



THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

DIVISION OF WORK & ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Voices on the Edge - Newsletter May 2002 (issue 3)

1ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ISSUE

EDITOR'S VISION

Welcome to the first Annual General Meeting of DWOP on 22nd May 2002. We are now firmly established as a Division of PSI. Our membership is increasing all the time. Since December we have inaugurated a Continuous Professional Development seminar/workshop series.

- John Loughran, Pearn Kandola Consultants, mapped out a major consultancy project conducted with the Western Health Board on: *Who wants to be a visionaire: identifying change facilitated in the Western Health Board.*

Some very innovative approaches to *Bottom-up Change, selection of change facilitators and their training, development of an "ideas questionnaire"* were introduced step by step clarifying the acceptance of the change process building on 300 ideas for change. This comprehensive model and practice of change generated considerable discussion. It was agreed that this initiative was a viable framework for future CPD sessions. Key issues arising from this seminar are reported on in this issue.

- Following our AGM we have great pleasure in welcoming Niall Leavy, Principal Psychologist, Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners on: *Assessment in the Civil Service: Challenging Times.* This constitutes the second evening seminar as part of CPD. We look forward to a lively analyses and discussion.
- An expanding field for Work and Organisational Psychologists is Health and Safety at work. The Annual Conference of the Health and Safety Authority (HAS) held on 5-6th March 2002 selected as its theme: *Work Place Stress – its time for solutions.* The very large attendance highlights the

significance of this field (see details this issue).

- Our thanks to Cara Louise White, Emerge, for exploring the intricacies of e-learning in this issue. This is an evolving field and the involvement of organizational psychologists in developing Integrated Learning Systems is paramount.

Eunice McCarthy
Chairperson

Workplace Stress – its time for solutions

Eunice McCarthy, Chair, DWOP

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA), has since its establishment in 1989 channeled substantial resources into health and safety issues at work. Psycho-social issues have not however been to the forefront until recent times. In recognition of the increasing salience of these issues the Annual Conference's (5-6th March 2002) theme was *Workplace Stress – its time for solutions:*

Tom Cox, Professor of Organisational Psychology, Nottingham University, spoke on *Stress in the Workplace from a health and safety perspective: An expert view.* He skillfully mapped critical factors in the history of Organisational Psychology and demonstrated their significance for understanding stress in the workplace, and health and safety promotion initiatives.

From an organizational psychology perspective a major initiative at this conference was the launch of *Work Positive – Prioritising Organisational Stress – a Resource Pack.* HSA organizational psychologist, Patricia Murray collaborated with the Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) in developing this rich resource pack designed to *help organizations address this very important health and safety issue – stress at work.*

Work positive is a step-by-step process that will assist in taking the necessary action to identifying and

reduce the potential causes of stress in your organization: The history of *work positive* draws on core literature in the field of workplace stress including:

- Cox (1993)
- Cooper and Marshall (1976)
- Karasek and Theorell (1990)
- Landy (1994)
- It focuses in particular on known causes of organizational stress from research which to a large extent has been initiated by organizational psychologists. These causes include: organizational change; organizational structure and management style; lack of human resources processes; fairness and interpersonal relationships; work processes; job characteristics; work environment; incidents; health and safety. Some outcomes of this approach are as follows:
 - Flexible and effective at identifying stressors,
 - Requirements
 - Senior management commitment,
 - Supportive culture
 - Effective communicators
 - Steering group
 - Use of external expertise if not in-house
- How to apply work positive in your organization? Work Positive maps five steps:
- **Step 1:** raising awareness, gaining and demonstrating commitments.
- **Step 2:** Benchmarking: assessing the current situation
- **Step 3:** identifying the causes and assessing the risks.
- **Step 4:** Avoiding and reducing any risks identified.
- **Step 5:** Reviewing the situation – time scales for implementation; consult with employers as to whether the solutions are working, review the performance indicators, sickness, absence, turnover, revisit the benchmark.
- This resource pack is very well designed and laid out. It is available from the Health and Safety Authority, 10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2. It also includes a CD of the data (cost €32.00).
- DWOP is planning a CPD workshop on *Work Positive* given its significance for the work of Work and Organisational Psychologists.

