

Our services explained

QSW provides a range of advisory and assessment services against nationally recognised quality standards.

In this issue:

Investors In People

The national standard which sets a level of good practice for the welfare, training and development of people to achieve business goals. Read how IIP has impacted one SW school. See page 3.

Investors In People Profile

Organisations using Profile gain a fuller understanding of their strengths and weaknesses with a focus on continuous improvement for organisational gains. See back page for details of the next Profile Club.

Lexcel

A quality mark awarded to practices and legal departments that are assessed and have met mandatory aspects of The Law Society's practice management system. See adjacent article for one practice's perspective.

Charter Mark Advisory Services

The Government's national standard for customer service excellence. Charter Mark gives the public sector a framework to improve customer focus and be recognised for high quality customer care.

SFEDI

The national standards setting body whose aim is to improve the quality of business advice. To make certain you are getting knowledgeable and relevant advice ensure your business adviser has official SFEDI accreditation. Find out more on page 2.



From left to right: Debbie Hunt, Steve Bulman –WBW Solicitors, Clare Jarrett – The Law Society, John Edwards – Quality South West, Bryan Sautelle-Smith – Lexcel and IIP Assessor.

Double award for Devon law firm

A long established law firm with a mission to become "the leading High Street practice in South Devon and Exeter" is celebrating a double award.

WBW Solicitors, which employs a staff of 140 from its base in Newton Abbot, has become the 100th west country firm to work with Quality South West to achieve Lexcel - the Law Society's quality mark for law practices, in-house legal departments and local authority law offices.

Quality South West has also recognised WBW Solicitors as an Investor In People - the national quality standard awarded to organisations that enhance their performance through their people.

The firm has used the good practices of Lexcel and Investors In People to achieve significant increases in its client base, while successfully retaining existing business, with a client satisfaction rate of more than 95%.

Managing Partner Steve Bulman explained: "Lexcel has improved professionalism in every facet of our work - and we are seeing tangible benefits for the business. Having both Lexcel and Investors In People tells our clients that we have a team that is well qualified and highly motivated to deliver legal services of the highest quality. With these two accreditations, our clients know that their affairs are in safe hands."

Founded in Newton Abbot in 1831, as Woolcombe Beer Watts, the firm embarked on steady growth through

the 1980s and 1990s, opening additional offices in Bovey Tracey, Torquay and, most recently, Exeter in 1999.

The firm changed its name to WBW in 2004 as part of a modernisation that involved the creation of a senior management team and the recruitment of a marketing executive. Now with 21 partners and 60 legal advisers, the firm continues to deliver the full range of High Street legal services. In committing to Lexcel and Investors In People in 2005, the firm focused heavily on long-term business planning in order to manage its growth more effectively.

"We recognised that the legal profession was changing rapidly and continues to do so. To remain competitive, we needed strong internal procedures in order to deliver services good enough to retain existing clients and to attract new business," Steve Bulman told us.

In its two-year drive towards Lexcel accreditation, WBW Solicitors has introduced IT-based case management systems and also refined its processes of risk assessment and supervision.

Meanwhile, the firm has maintained its tradition of "promoting from within."

Since September 2006, for example, five new trainees have begun careers with the firm. Steve Bulman explained further,

"Of the 21 partners, around two-thirds of us have previously been trainee solicitors with WBW, including myself."

Our Future It's in Our Hands

Quality South West have signed up to the Government's new initiative - The Skills Pledge.

Launched in June, The Skills Pledge is set to have an impact on organisations across the South West. Employers will be able to shape the "skills system" to meet their business needs, in return for prioritising skills training at all levels.

For UK business to compete with emerging economies it has to invest more in skills, ensuring that all UK employees are competent to make a full contribution to an organisation's success.

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by a business head (e.g. Chief Executive/Managing Director) to enable all employees to develop their skills to a minimum of Level 2 qualifications. Open to all private, public and voluntary sectors, the Government will provide funding for companies for any employees who have not yet achieved Level 2.

Our world is changing. We all need more skills than ever before. One in six organisations admits that their people don't have the right skills needed for their business future. If you are currently working with Investors In People, or considering it, you are already thinking ahead to safeguard your business.

To find out more about The Skills Pledge and funding email rachel.trudgian@qualitysouthwest.co.uk



New!!! Investors In People advisory and assessment support package

Quality South West are delighted to be offering high value advisory and assessment packages, encompassing a range of support and advisory tools up to and following assessment.

Key to the success of our package is the opportunity to benefit through flexible support from an adviser who has been registered and quality assured through IIPUK and the Institute of Business Consulting.

Additionally clients will receive web based tools, paper based guidance, newsletters, free networking activities and discounted workshops to support their development.

The package also includes assessment from an IIPUK registered assessor providing organisations with the feedback and positive achievement they have worked so hard for.

