure services previously run by Tynedale Council, in 2003 it took on the operation of Alnwick Council's leisure services, and this year the operation of Copeland Council's main leisure sites. It now operates as Leisure Alnwick District, Leisure Tynedale and Leisure Copeland.

Skills for life



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



Ruth Spellman,
former Chief
Executive of IiP UK

In a highly competitive marketplace, it is increasingly important that employees are equipped with the skills that are the foundation of almost all we do - Maths and English skills.

If staff at any level have gaps in their English and Maths skills, this can effect growth, profitability and organisational image. Developing such skills in the workplace will not only improve performance, morale and commitment, but will make the organisation more productive and efficient.

City of Sunderland College's Business Solutions team have created an innovative approach to delivering Maths and English to employees in the workplace that is known as Better

Workforce Challenge.

Assessment North East was delighted to have the opportunity in September to join City of Sunderland College in promoting the Better Workforce Challenge and invited organisations who already hold the Investors in People accreditation and those working towards recognition in the future. The event was also attended by Ruth Spellman, former Chief Executive of IiP UK, Neil Robertson, Head of the Skills for Life Strategy Unit at DfES (Department

for Education and Skills), and Jamie Pearson of Faraday Printed Circuits Ltd.

Ruth explained the importance of Foundation Skills and how they are an integral and implicit part of the Investors in People Standard, "We believe in the development of each person so that their potential is fully reached and maximised. Skills for Life and importantly communication skills are vitally important and essential for organisations to be productive and effective."

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we wanted comprehensive feedback
on the effectiveness of our staff development activities

Managing success with the help of Investors and Lexcel



Bryan Hoare, Director of Marketing at Blackett Hart and Pratt

In a year that has seen record growth, the completion of two further mergers and conversion to a limited liability partnership, North East regional law firm Blackett Hart & Pratt (BHP) can be seen as one of the region's success stories.

"Investing in your people and maintaining high levels of customer service is key in any business," says Bryan Hoare, Director of Marketing at Blackett Hart & Pratt.

"Our growth over the last two to three years can certainly be attributed, in part, to our commitment to both the Investors in People (IiP) standard and the Law Society's Lexcel Quality Accreditation Mark."

"Whilst we have always viewed our investment in training and people development as being central to our business, the implementation of the IiP Standard has allowed us to formalise a lot of what we were already doing in such a way that it has added value."

Anne Lane, Practice Manager at BHP explained, "Our accreditation to Lexcel required an internal reassessment of all our quality and risk management procedures. Compliance to the standard has meant refining and developing many of our standard practice procedures in line with the requirement of Lexcel. This has brought a number of benefits including a greater awareness of risk, increased accountability and an improved approach to quality management."

"Whilst we have always focused on client care, our Lexcel accreditation has helped us to improve our standards further to the ultimate benefit of our clients. Investors and Lexcel are not just 'standards' as far as we are concerned - they have become a central part of our company ethos and culture."

BHP, which has offices in Newcastle, Durham & Darlington, achieved joint accreditation in both Lexcel and IiP in the early part of 2004.

Bryan adds: "Our rapid growth over the last few years has to be put down to the professionalism of our staff and our very loyal clients who continue to support us. We have however also worked very hard to maintain a culture which has grown and developed as we have."

With currently only around 4% of law firms holding joint accreditation nationally, BHP strived to go one step further this year and was successfully reviewed under the revised Investor in People Standard.



The BHP Team with their IiP and Lexcel awards

"Our thought was to go with the new Standard immediately on the basis that whilst we may fall short of the new criteria we could at least learn from that," explains Bryan.

"To our surprise we achieved the new Standard at the first attempt and became one of the first businesses in the region to do so. This was only possible because of how we have embraced Investors right through the business from a cultural perspective."

BHP has always strived to ensure that a quality approach is maintained throughout the organisation, but how has this been achieved? Catherine Gilbert, HR Manager at BHP commented on the firm's induction programme: "We spend a lot of time with new people who join us, explaining the culture and ethos of the firm and our expectations. There is a lot of emphasis on how every role fits into the bigger picture and the part everyone has to play and the contribution they make to the success of the firm, whatever their job may be. We try to ensure that every new member of the team feels valued from day one."

New recruits at BHP undergo a week-long induction programme with numerous opportunities for further training and career

development, but it is the ongoing emphasis on people development which has been a major contributory factor.

The positive assessment was borne out by recent recruit, trainee solicitor Adam Wood, who is based at the Darlington office.

He says: "BHP does have a training-orientated culture and high priority is given to training and an understanding of the BHP culture. I have been impressed by the in-house courses the firm offers, as well as being given the opportunity to attend formal courses."

Not only have Investors and Lexcel played a part in the firm's recent success, with the last two years showing an increase in turnover of 15% and last year an increase in profits of 39%, but it has led to other benefits as well.