Seminar by John Loughran, Occupational Psychologist, Pearn Kandola titled

‘Who wants to be a Visionaire: Identifying Change Facilitators in the Western Health Board.

John Loughran, Occupational Psychologist with Pearn Kandola delivered the first continuous professional development evening seminar on the 13th of December in Buswells Hotel. John discussed the work that Pearn Kandola was involved with over a two- year period on the selection of 60 change facilitators within the Western Health Board.

The main objectives of the project were to identify change facilitators and to facilitate the future development of all participants in the development centres. The assessment process included first specifying the role and developing competencies. Competencies developed included planning and organising, influencing skills, overcoming barriers to progress, identifying better ways of doing things, evaluating information and decision-making, organisational change and awareness, developing others, focus on results, leadership and teamwork.

Development centre materials were designed including assessment centre exercises such as case studies, briefing exercises, group exercises, one-to-one role-plays. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and 360 feedback were also used in the process. Feedback on performance was given to all participants and they were involved in Performance Development Planning. A development directory was also designed for the Western Health Board. An Ideas for Change Questionnaire was further developed which generated over 80 different proposals for change projects within the Health Board. The selected change facilitators are currently engaged in delivering a variety of these projects.

John’s talk marked the beginning of the Continuous Professional Development Process. Different models of the process have been discussed but it was decided that evening seminars will be organised to give the opportunity to share knowledge while this process is being designed.

John's talk was warmly welcomed by DWOP members.

The chair thanked all for their enthusiastic involvement and their plan for future CPD seminars.

Questions from the floor included:

1. Did Pearn Kandola meet the CEO of the Western Health Board's expectations regarding the outcome of the project? Expectations were met in that the project involved all of the Health Board and not just management grades.
2. What are the difference in skills between psychologists and lay facilitators. Why was the outcome better when using psychologists? More research needed in this area. However, possibly greater openness expressed by psychologists and participants found it easier to form a relationship over the two days based on trust.
3. How did Pearn Kandola give feedback to those individuals who were not selected as change facilitators? Never easy to give feedback to unsuccessful candidates. Pearn Kandola provided developmental feedback at all times and gave participants an opportunity to practice areas required for development. For example one unsuccessful participant agreed to present to the Western Health Board her experiences of the development centre. This gave her the chance to practice her presentation skills which was an area for development.
4. Communication of the project – what did this entail? This project was communicated through posters, flyers, presentations.

eLearning – A New Frontier Cara Louise White, Emerge

Technology continues to change the way we live, work and learn. Today's workforce has to process more information in a shorter amount of time. New products and services are emerging with accelerating speed, and as production cycles and life spans of products continue to shorten organisations do not have the time or the money to spend on leisurely learning curves. People need to learn fast, retain what they learn, and feed it back into the organisation.

The Internet has had a revolutionary effect on how organisations conduct business, opening up new possibilities for communicating with employees, clients, customers and suppliers. It has also rapidly transformed approaches to learning within organisations. Organisations recognise that re-skilling and training are not only a necessity but must become ongoing activities to succeed in today's knowledge-driven market. Consequently, companies are reviewing their traditional classroom based training methods and are investigating how technologies such as intranet and Internet systems can deliver flexible training and learning programmes. Learning is moving online in the form of eLearning.

Most organisations have cited costs saving and higher productivity as the reason for selecting eLearning solutions; eLearning offers learning that is available anytime and anywhere, it is learning that is flexible providing the opportunity for learners to learn at their own pace and access and review the material at their leisure.