We are currently pleased to be offering very attractive subsidised rates for these packages. The national rate ranges from £4125 - £7125 but Quality South West have a reduced rate of only £2500 - £5000 for a limited period.*

We can also offer ad hoc advice covering an extensive range of topics relating to Investors In People with the amount and timing of support tailored to requirements. (Minimum 2 hours advice @ £70 per hour).

Interested in Advisory Support?

Whether you are new to Investors In People or already working with the Standard our Advisory Service and Support Packages can meet your needs. To find out more please contact our office on **01452 413641** or email Diane Dobney at diane.dobney@qualitysouthwest.co.uk

* (Depending on size of company, for companies from 2 – 500 employees, introductory discount offer included. For companies larger than 500 we will be delighted to provide bespoke proposals for support.)

SFEDI: Recognising the skills and knowledge of business advisers

With 15 years in management, marketing and consultancy, Jeanette Howells set up her own business in September 1997 in Wiltshire. The consultancy offers Small and Medium sized Enterprises a full range of professional business advice and guidance, specialising in organisational leadership and management development by building continuous learning environments. January 1998 saw Jeanette's husband, Richard, become part of the newly incorporated Oaklands Resource Management Ltd. We spoke to her about what kind of business she runs and why she had gone for SFEDI accreditation.

Ed: What do you feel is the main thing offered by Oaklands?

JH: We provide strategic business support - planning delivered through the development of a Strategy Map to help organisations grow. We demonstrate how to use the maps to communicate aims and aspirations – making business achievement a reality.

Ed: Why is this approach important for SMEs?

JH: With business growth there is a 'change culture' and we help them to go forward, linking people and business together to make a successful transition. More than a business plan, it's an effective working tool that businesses can relate to.

Ed: Do you find this approach is right for all companies?

JH: Our main clients have 10-50 employees. This is often the stage of greatest change. They're no longer just family businesses, there are now employees involved, and the organisation will have outgrown the original skills base. So whole new strategies need to be put into place. You go in and provide them with advice and guidance, working with them to identify realistic solutions. Six months later you can see how they have changed and moved forward. Seeing this is what drives me.

Ed: Your company was expanding too – did you face the same dilemmas as your clients?

JH: We were bringing in associates to help us deliver our contracts but, as their numbers increased, we found the personal service difficult to maintain.

In January 2007 I had been engaged by Quality South West to assess business advisers against the SFEDI Business Support Standards. As part of my own development and to enhance credibility with SFEDI candidates, I felt it was important to be independently assessed against the same benchmark.

Ed: What activities do you feel helped the early rapid growth of your business?

JH: Our priority has always been to provide a professional and personal consultancy service tailored to individual business requirements. I've also networked at every opportunity and belong to a range of business organisations. Consultants and business advisers sometimes get locked into one area or direction. But the wider your network, the more you understand business as a whole.

Ed: So you had no hesitation in applying for SFEDI assessment?

JH: Absolutely not. The process took about two to three months and included a self assessment against the Standards followed by a planning meeting with my assessor. I was observed with a range of clients and finally undertook a professional discussion to check that my knowledge was current and up to date. The assessor also observed me working with a client, taking him through one of the strategy maps which we'd designed – and getting him to talk through it.

Ed: You achieved SFEDI accreditation at the first attempt with a glowing assessor report. What do you feel this has brought to you and your business?

JH: I can market myself as someone who has achieved SFEDI accreditation and is on the national directory of Business Support Advisers. The standards that are laid down by SFEDI are what I believe in and what I do and the SFEDI process was confirmation of that. To be independently assessed gave me considerable satisfaction. I can now say to my own SFEDI candidates, 'This isn't just something that I assess. I've been through the process. I totally understand what you're going through'. It helps make my business more successful and stand out from the crowd, reassuring clients that they are in good hands.

For further information about SFEDI accreditation and entry on to the National Register for Business Support Professionals please contact your SFEDI Licensed Centre, Quality South West on **01452 413641** or visit www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk



Jeanette Howells, Managing Director, Oaklands Resource Management

Plan, Do, Review

We covered the first two areas within the Investors In People Standard cycle in our previous issues. We can now look at the review stage and why it is vital in continuing the improvement process.

The time when evaluation is most effective is once any learning and development activity has been put into practice, typically after three or six months, when a difference in performance can be measured. It might seem obvious but the real trick to evaluation is actually agreeing the impact measures at the outset. Identify **what** you expect to happen or change as a result, **how** you will measure this and **when**. For further guidance on the 'Review' phase our experts have put together a checklist and accompanying notes and you can find this in full on our website www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk

Investing in people to deliver quality recruitment

Bovey Tracey Primary School, Devon - 45 staff. First recognised as an Investor In People in 1998. Successfully reviewed in 2001, 2003 and 2006.

