

Welcome

Which comes first: the chicken or the egg? The creative idea or the polished advert? The right process or the software solution? In this edition of the newsletter, we focus on processes from an IT perspective and consider why you need to have IT involved right at the beginning of the Processfix journey.

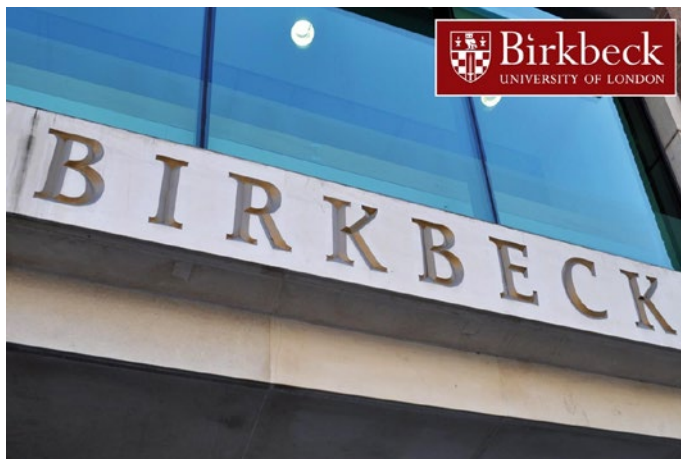
Often, people look to technology to solve their problems, but perhaps one of the key reasons to involve IT right from the start of process improvement is that they are quite clear that the right software will only be developed if the process issues are clearly understood. And even then, the most pragmatic, effective solutions, may not involve new technology.

We speak to James Smith, Director of Process Improvement and Corporate Information Systems at Birkbeck, who explains how their Operational Excellence initiative has been set up with a clear understanding that it is not a technology driven project, but is instead driven by the real issues.

John Butterworth, Director of IT Governance at King's College London, then shares with us how their approach involves a wide range of different functions, with a mix of contributors at different levels of seniority and supported through a Process Council and Information Centre.

Finally, in our spotlight, is Tessa Harrison, also from King's, who, as Director of Students and Education, is co-sponsoring process change with the IT Governance team, sharing her wealth of experience to support the transformation that is going on within King's approach to process change.

Why technology is not the answer to everything



At Birkbeck, the Operational Excellence initiative has been described by the College Secretary as: "the Industrial Revolution for administrative work". Right from the start, the team has been clear that this is not a technology project, rather, it is about understanding and improving processes. We spoke with James Smith, Director of Process Improvement and Corporate Information Systems about the Birkbeck approach to process change and improvement.

"I would say that our approach has evolved quite a lot over the last few years. When I first started here seven years ago, it was a case of all hands to the pump. There were various things that had to be done to survive the funding cuts. I wouldn't say it was a case of imposing change on people, but it was very much that some things categorically had to be sorted out; they were big and obvious, and we had to make it happen, which thankfully we did."

Then, having survived the removal of ELQ funding, Birkbeck recognised the need to carry on improving services to students and the efficiency of those services.

"We needed to minimise income spent on pushing paper, to focus more on delivering to students and on research opportunities. So we set up our Operational Excellence (OE) initiative, focusing on our administrative processes. We approached this from three angles:

- 1 – Reskilling/upskilling our people
- 2 – Recognising we operate processes and that improving their efficiency will deliver better services and savings, so we can reinvest in other areas
- 3 – Improving the technology to understand and orchestrate our processes

We were quite clear that this OE initiative was not a technology project. We needed to understand processes: what makes them inefficient and what makes them better. We wanted to find a way to get our colleagues to recognise that, but not be centrally controlled. It was important that whilst we wanted a central approach, we needed local process design, from the people on the ground. A lot of our focus is on increasing the understanding amongst our colleagues that all work is a process and any process can be improved. Small improvements can make a big difference

without the need to have loads of new technology."

Birkbeck has been admitting students since 1823, so some of the processes are the best part of 200 years old, and of course, unnecessary waste has been created because they've evolved,

"We needed to understand processes: what makes them inefficient and what makes them better"

rather than been designed. James went on to say: "very often the most valuable part of the whole initiative is our work with facilitators, both from Processfix and internally. We get all the participants of a process to sit down together and describe what they do. People enjoy the workshops; they have no idea what they're going to achieve at the start, but they leave able to make small improvements by doing things a bit differently and knowing what everyone else is trying to achieve."

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NEWSFLASH!

High Wycombe, UK
– October 2015
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KING'S College LONDON

Why change will not be achieved by IT alone

Nearly two years ago, the IT Governance Group at King's College London recognised that it needed to put in place a consistent approach to business process change in the college. However, it also recognised that while "major change today requires technology, with perhaps over 70% of meaningful changes needing some form of IT support", it was not something that could be achieved by IT alone.

We spoke with John Butterworth, Director of IT Governance, about the ongoing programme of process change. He explained why King's decided to build a coalition of people who would understand what the programme meant and what would be needed to make it happen, from Finance through to all the key operators of a process.

"We realised that one area can't do it alone, because so many processes are end-to-end, across different teams or silos. We knew that we could make some improvements just by looking at processes in for example, the Estates department, but the full value and benefits only happen when you include all the different functions."