But eLearning is more than simply putting content online, key factors in developing effective eLearning include an understanding of the organisation's overall business objectives and its approach to learning and more specifically insights in the learner audience and the learning objectives required. However, it is the quality of the learning that is crucial if eLearning is going to be effective and acceptable to the learners. eLearning must be enjoyable and stimulating to be effective, motivation should be incorporated into the learning process. Motivation can be built into eLearning by creating interesting, highly interactive, engaging and immersive learning environments that evoke in the learner a sense of curiosity and self-exploration. The learning, searching for answers and finding answers, is reinforcing in itself, the learner is motivated to understand, stimulated by their own curiosity. eLearning solutions should elicit knowledge construction rather than knowledge reproduction.

Effective eLearning must also be relevant and personalised to the learner, emphasising the performance of job related learning activities in simulated settings rather than abstract instruction out of context. And for real learning to take place the learner must be provided with time to reflect on the learning experience and evaluate it which aids retention and transfer back into the work environment.

Many organisations today have found success with eLearning as a tool for business process transformation and have successfully implemented eLearning solutions for a specific business process problem such as, speeding up new product roll outs, recurring training issues or technical training. But, what about the future of eLearning? Until very recently the focus of eLearning has been on providing solutions for formalised learning and has had little interaction with informal learning, which as research shows can account for as much as 70% of the way employees learn*. This informal learning has traditionally been in the domain of knowledge management systems. Therefore current readings suggest that for organisations to develop effective learning environments and maximise the investment in learning they will need to look for a system that intersects eLearning and knowledge management and accommodates both of these aspects. This system is being labelled as an Integrated Learning Systems and it will combine formal course learning with ad hoc, just in time, performance-related personalised learning. Advances in technology are already making it possible but the question is, will attitudes to learning accommodate this?

**Education Development Center, Inc (1/1998), "The Teaching Firm (Where Productive Work and Learning Converge)"*

CONFERENCE AND SEMINAR NEWS:

A one-day seminar on 'Career and Educational Opportunities in Psychology' was held on 13th April in All Hallows College. Invited speakers from four Psychology areas: Clinical, Occupational, Educational, and Counselling gave interesting and informative accounts of the work, opportunities and academic courses available in their respective fields. The speakers were: Sinead Fitzgerald, Co-ordinator, Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, Trinity College; Dr. Melrona Kirrane, Lecturer in Occupational Psychology at DCU; Bernard McGettrick, Director of MA in Educational Psychology, UCD; and Aida Keane, Student Counsellor, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. Delegates questions were welcomed, and the day provided an enjoyable and useful forum for the exchange of ideas, information and contacts. The organisers hope to put on a similar day in Limerick/Cork in the autumn. For further details see the

website www.appliedpsychology.ie or contact info@appliedpsychology.ie

The Institute of Business Analysts and Consultants held their annual seminar on May 1st at the UCD Industry Centre Belfield. It was entitled 'How Work/Life Ethos leads to more Effective Organisations' and experts from several fields, including a live video link-up with Dr. Stephen Covey in the USA, made it a most interesting and day. Chaired by John Quinn, Senior Radio Producer with RTE, the speakers included Steve Costello, Chairman, Business in the Community Ireland; Michael Steinharter, Vice President, IBM Global Services; Dr. Aine Tubridy, EA Director Employee Assistance Partners Ltd., Consultant Psychotherapist, Institute of Psychosocial Medicine; Dr. George Bilotta, Institute for Reflective Leadership; Mr. Colm Kelly, HR Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers; and business and leadership guru, Dr. Stephen Covey via live video link from Utah. For further information contact secretary@inbusans.ie.

TRAINING COURSES

Training in psychological testing for BPS level A and B certification will

take place at the end of June. Interested individuals and groups may contact 087 2852185 for further details.

Submitted by Pippa Coughlan

Forthcoming Conferences

XXV International Congress of Applied Psychology
Making life better for all: a challenge for Applied Psychology. 7-12th July 2002, Singapore International Convention, 6 Exhibition Centre under the auspices of the International Association of Applied Psychology.
Local contact-person email: Eunice.mccarthy@ucd.ie

11th European Congress on Work and Organisational Psychology
14-17th May 2003, Lasboa, Portugal. *Identity and Diversity in Organisations – Building Bridges in Europe*
More Information: www.eawop-congress.iscte.pl

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