The organisation

Created in 1910, the Primary School serves a town of 6,000. Max Quick was appointed headteacher in 1983 when the school had 160 pupils aged 4 to 11. Now the school roll has almost doubled and the building has been remodelled and extended.

The challenge

With the growth of the school, from 6 classes to 10, came steady increases in staff, particularly teaching assistants.

"When I first came, there was one teaching assistant for infants and one for juniors. Now there's at least one for every class," Max Quick explained.

But the school lacked modern systems of induction and appraisal as well as training and communication. With so many new faces, the need for established forms of team building was great and the traditional 'teacher/non-teacher' divide needed breaking down. Like other schools, they also needed to comply with the 2004 National Agreement where teachers were to be allowed to spend 10% of work-time on Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) – meaning enhanced roles for teaching assistants.

The strategy

As part of its journey towards IIP in 1998, Bovey Tracey Primary School worked with an adviser to become one of the first schools in the west country to introduce systems of induction and appraisal for all staff.

"We started appraisal long before it became a legal requirement," Max Quick said. *"There's a two-way benefit. It actually gives staff the luxury, in a busy environment, of sitting down and talking about their jobs. It gives management the chance to make people feel appreciated and valued. You can then work on what can be improved, setting individual targets for the year ahead... a pattern of what the school needs to do in order to develop."*

The school also focused heavily on training and development. PPA was seen as an opportunity to train teaching assistants towards greater roles within the classroom.

"We've built 'teams within teams' in different sections of the school. While teachers now have the time to prepare for lessons, we've trained our teaching assistants to teach classes. Six of our teaching assistants now have the Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) award and two have developed careers as teachers."

Bovey Tracey Primary School has also worked hard to raise the status of its Mealtime Assistants (MTAs).

"In the past our lunchtimes were not very well organised or managed, so you would get children falling out – and the repercussions took up teachers' time in the afternoons. We've now appointed a line manager for MTAs – they do group appraisals and meet fortnightly, whereas they previously met once in a blue moon."

The school has established itself as a workplace where there are no 'teachers and non-teachers' - just 'staff'. It's also a place where staff unlock their potential by learning and developing alongside the children. Currently Devon has four headteachers, a deputy headteacher and an advisory teacher who built their careers at Bovey Tracey.

The results

Bovey Tracey Primary School continues to deliver SATs results significantly above the national average. The focus on personal and social education, with the involvement of MTAs and children acting as 'peer mediators', has brought noticeable improvements in children's conduct. A recent OFSTED report recorded that "Behaviour is exemplary." Meanwhile, the school roll is higher than ever – and the school is now oversubscribed.

Max Quick, headteacher:

"Investors In People is not just another 'badge'. It's a set of values to believe in and to hold onto. It keeps us on track to improve continuously in all areas. It gives us the working tools to help our children to make progress."



Newsflash!

Are you aware that our Networking Club will be running at venues throughout the South West from October through to February?

See the 'Forthcoming Workshops' column on the back page of this newsletter for more details.

Coming soon!

New interactive tool to support your IIP journey. Further details will be in the October issue of Raising the Standard.

Profile: Building a framework for business improvement

We were delighted with the success of our Profile awareness event held in September at Taunton School. It gave many of our Investors In People clients a chance to network with colleagues, while learning how Profile can develop their business even further. Delegates also had the opportunity to attend our successful Profile Club in the afternoon and meet those who are already taking advantage of Profile.

The morning included an interactive workshop, a presentation by Callum Husein from the Profile accredited company Holiday Extras and an enlightening talk from Tony Salt, Head of Quality at Investors In People, about the latest developments by IIPUK for a new client-led approach.

This new way of working (undergoing trials with a sample of clients, including some from the South West) has the power and flexibility to enable organisations to tailor their assessment process to address current business priorities - ensuring they obtain maximum benefit for their company. It will help clarify how people management and development strategies impact on organisational performance and provide intelligence on how certain activities contribute to achieving business objectives. It also offers valuable advice on what can be done to progress even further.

If you would like to find out more about Profile and the workshops we offer please visit our website www.qualitysouthwest.co.uk

Alternatively, we would be happy to arrange for one of our experts to contact you to discuss this further. Please email Rachel Trudgian, Business Development Manager rachel.trudgian@qualitysouthwest.co.uk or telephone 01452 413641.



