

Challenging times!

By Rob Macleod, MD of Assessment North East

Welcome to our spring edition of ANECDOTE.

My father-in-law, a keen 'DIYer'; was once seeking advice from a tradesman at a building supplies shop and following a lengthy explanation said, "Sounds easy enough!" To this the wise tradesman replied, "In life, nothing is ever easy!" - and this sticks in my mind whenever I'm faced with a challenge.

Last December, Lord Leitch presented the Government with a challenge in the form of his report titled "Prosperity for all in the global economy - world-class skills". The report concludes that our competitiveness as a nation rests with our level of skills and that with the growth of emerging economies such as China and India, our skills levels are not good enough to sustain the prosperity we have enjoyed. What is needed is radical change to meet the challenge and its not going to be easy. We need employees to be able to adapt and cope with the changes that the global economy will bring. But for us in the North East the challenge is even greater; our comparative starting point, against other regions, is so far behind that we are not even playing on the same pitch. So just getting ourselves into the game, let alone performing better than our global competitors, is not going to be easy!

How we can respond to this challenge is currently being discussed through our regional government and representative groups. The action taken as a result of the Leitch report will affect us all; at Assessment North East we hope to play a key role in assisting organisations meet the challenge through the Investors in People standard and some of the other services we offer:

One of the challenges Leitch highlights is the ability of our managers. For a long time we have recognised that good managers are a key component to a successful organisation; but how do you know that you have effective managers and how do you get them? Well I'm delighted to announce that Assessment North East has just become an accredited centre for management development with the Institute of Leadership and Management. This strengthens our existing management development portfolio and enhances our ability to assist businesses of all shapes and sizes to tackle the challenges facing us all.

We are determined to bring to the North East a range of high quality services to assist organisations to develop and prosper and in the coming months we'll talk more about this. In the meantime, I hope you gain some inspiration from the great stories of success in the following pages and that you can realise for yourself that **whilst nothing is ever easy, the rewards for overcoming a challenge are priceless!**



Focus on Quality and Service

The Ringtons' story began in Newcastle in 1907 when founder Sam Smith began trading in tea and delivering it to customers' homes by horse and cart. Over the last 100 years, the business has continued to grow via this traditional distribution method and today serves 400,000 customers, flourishing through a focus on quality and service.



Ringtons is a family business now run by the 4th generation of the Smith family. It has always understood the importance of its employees; back in the 1930s the owners set aside time for the welfare of workers during very difficult economic times. Annual trips to Scarborough

were enjoyed by all when special free trains took staff and their families to the seaside for the day. In 1999, Ringtons achieved Investors in People, providing external recognition that its culture and values are centred on a positive, engaging approach to its people. Working towards the

Standard helped Ringtons to improve and standardise 'people' processes across the company and ensure each was contributing to the success of the business. One of the key benefits Ringtons gained was achieving consistent communication of the right message to the right people at the right time.

As Ringtons marks one hundred years in business, they strongly believe that the improved performance of business has been achieved through its people. They have helped it to identify the core strengths of the business and focus on how to improve them, they have honed a sharper focus on training and development and attracted a higher calibre of new recruits.

The company sees IIP as key to its future plans; it will continue to look for continuous improvement in all areas of the business and this can only be achieved with a workforce that is motivated, well informed and highly skilled.

Ringtons continues to provide teas, pure roast coffees and hot chocolates direct to your door, roasted and blended in-house and free from any artificial flavourings, colours or preservatives. They are members of the Ethical Trading Initiative and actively encourage ethical farming and practices.

For further information about Investors in People contact Kay Lindsay on info@aneltd.co.uk.



for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

consistent communication of the right message
to the right people at the right time

Ongoing Success with IIP

Thermo Fisher Scientific Cramlington had its first Profile Review in February this year and is delighted with the outcome. ANECDOTE spoke to HR and Facility Manager, Julie Dixon, to find out more.

"It has always been important to us to work toward achieving a nationally recognised standard as a means to motivate and encourage existing staff to develop themselves within their roles in order to improve the business. It is also important that we achieve the standard in order to promote our company when recruiting. We found the standard to be a useful tool, providing direction for people development that would, in turn, lead to business success.