In summary, BHP have demonstrated that both Investors and Lexcel have had a direct impact upon the growth of business but, as Bryan comments: "Lexcel and Investors can be seen by dissenters as just another paper trail and audit exercise that they could do without."

"Those firms that reap the rewards of the accreditation ensure that the standards' principles are embedded within their culture right through the business."

for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

Investors and Lexcel have become a central part of our company ethos and culture

Tackling poor performance



by Steve Cave, Associate Consultant at Assessment North East

Picture the scene.. John is a fairly new manager and is about to have a discussion with one of his team, Eric, who is not performing very well. He has tried various ways of bringing Eric's poor performance to his attention but all have been ignored and he now needs to sit down and explain to Eric that his performance is simply not good enough. Sound easy? Only if it is someone else doing it! It is likely that John has not slept very well as he worries about how Eric will react and his stomach is churning a little at the prospect of confrontation. Many of you will have been in this situation and very, very few of you will enjoy this aspect of management.

Oh I almost forgot to mention that Eric is 71 years old!

Hard enough to do even in normal circumstances but made even more difficult by the difference in age between John and Eric. I know in an ideal world age should not matter and Eric and John may have a very good relationship, but back in the real world, John is still worried sick and is not likely to get much help or sympathy from other employees!

So how likely is this scenario? Despite the new age discrimination legislation it is unlikely, as although employees have the right to request to work beyond 65, most requests are likely to be turned down. However, what is looming on the horizon is a distinct possibility that a mandatory retirement age will be scrapped, either as a result of the 'Heyday/Age Concern' judicial challenge or in 2011 when the Government reviews retirement ages. In principle, it does not seem compatible with age discrimination that a certain birthday can be grounds for dismissal, but the practicalities of no retirement age are interesting to say the least. It is certainly a debate that I suggest that you have in your organisation, 'what if we had no set retirement age?'

So back to Eric, why do most managers find tackling poor performance so difficult? Even if the person is not 71, most managers would rather go to the dentist than have to confront a poor performing employee.

Dealing with a poor performing employee is something I regularly get called upon for advice. I receive a description of how bad the employee is, to which I respond, "have you told them this?" The reply is usually 'no'. Now if you were doing something wrong, would you not expect to be told about it so you had a chance to put it right?



Of course, there are two potential problems with telling someone: firstly, they might be emotional and, secondly, they might argue back, both of which means the manager is not in complete control of the situation. I recently did some work with a company who had asked their team leaders what would help them tackle poor performing employees. Initially, they said that HR should do it, but HR did not like that idea, so the second suggestion was that a framework should be devised to follow when dealing with poor performance. So a framework was developed; 10 steps each team leader can follow with training provided in using the ten steps. Some team leaders even wrote down the words that they would say at each stage. Of course some of the 'people orientated' team leaders got better results because they read

people better; but even the 'process' orientated team leaders found themselves able to challenge poor performance.

If you are 'John' then remember that the reason you are being paid the money you are is because you have to do some unpleasant tasks like this, and more importantly, if you do not tackle the problem, then it is very likely that you will get the blame for poor performance in your section, so, it is really your reputation on the line. Now get in there and tackle that poor performance!

Steve Cave spent 13 years as a Senior Advisor at Acas and now works as an Associate Consultant at Assessment North East. He can be contacted on SteveC@aneltd.co.uk

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why do most managers
find tackling poor performance so difficult?

The Work & Families Act 2006

By Emily Cox, Robert Muckle LLP



The Work & Families Act 2006 received Royal Assent on 21 June 2006. The new legislation sets out the Government's latest family friendly policies and brings in a raft of increased entitlements for employees.

The changes, many of which will be brought into force by secondary legislation, introduce significant increases to existing rights in relation to maternity and adoption leave and pay and flexible working. The Act also empowers the Government to introduce paid bank holidays and to increase the statutory maximum of a week's pay for certain employment claims.

The changes effective from 1 October 2006 are:

- The removal of the length of service requirement for additional maternity leave, with the result that women who qualify for ordinary maternity leave will automatically qualify for additional maternity leave.
- A doubling of the period of notice women are required to give if they wish to return to work early from maternity or adoption leave, from 28 days to 8 weeks.
- The introduction of 'keeping in touch' days, whereby an employee on maternity or adoption leave can work for up to ten days during the statutory leave period, without

losing statutory pay for that week or bringing his/her leave to an end.

- The clarification that employers are permitted to make reasonable contact with an employee on maternity or adoption leave.
- The removal of the small employers' exemption (of 5 employees) so that the employee has a right to return from additional maternity leave or adoption leave to the same or a similar job regardless of the size of the organisation for which he or she works.
- The extension of the period during which a woman is entitled to receive statutory payment during her maternity leave from 26 weeks to 39 weeks for women whose babies are due on or after 1 April 2007. The Government has the power to further extend the maternity pay period to 12 months and has indicated its intention to do so before the end of this parliament.