Forthcoming Workshops:

Below are details of the events we are running over the next few months. For more information, or to book your place, please phone on 01452 413641 or email sally.say@qualitysouthwest.co.uk

IIP Awareness Workshops

26th Oct - Plymouth
21st Nov - Bristol
10th Dec - Taunton

IIP Briefing Sessions

11th Oct - Swindon
30th Oct - Salisbury
6th Nov - Plymouth
8th Nov - Bristol
4th Dec - Bridgwater

IIP 'Profile' Briefing Sessions

23rd Oct - Gloucester
2nd Nov - Plymouth
7th Dec - Taunton

IIP Network Club

11th Oct - Plymouth
6th Nov - Bristol
21st Nov - Bridgwater
4th Dec - Gloucester

Preparing for Assessment or Review

10th Oct, 13th Dec - Plymouth
16th Oct, 7th Dec - Gloucester
23rd Oct, 6th Dec - Salisbury
29th Oct, 3rd Dec - Taunton
31st Oct, 12th Dec - Bristol
22nd Nov - Swindon
23rd Nov - Exeter
29th Nov - Dorchester

IIP for Schools

Oct 11th - Gloucester
20th Nov - Plymouth
11th Dec - Bristol

Lexcel Workshops

Bristol

Leadership & Management
5 Nov 2007
Strategic Planning **22 Nov 2007**

Partner & Staff Development
5 Dec 2007

Cardiff

Leadership & Management
6 Nov 2007
Strategic Planning **29 Nov 2007**

Partner & Staff Development
13 Dec 2007

Plymouth

Leadership & Management
7 Nov 2007
Strategic Planning **30 Nov 2007**

Partner & Staff Development
14 Dec 2007

Countering Convention

Dr Chris Williams, dental surgeon and principal of an 'Investor In People' recognised private practice, shares his thoughts on work/life balance and a fulfilled workforce.

Whilst not disagreeing with the intended sentiments of work/life balance (WLB), I do disagree with the phrase itself. The implication is that if you are working you are not living. I like to use the term 'work/non-work balance', which more aptly describes what I feel is meant. Any responsible employer should be cultivating an environment which employees view in this way.

Sadly, many people talking about WLB do actually mean that they want a balance between work and a desired lifestyle that they can only realise by working. For some people, the *raison d'être* for work is: "I owe, I owe, so it's off to work I go!"

No one should be so bored, oppressed, irritated or stressed at work that they spend their entire week longing for Friday evening. Similarly, being engulfed by a feeling of total misery on Sunday nights is something not to be routinely experienced. In either case forget attempting to balance anything, a better life may be achieved by moving jobs or changing careers.

Workers require money, time to complete tasks, learning opportunities, networks and an extra something. I believe that 'extra something' to be responsibility. People respond to being given responsibility and the associated respect which comes with having opinions appreciated and ideas actioned. If workers feel they 'own' the business processes then they feel a part of that business; it becomes their business and they want it to succeed. They feel valued and motivated and tend to want to stay.

My most-recently appointed member of staff achieves 17 years in November. My youngest (36) but longest-serving member of staff has completed 20 years. She wrote a thank you

letter for a function in her honour, "If you've got to work what better place to work! Everyone has been so lovely - I couldn't imagine working anywhere else!"

I have absolute confidence in my staff. I base my management style on 'the presumption of competence'. Every achievement is, quite rightly, praised. They have confidence in their own abilities because they know they are valued. Just as importantly, they are not afraid to seek advice if necessary.

Napoleon Bonaparte said, "A good manager is a man who isn't worried about his own career but rather the careers of those who work for him". My advice: don't worry about yourself. Take care of those who work for you and you'll float to greatness on their achievements".

Dr Chris Williams is a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute, a Member of the Institute of Directors and a Member of the Institute of Healthcare Management. He is a member of the IIP Review Panel for QSW and he is an Assessor for the British Dental Association's 'Good Practice Scheme'. The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author.

Refer to our website to read this article in full.



The National Training Awards for the South West

The National Training Awards for the South West will take place on Thursday 18th October at the Bristol Marriott Hotel.

These accolades, universally considered the number one awards of their kind, are awarded to organisations and people who have achieved excellence through training that has resulted in them achieving their goals and potential. Achieving one of these awards demonstrates that you are an authority in your chosen field, whether in the community or within your work environment, gives you an edge on your competitors and provides you with a justifiably first class reputation. People development is paramount to individuals and organisations who put themselves forward for the National Training Awards.

These annual awards are open to all sizes and sectors of organisation (including the self-employed), to individuals and to volunteers. For further details take a look at the National Training Awards website www.nationaltrainingawards.com

Email newsletter – sign up now

In order to reduce the amount of paper we use we offer clients the option of receiving an electronic version of 'Quality First'. If this would be more convenient for you, just email us at info@qualitysouthwest.co.uk, clearly stating the email address(es) you would like the newsletter sent to.

If your organisation is involved in the accreditation process for a specific standard, or has recently undergone successful assessment, we would love to hear from you - and maybe even write about your team's achievements in future pages of 'Quality First'. Contact Jean Hawkins on 01452 420915 or email jean.hawkins@qualitysouthwest.co.uk



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

