

Annual Conference 2005. Notes From Workshop 3. Tuesday 28th June

Investing in Your People presented by:

**John Bennett from Pack-IT
Jackie Lewis Investors in People Advisor
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John Bennett

The Barriers

In deciding to go for the Investors in People Award there were a number of barriers to overcome. We needed to ask: What's in it for who will benefit and us?

John said he needed to be persuaded -had to be sure the results were worth the effort (time, resources and the pain!). " Inevitably it takes time and commitment to do the right thing". Then the Board needed to be persuaded .

Undertaking liP requires commitment and provides challenges – the day job is big enough and it was a big step to get employees to see the advantages. So it was a big step and getting the right partner was absolutely crucial. There is flexibility to choose who will work with you as an adviser in preparing you for liP - so shop around, meet people and don't settle for an adviser who is not on your wavelength. Should be someone who will work through the process, understand you and your business, who and what you are and someone who is people focussed.

The Outputs

Reviewing the business for liP meant looking again at items such as:

- The Staff Handbook
- Health and Safety Certificates
- The Employee of the Month system and the
- Employee of the month award

Sometimes we threw away what we had and started again because we realised that what we had did not meet the needs of the staff - needed to talk in a language that all understood.

We produced a picture based Induction Handbook and developed a "People" Chart – a photo of each staff members with one clear sentence to explain their job.

We sought and found ways to ensure that Health and Safety was truly understood and not words on paper.

The adviser found the employee of the month was not a token gesture and that it was valued.

Going for Investors in People

People running Social Firms were encouraged to go for liP because the standard touches and impacts positively on so many areas for the business and the people. liP is not an easy option but with lots of guidance a **winning team** where **job satisfaction is high** can be achieved.

Jackie Lewis

Qualtech - an organisation that acts as an advisor for liP and Assesses for liP. For Pack IT we were the liP Advisors.

Why consider IIP?

Don't do it to get the plaque on the wall but to improve the business – to add value and because the business needs it. Sometimes we are so busy at work that “you can't see the wood for the trees” but the process of working towards liP enables you to you're your business objectively – to see what works well and what doesn't.

What is IIP all about?

It's about working together. The liP Advisor understanding the culture of your organisation and forming a partnership. The Advisor is there to help you solve problems and see the difference this makes.

Working Together - how does this work and what happens?

It works as a partnership where the IIP Advisor provides advice and support to enable the company to implement improvements and focus on solutions.

In working together the business needs are reviewed and any problem areas Identified. In a supportive relationship can look at what is difficult or frustrating or that is causing barriers to effective working.

Together we review what is not working. Sometimes at work it is possible to just 'go through the motions'. liP gives the opportunity to say 'we'll scrap that and start with new – something that works.' The process helps you to get the most effective tools for you and gets you to where you want to be. You need to think about what staff need to know and how best to provide them with that information.

At Pack IT we did scrap a lot and started with a clean slate. The aim is that reach the position where you have things in place that fit and inspire the organisation.

The IIP Advisor assists in solving the problems by being:

- an extra resource and external eye:
- support to complement the organisation's management team:

- providing a perspective from another point of view.

It is important that:

- the IIP Advisor understands the issues for the business s/he is working with;
- the IIP Advisor and the business manager look together look at resource limitations (it is important to work within these) and review how to pace the change and agree priorities;
- results are measures on an on-going basis (sit back – take stock and review) as this provides motivation to the next stage of improvement. This way everyone will see the difference and notice the point of change.

IIP needs to be approached positively. It should not be, “Oh, no not IIP. Why should we bother?” but from a real desire to improve the business.

Getting started

An advisor will help you on your IIP journey. In Wales* ELWa (Education and Learning Wales) is the first point of call and paid for Pack IT's advisor.

You don't have to have the first advisor offered to you and it is important to 'shop around' to find the adviser who is right for you and your business. Important to remember that you are the customer. Ask how much time/support you are entitled to and ask about the way in which the advisor works get them to describe how they work.

Once you have your advisor agree together how best to use the time available. For Pack IT the 14 hours of consultancy allowed was broken down into 2-hour slots with 2-6 weeks between visits - as mutually agreed.

Assessing for Investors in People

Sue Rowlands

Sue Rowlands Associates - an organisation that acts as an advisor for IIP and Assesses for IIP. For Pack IT we were the IIP Assessors.

Support through the IIP advisory process is probably better in Wales.

Assessment -Why bother?

Going for IIP takes time, it costs money and causes disruption and 'we think we are good [enough]".

BUT it's positive for someone else to tell you HOW good you are and when they confirm you have reached the standards it's the icing on the cake! It provides a benchmark of your quality. 40,000 businesses in the UK are now recognised as having achieved IIP.

Our job was to assess Pack IT against the IIP Standard.

The Benefits of liP are:

- formal public recognition of good practice
- it demonstrates an 'us too' attitude

The Assessment Process

- Involves people (it should be probing but positive and not damaging)
- Is supportive of the organisation and its aims
- Provides invaluable feedback from an objective perspective (the assessor should give examples to show other avenues that can be explored.
- It is not a paper chase (don't want to see lots of paperwork) and we are not interested in bureaucracy.

What did I find at Pack-IT?

I found:

- a business led by a businessman with management and operational teams;
- people with respect for each other;
- a can do attitude;
- a huge Commitment to personal development (people making real progress, gaining in confidence and ability including improving numeric and literacy)
- systems that recognised and rewarded achievement (e.g. Employee of the month).
- an organisation that demonstrated real effort was put into in making things happen (Pack IT had a real grip on the added value of liP).
- an understanding of the contribution that their business made to the local economy

The Benefits

Investors in People provides a model for business improvement which can be used in any organisation – it is a real business tool

Achieving recognition takes you to the next level. Achieving liP is only the beginning. You can keep improving and keep adding value. liP will keep coming back to see what further improvements have been made and how you have reacted to new challenges - business today are constantly challenged.

It is recommended that you start your liP journey as soon as possible. You don't have to wait until you have grown your businesses. If you start when you are small/new it is easier to assimilate change and to put positive action in place.

*In England contact you local Learning and Skills Council