We first achieved Investors in People in 2001 and since then we've seen many positive changes:

- Improved manufacturing processes and four-fold capacity increase
- Increased business opportunities, outputs and profitability
- Improved recruitment processes
- Improved workforce retention rates
- Improved reward and recognition
- Introduced management standards
- Introduced formal qualifications for staff
- Improved employee satisfaction
- We now have a highly committed, aligned and capable workforce

When it came to planning for our third review, we decided to use the Profile Review to benchmark ourselves against the higher levels of the standard. We felt that this made sense since we had achieved the standard IIP recognition twice and had established a defined culture of learning and development. This would enable us to assess our current status and set future development goals for the site as a continuous improvement activity leading toward being a best practice. It also gave us the opportunity to benchmark ourselves against other IIP organisations that have undertaken the Profile Review and perhaps most importantly enabled us to ensure that we were challenging ourselves. We did not want to influence the result of the Profile Review in any way in advance. Only by accepting our status 'as is' would we be able to make the correct development decisions for the future.

To our delight, we had an exceptionally positive Profile Review; the results were phenomenal as far as we're concerned! We had not specifically tried to achieve profile, but simply decided that the time was right to be reviewed against the whole of the standard.

We learned that management and staff recognise that we have strengths across all ten Indicators, including:

- Equality of opportunity within the company
- Recruitment and selection
- The planning process involving representatives

across the workforce

- Security of employment and the newly formed values-driven approach of our company, including the desire to be an Employer of Choice
- Non-financial reward and recognition scheme
- Socially responsible activities like the Primary Science Enhancement Programme
- Learning and development opportunities, particularly to gain recognised qualifications
- Opportunities to give and receive feedback, including our new Performance Management and Development process, staff meetings and surveys
- Approachable line management; opportunities to review management capability, train and develop management staff
- Friendliness of the site and commitment to continuous improvement in general

We also learned that management and staff believe there are areas we can develop over the coming years, such as:

- Assisting management and staff by providing career development opportunities
- Ensuring that the Thermo Fisher Scientific core values are at the heart of the way the site operates
- Ensuring that continuous learning is available to everyone
- Providing more opportunities for managers and staff to develop their skills and for people at all levels of the organisation to coach and develop others
- Adding teamwork opportunities to improve planning, communication and team behaviour
- Reviewing financial rewards and making positive changes in the future

The feedback from the assessor is now being discussed at senior and management levels. In addition, strategies and action plans are being put into place throughout 2007 aimed at addressing areas for improvement. We will take a balanced approach toward our continuous improvement and people development strategies in the future. And we will be careful not to lose sight of our current strengths so that we do not allow them to slide.

As well as undertaking the Profile Review, Thermo Fisher Scientific has also been involved in the 'Health & Well-being' pilot, a proposed 'sister' Standard that may sit alongside Investors in People in the future. We found this really useful as health and well-being was already identified as one of our key site projects for 2007.

The assessor's comments and suggestions will be beneficial in setting and monitoring the direction



of our project in order to achieve the most positive outcome. Similarly to our approach to IIP, we will aim for health and well-being to become a culture on this manufacturing site (rather than a project) within the next three years.

Developing Managers

Thermo Fisher Scientific invests significantly in management development. In recent months it has utilised the MAP (Managerial Assessment of Proficiency) tool. One of the great appeals of MAP is its global scope. Ensuring percentiles gives each manager an indication of competence, benchmarked against other managers around the world.

The results indicate areas of management competence that enable managers to utilise their strengths to best advantage and indicate areas where they may need to undertake development activities.

Management competence is measured through regular Employee Satisfaction Surveys, enabling Thermo Fisher Scientific to measure improvement by following this process. In addition, the ever-improving outputs and profitability of the Cramlington site are evidence of the growing expertise of managers and staff.

Who is Thermo Fisher Scientific?

Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc. (NYSE:TMO) is the world leader in serving science, enabling its customers to make the world healthier, cleaner and safer. With an annual revenue rate of more than \$9 billion, it employs 30,000 people and serves over 350,000 customers within pharmaceutical and biotech companies, hospitals and clinical diagnostic labs, universities, research institutions and government agencies, as well as environmental and industrial process control settings.

The Cramlington site has operated since March 1993, and currently employs 100 staff and 30 agency-supplied workers.

For more details on Profile Review or management development contact Kay Lindsay on info@aneltd.co.uk

for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

people development
that would, in turn, lead to business success

Achieving in the Third Sector

The long term growth of the voluntary and community sector in the UK continues and successful organisations in this third sector are becoming more commercial in their approach as they are required increasingly to compete for scarce resources.

One such organisation is North Tees Women's Aid (NTWA). Established over 30 years ago as a co-operative running a women's refuge in Hartlepool, it is now a dynamic charity providing a range of services related to domestic and sexual violence with an annual turnover of over £1.25m.

In 2004, Director Lesley Gibson recognised that NTWA needed to embrace a new approach to the way it recruited, motivated and developed its staff teams to ensure it had the best chance in the increasingly competitive marketplace.

Lesley takes up the story:

"We knew we needed to change and that to do so we would need our staff to work with us, but our culture was quite traditional with managers making decisions and staff following these. We met with an HR Consultant who suggested we use the Investors in People Standard to guide the changes we wanted to make and we haven't really looked back since. The journey to achieve IIP took us two years but along the way we learnt a lot and introduced lots of really positive changes to areas such as Induction, Personal Reviews and Internal Communication. One of the best things we introduced was a quarterly Corporate Day when all the staff come together and we share information, learn what other teams are doing and undertake training. They have made a big difference in our efforts to pull together as one organisation rather than a series of separate projects.

The other big area for us was to develop the competence of our managers. We drew up a competency framework with the managers and then looked at how to ensure we all had the required skills and behaviours.

I knew that I had to lead by example, so undertook the MAP (Managerial Assessment of Proficiency) programme with Assessment North East, to better understand my strengths and areas for development. I then worked with a mentor through an action plan that we prepared in response to the feedback and when I returned for the re-assessment I could see the impact that the mentoring had made on my managerial style. Personally this was a



thoroughly enlightening experience, opening my eyes to what different outcomes can be achieved just by changing the way in which you manage your team.

NTWA is a different organisation in 2007; we are more professional, all the staff understand our priorities and know their individual roles, but we are not finishing here! The change is ongoing and this year we are focussing on training and development to ensure all front line staff have an NVQ III in Support & Guidance, giving them recognition for their skills and giving us a competitive edge with an accredited workforce.

Making that commitment to achieve IIP was definitely one of the best business decisions we have made and hopefully it will continue to support us as we face new challenges in the years to come".

Who is NTWA

NTWA operates women's refuges in Hartlepool, Stockton, Peterlee and Middlesbrough, run a community based outreach service supporting adults and children who have experienced domestic abuse across four local authority areas and a programme to change the behaviours of those who perpetrate domestic abuse.

For more information about how Investors in People can make your organisation more successful or learn how your managers could benefit from the MAP process contact Alison Davies at AlisonD@aneltd.co.uk.

for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

best business decisions
we have made

Communication, Communication, Communication!

The provision of legal services in an increasingly competitive marketplace means firms need to ensure the advice they provide is effective and the service which delivers the advice is outstanding. Many firms now use Lexcel, the Law Society's best practice quality standard, to drive this excellent service. ANECDOTE has spoken to Yorkshire firm Ingrams to talk about how they used an intranet based communications system to achieve both Lexcel and Investors in People.

Ingrams Solicitors was established in 2001 by partners Paul Stott and Catherine Copp and Associate Partner Dianna Bamforth. Less than two years later, the firm had achieved Investors in People accreditation, whilst expanding to more than twice its original size. The IIP award was reviewed in 2005, and in 2006 Ingrams was delighted to achieve Lexcel accreditation too.

The firm now has over 70 staff spread across offices in Hull, York and Harrogate, and communication - between partners and staff, between offices and between departments - was flagged up by a 2005 staff survey as the issue causing most concern.