Future changes will include:

- The extension of the existing right to

request flexible working to employees with caring responsibilities for adults.

- The introduction of a new statutory right to additional paternity leave for employed fathers or partners of a mother or an adopter following the birth or adoption of a child up to a maximum of 26 weeks. This right also covers men and women in same sex relationships. In the future, fathers may also be entitled to additional statutory paternity pay during this period if the mother or adopter has not used up all of his/her entitlement to statutory maternity pay, maternity allowance or statutory adoption pay at the time of his/her return to work.

It is expected that these changes will be introduced on a piecemeal basis and the detail of how these new rights will operate will need to be fleshed out by secondary legislation. Employers need to take care to ensure that their policies and procedures are compliant with the new statutory minimums.

See www.dti.gov.uk/employment and www.acas.org.uk for further guidance or contact ecox@robertmuckle.co.uk or telephone 0191 244 2982.

Spreading the Cost of your IIP Review

Investors in People organisations can now spread the cost of their reviews, paying by instalments to avoid the need for a single larger payment. This helps organisations to budget for the review costs and in addition they receive a complimentary visit from an Investors in People Advisor to assist with the preparation for their review.

Organisations with Investors in People must undergo a review every three years but can opt for a review at any time in the three years. Many elect to have a review every 12 or 18 months to enable them

to continually benchmark their organisation against the Standard and keep them focused on continuous improvement.

The instalment plan works on a pre-payment basis aiming to meet the anticipated costs of the review by the time it is due. If you were interested in this option, Assessment North East would calculate the estimated cost of your next review and spread this cost over the intervening months with either quarterly or six monthly payments.

For more information about this payment plan, please contact Lesley Beattie by email on LesleyB@aneltd.co.uk

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Happy Birthday **15** YEARS OF IMPROVING BUSINESS Investors in People

Investors in People celebrated its fifteenth birthday during Investors in People Week last month.

Over the past 12 years independent research has consistently shown that the Investors in People Standard provides real business benefits to organisations of all sizes and across all sectors.

There are currently over 37,000 recognised organisations in the UK employing over 27% of the UK workforce. Every one of those organisations is benefiting from the Standard in one way or another and with a 90% retention rate, we must be doing something right!

The practical benefits of working towards and achieving the Standard are many and include:

Improved earnings, productivity and profitability

Skilled and motivated people work harder and therefore improve productivity.

Customer Satisfaction

Investors in People is central to helping employees become customer focused enabling organisations to effectively meet customer needs.

Improved motivation

Through employees' greater involvement, personal development and recognition of achievement, motivation is improved. This leads to higher morale, improved retention rates, reduced absenteeism, readier acceptance of change and identification with the organisation's goals beyond the confines of the job.

Reduced costs and wastage

Skilled and motivated people constantly examine their work to contribute towards reducing costs and wastage.

Enhanced quality

Investing in people significantly improves the results of quality programmes. Investors in

People adds considerable value to The Excellence Model, ISO 9000 and other quality initiatives.

Competitive advantage through improved performance

Investor in People organisations develop a competitive edge.

Public recognition

Investor in People status brings public recognition for real achievements measured against a rigorous National Standard. Being an Investor in People helps to attract the best quality job applicants. It may also provide a reason for customers to choose specific goods and services.

Additionally an organisation can expect to gain:

- The opportunity to review current policies and practices against a recognised benchmark
- A framework for planning future strategy and action
- A structured way to improve the effectiveness of training and development activities

For more information about the Investors in People Standard, contact Kay Lindsay by email on KayL@aneltd.co.uk

Benefits for the Small Business

Specialist recruitment company Essential Choice is one of a band of small businesses recognising that Investors in People can bring benefits regardless of the organisation's size.



From top left (clockwise) Louise Hassen - Recruitment Consultant, Steven Glendenning - Managing Director, Carla Saul - Trades Manager, Christian Ball - Trades Labour Controller, Heather Bone - Public Sector Manager.

The company, headed by Managing Director Steven Glendenning, made a decision to achieve Investors in People three years ago believing it would help them to attract quality recruits to the business. They received assistance through Business Link under the Small Firms Initiative and firmly believe the support enabled them to improve business performance as well as achieve Investors in People.

In the intervening years they have kept up the good work! Staff have continued their personal development, several working towards CIPD qualifications. They have developed a Company Handbook as well as a choice based training programme to improve communication channels within the company.

Essential Choice specialises in providing temporary and permanent staff to the public and voluntary sectors and has found that clients and potential clients in these sectors recognise Investors in People as a shorthand for a quality organisation.

The company shortly embarks on its first review against the Standard and is confident it will continue to reap benefits by maintaining its accreditation.



Please email: ChristineM@aneltd.co.uk if you or a colleague would like an electronic copy of this newsletter



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