

## Can the UK manage ?

a personal provocative view !

UK management can probably best described as the little girl in the nursery rhyme "when she is good she is very good, when she is bad she is horrid"....

Recent research shows that more than a fifth of UK companies have increased their proportion of managers in the last 3 years. This is more than any other country apart from the USA.

Why? There are probably as many reasons as there are Human Resource Managers!

- Could there be an inherent trait in the UK psyche that prevents us from organising and managing people well?
- Are we victims of a history of class hierarchy, of muddling through, seeing a dilettante approach as a virtue?

It does not mean we are incapable of managing or changing. The problems are we do not recognise the tools that are available to help us; do not look at examples of excellence and copy them. Take a look at one of the UK's most recent success stories, easyJet, the company used an example of success by modeling itself on South West Airlines in the USA.

So what are the HR Directors /Managers, training and development managers and the good old IPD doing? They help to re-organise companies, do job evaluation exercises, salary administration, personnel policies and procedures, develop enough rules to stifle initiative in any company.

- Is this the management establishment in UK business, industry, and services that is stifling innovation and change?
- Is this the management of the fire service that managed a workforce with an overtime ban for 25 years?

Do UK managers on reaching the exalted level of manager take on the mindset of a particularly backward member of the MCC? Do they become the people who are suspicious of those who practice to become better? Unfortunately the answer is in many cases yes. Why? I believe they do not see people in the same way they see other aspects of the business. If you ask most organisations for their business plan, sales plan, customer service plan or marketing plan the

chances are you will be on pretty solid ground. Ask for their people plan and at best you will get the training programme (depending on budget), performance management system (funny, everyone seems to score about the same!) and if you are really lucky the management development programme ("we're looking outside at the moment for a new ops director")

So what can be done?

The development of people is not an isolated act to satisfy the performance target of the HR function, it is part of the whole business, a plan that runs alongside the business and operational model. It is the creation of a place of work a 'brand' that is as exciting to work for as it is to invest in and buy from: people are trained and developed in the skills and requirements to achieve these business goals. They will be enabled, have the tools to do the job, they will receive praise for a job well done, they will be trained and developed to acquire the skills they need, and they will be encouraged to practice these skills. Their performance will be measured against the performance of the company, and its customer and investor satisfaction, not some meaningless set of parameters dreamt up to satisfy the latest HR fad.

We need more leaders in the UK and fewer managers.

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## WORK-LIFE BALANCE CAMPAIGN

The DTi surveyed over 4,000 job seekers with the following results:

46% chose flexible working as the benefit they would most look for in their next job.

24% of managers/directors said that work-life balance was an extremely important factor in deciding whether to apply for a new job.

37% of women chose flexible working over £1000 more pay per year compared to 27% of men.

## Did You Know ?

Workers at Matsushita Electric Company, in Japan, used to beat dummies of their foremen with bamboo sticks to let off steam. The Company at this time enjoyed a 30% growth for 25 consecutive years.

Clans of long ago that wanted to get rid of their unwanted tribesmen without killing them used to burn their houses down - hence the expression to "get fired"

American Airlines saved \$40,000 in 1987 by eliminating 1 olive from each salad served in 1st class.

## meet the team



Leading-change.co.uk Board of Directors (left to right) Gwyn Evans, Dr David Wall & Ian Derbyshire

Managing Director, Ian will be speaking at the IOD 2003 leaders programme on Strategy - March 10th. Call us on 01244 341241 for further details.

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## Developing Teams

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