It was also proving a challenge ensuring that every staff member had an up to date *Office Procedures Manual* and *Employee Handbook*. Ingrams had always supplied a paper copy of each manual to staff, and relied on the staff to keep them up to date. This system was cumbersome, unreliable and used a huge amount of paper. The solution to this was 'Lextranet'.

Lextranet is an intranet-based legal knowledge management system, designed to assist firms who are working with standards of excellence such as IIP and, specifically, Lexcel accreditation. Staff have access to the intranet via a username and password and by putting all their manuals, policies and procedures on an intranet, accessible by everyone, Ingrams can be certain that all staff are using the same up-to-date core material. In addition to the *Office Procedures Manual* and *Employee Handbook*, the intranet also holds the firm's staff directory, the *Money Laundering guidance*, generic risk checklists, Law Society warning cards, registers of experts/counsel and the firm's business and marketing plans.

Simply having the right policies and procedures is not sufficient for Lexcel; it must be shown that they have been communicated to staff. Effective communication in turn strengthens the firm's risk management capabilities. A newsdesk facility in Lextranet enables the Quality Partner to announce changes and these can be introduced and implemented as soon as an area for improvement is identified, allowing the firm to gain immediate benefit from the changes. Staff can put news on the Ingrams newsdesk too, so it can be used for social announcements as well. Lextranet is a bespoke package which can incorporate a firm's own branding, and Ingrams has taken advantage of this to reinforce their brand and corporate identity within the firm.

The staff survey carried out in 2006 showed a marked improvement in the satisfaction staff expressed regarding communication at all levels



The Ingrams Team with their Lexcel standard

(their comments confirmed that much of this was due to introduction of the intranet), and it showed that staff were more aware of the firm's business plan and their own individual roles in that development plan.

Ingrams' knowledge bank 'menu' is expanding all the time. They have now included a precedents bank within the intranet, to share knowledge and expertise within the firm, and are also introducing *Key Performance Indicators* onto the management team's desktops, to enable monitoring of staff performance and departmental profitability, before rolling them out firm-wide.

Ingrams' IT Partner Catherine Copp says "We have already seen the benefits of having our strategic documents shared via a firm-wide intranet, in terms of improved communications and tighter risk management controls. Now we are keen to step up a gear and exploit our intranet capabilities to the full. The potential for driving up performance levels is very exciting."

For more information about Lexcel contact Sally Johnson on SallyJ@aneltd.co.uk.

for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

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Equality of the Sexes



by Steve Cave, HR Consultant

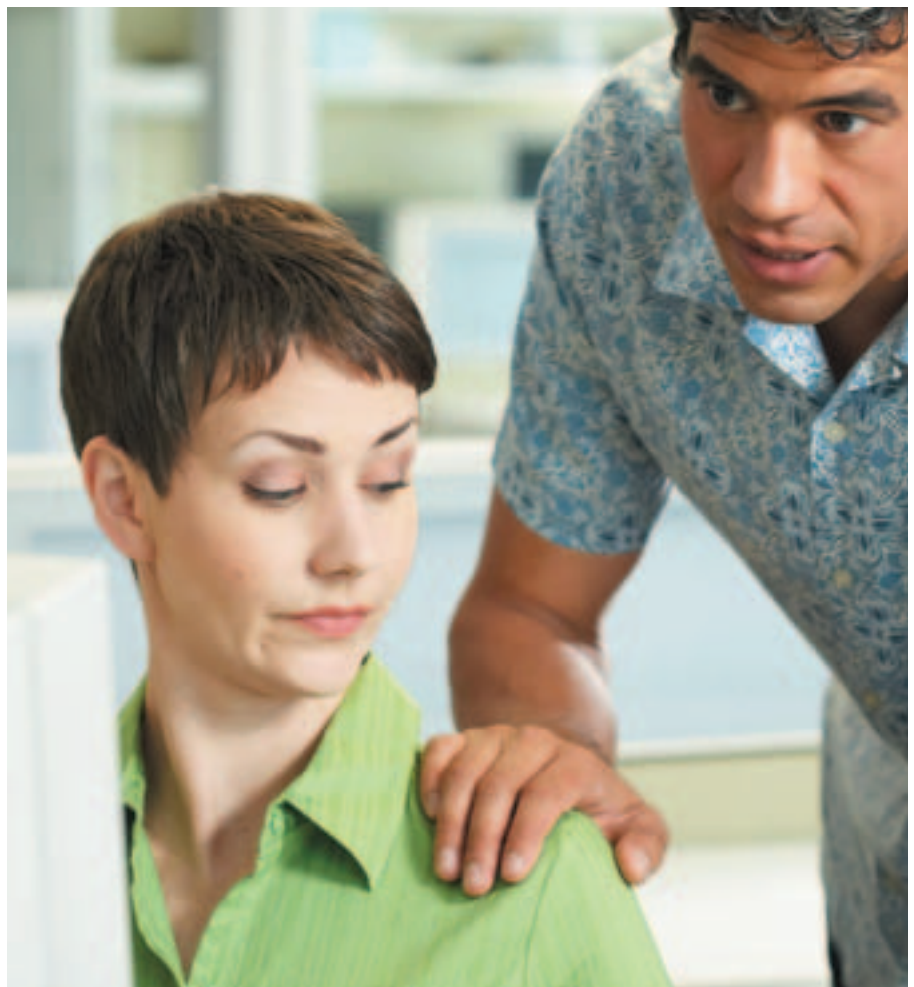
2007 is the European year of Equality but 30 years after the introduction of Sex Discrimination legislation, has it made any difference? Two recent experiences make me think that the answer is not much!

Discussing what might cause offence to people at work, I mentioned that pornographic material displayed on walls was something that most people would object to. So I was a little surprised to find the displaying of pornographic material being defended by a group of managers, one of whom proudly announced that his pictures were not pornographic, they were just nude pictures of his wife, displayed on his locker! "It is my wife, I can do what I like", was his main line of defence along with, "it is also my locker"! The more some of his colleagues argued with him, the more entrenched he became. He really did not think he was doing anything wrong. Having watched the new television show *Primeval*, I now realise he could have slipped through an anomaly in time and he was really from 1970!

The second example involved a similar setting but this time both male and female managers. A female manager complained about the term 'wor lass' as she thought it meant that she belonged to someone. The response from most of the males present was to ridicule her. Some did listen to her viewpoint but most could not understand why she would find this offensive. One particular attack on her viewpoint was that this was just political correctness. She argued that men and women were equal and that marriage was a partnership, so the term 'wor lass' had no place in society.

One of the difficulties facing employers is that they may well have both these people working for them. In the first example having someone with this attitude is dangerous to the company as it is surely just a matter of time before they offend someone and it ends up in a tribunal. It is worth noting that there is no limit to the amount of compensation a tribunal can award in such cases.

In the second example whether you agree or disagree with the term 'wor lass' does not



matter as the employee has now made it clear what her view is and that should be respected. Failure to do so could again end in an employment tribunal. Some of the political correctness stories in the press do seem rather silly but to use them as a defence against treating men and women as equals or to condone discrimination is in my view pathetic. The next time you think about saying, "I am not

sexist/racist/ageist/homophobic, but..." Do not finish the rest of the sentence.

Whilst it is not possible to totally prevent employees making discrimination claims, the best way to avoid them is to ensure all staff are treated with dignity and respect and make it clear throughout your organisation that this is the only acceptable behaviour in the workplace.

for expert advice call 0191 516 6464

ensure all staff
are treated with dignity and respect



Agency Workers

By Emily Cox, Robert Muckle LLP

Identifying the employment status of agency workers who are in a triangular relationship with an agency and an end user company is surprisingly difficult. The traditional view until recent years is that the agency worker is neither the employee of the agency nor the end user company.

However, the case of *Dacas v Brook Street Bureau* threw a spanner in the works and introduced the idea of "implied contracts of employment". This is the possibility that there can be a contract of employment implied between the agency worker and the end user company.

This development has caused business risks for employers that use agency staff to respond to fluctuating business needs and service demands. It has also been deeply unpopular with many lawyers and the judiciary as it is believed that the concept of "implied contracts of employment" is based on flawed legal reasoning.

However, subsequent cases have attempted to clarify the law in this area and to offer some guidance to employers who use agency workers on a regular basis as to when such contracts will be implied. Some of the main indicators that tribunals will consider are:

- Whether the way in which the contract is performed is consistent with the agency arrangements or whether it is only consistent with an implied contract between the worker and the end-user.
- What the payments to the agency actually represent? In a genuine agency relationship, the end-user is not just paying directly for the work done by the end user; the payment often includes other elements such as expenses and profit. The end-user will often have no idea what the worker is being paid.
- Was there any substitution? A key feature of a genuine tripartite relationship is that the end user cannot insist on the agency providing a particular worker.
- Whether the relationship has developed over time. A genuine agency relationship may subsequently change, so that a tribunal may conclude that whilst there was a genuine

agency relationship at the start this no longer describes how the work is being performed.

- The length of the agency relationship will also be considered although there is now uncertainty as to whether the length of the placement with the end user can be used to imply a contract of employment.

In addition, the tribunals have also held that there is no need to imply a contract of employment between an agency worker and an end user, where the agency which provided the workers' services has a contract of employment with the worker.

The law remains in a state of flux and many of the current decisions are likely to be appealed. Businesses with agency workers may wish to seek advice in terms of ways in which they can limit their business risks or face the prospect of employing workers that they believed were employed by an agency or were self employed.

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.

Workshop Dates	
WORKSHOP	2007 DATES
ISO	
Internal Audits	13 June 16 October
Introduction to ISO9001:2000	19 June
Care Sector Share & Learn	2 July (am/pm)
Plan, Do & Review - The Links Between ISO and IIP	13 November
Investors in People	
Preparing for Your Review	14 May 11 June 2 July
The Investors in People Internal Champions	15-17 May 17-19 July
The Investors in People Standard Explained	29 May 9 July
Making Training Pay	20 June 18 September
The Investors in People Profile Explained	6 July
For more details please contact Kay Lindsay on info@aneltd.co.uk	
NB: All courses and workshops are available as an 'in-house' option and may be subject to 50% funding	

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the ILM Centre

Assessment NE has been providing management development services for years but we are now accredited to award your staff with a recognised management qualification.

Our ILM centre status means we can develop bespoke training packages to support your organisation that gives your managers a qualification and meets the requirements of the Investors in People Standard.

Advice on how this might work for your organisation and information about available funding is free so contact your account manager or Alison Davies (AlisonD@aneltd.co.uk) to discuss this further.



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ISO partners with IIP

Earsdon Engineering is enjoying the dual benefits of being an **Investor in People** and holding **ISO 9001:2000** with the help of **Assessment NE**.



The journey started a few years ago when it became clear to the company that to win larger value contracts in the civil engineering sector they would need to prove their credentials with some form of quality accreditation.

They had some loose quality systems in place but the process of working towards IIP and ISO has ensured all employees are now clear about their job, what is expected of them and how they are performing. There are six month meetings for everyone to review and look forward and this has been welcomed by employees, giving them a say in the way they work. The workplace has become a more positive place, bucking the trend for the usual

stereotypes of the construction industry with high morale and good employee retention.

In line with the company's focus on continuous improvement, both management and workforce regularly attend development courses. As a result some site welders and shop floor fabricators have been promoted to management posts. Within five years of serving an apprenticeship, one of Earsdon's achievers was promoted to Assistant Contracts Manager. The company continually strives to improve workforce efficiency as they know this enhances the company's well being. Earsdon is very clear that these accreditations now provide it with an edge and enable them

to tender for and win work that would have been out of the question previously.

Who is Earsdon Engineering?

Earsdon Engineering employs 30 people from premises in Blyth and Thirsk, working nationwide to design and produce steelwork, metalwork and street furniture for the construction industry.

For more information about how ISO 9001:2000 and Investors in People can support your business contact Kay Lindsay on info@aneltd.co.uk.



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Call Kay Lindsay on 0191 516 6464.

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