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Already having some idea within their teams of how they wanted to develop their processes, when Tessa Harrison arrived at King's to take up the

role of Director of Students and Education, she introduced John to Processfix, who she had worked with at the University of Southampton. John took the opportunity to attend a Processfix masterclass along with the Head of Business Analysis; following that, they decided to engage Processfix to train the team within King's in their approach.

Initially, Processfix facilitated a 'Champion's Workshop' of senior players, so building understanding, agreement and collaboration. King's then put in place a programme of Processfix workshops and masterclasses over 1.5 to 2 years so that everyone would speak the same kind of language and be aware of it.

"There are a number of different projects going on at King's and what we are doing here is adopting the Processfix approach across all projects. We are now in the process of training up a number of Processfix facilitators internally."

To maintain the momentum, a Process Council has been established with co-sponsorship from Nick Leake, Chief Information Officer and Tessa Harrison, Director of Students and Education, plus dedicated full time support from Laura Clayton, Director of Service Excellence.

"We want to make sure we keep a consistent methodology across the college, setting improvement priorities and the 'rules of the game'. Recognising its importance, the Council will be chaired initially by the college secretary, making him the current chair of three major governance groups covering data and information, process and technology.

One challenge will be to keep our facilitators enthused; to do that we are just beginning to describe a Process Information Centre. This will enable people to see what's going on in different areas and be supported by regular news articles. We will share the good news stories that we have had and set up local interest groups. It will be overseen by the main Process

Council, but will involve people who are more hands-on across the different areas of the college."

There are already three success stories to share through the Information Centre.

- The enrolment process has seen the number of its steps reduced by nearly three quarters, from 101 to 27
- The placements process has had a reduction in steps from over 70 to just 34
- The PGT application process has improved the transition between its often complex, but necessary steps, delivering clarity for both applicants and admissions staff

John concluded by telling us: "By the end of the year, we will have trained about 45 individuals from across the college. We are building a mix of people who can all act as facilitators and improvement champions. It's been important to include a range of disciplines and seniority. Anyone who has undertaken the training will have had approval from a senior director. We are actively making sure that the people we train will be involved in a fair amount of process change going forward."



In the spotlight: Tessa Harrison, Director Students and Education and Chair of the Association of University Administrators

A career Higher Education professional services manager, Tessa came to King's in November 2014 to take up a portfolio which she explained: "gets me into the heart of the student experience". Tessa is also the current Chair of the Association of University Administrators.



What was it about the role at King's that attracted your attention?

It offers all the bits of administration that I enjoy and covers the whole student lifecycle which is what I'm passionate about. King's is a big-hitting, serious research institution, but has recognised the need to focus on the student experience. This will require a not-insignificant culture change. My input since I arrived has changed the nature of a lot of internal conversations and is helping King's to find its way through what it will take to genuinely put students at their heart. One key area we are looking at is how to balance the provision of student services - we have around about 25,000 students spread over several London sites - between central and local delivery.

What have you been doing to support the necessary change?

Working with Processfix has been an important part of this. What their approach gives us is that fantastic space to bring all the stakeholders together in the room and have the conversations. King's hasn't worked like that before and the transformational effect is great to see.

Since arriving at King's, you've been co-sponsoring process change with the IT Governance team. How did that come about?

Along with other institutions, we have gone through the global period of austerity in professional services and now we are looking at how we can make better use of academic time to enable them

"we need to make sure that we don't become 'over processed'; we want the work to be fun!"

to focus on what's important in education and research. They have been doing more and more admin, but we have to ask, particularly in such a highly regarded research institution, is this a good use of their time?

King's was just ready for a change in approach. The teams knew they needed to do something and had been dipping their toes in the water with various approaches. What I did was go in and say "why not try doing this?" This has facilitated a new style of conversation within the institution. I think I have been a catalyst, by simply drawing together things that were already

happening and putting a student focused wrap around them.

What are the key factors driving success at King's?

The most exciting has to be the King's Activity Model developed by IT. It's tradition that student admin and IT are often at loggerheads, but on arriving at King's, thanks to my previous experience and work

The Road Map report is a real demonstration of their generosity of experience and advice and it's a very affirming piece of work.

We're now at a place where we can identify service and process owners, drive accountability and start to build things properly. We really are in a position where we can take a whole institution view.

What do you see as the main challenge going forward?

I think the challenge is going to be capacity. We're doing all the right things for continuous process improvement: we have a lead co-ordinator, senior level support and a flourishing group of trained facilitators. Once other services and areas of the college get involved, the demand will probably outstrip our ability to support it!

That's why the roll-out of facilitator training that John Butterworth talked about in his article will be so important. But above all, we need to make sure that we don't become 'over processed'; we want the work to be fun!

For me, the Processfix approach provides us with the ability to be the change we want to see, through sharing the problem and working in partnership with service users to find the solutions.

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We asked James what he felt was different about the Birkbeck approach: "In terms of what we're doing around process improvement and around our corporate systems, I'm not sure we are distinctive. We work in an interesting sector: we are competitors, but don't behave competitively, so at a peer level we have no problem helping each other, or sharing what we are doing. But I do get the sense that at Birkbeck we are potentially able to move a bit further, a bit faster, than other people. I think that's because we don't spend a long time trying to come up with the amazingly perfect end solution that is then documented

to death. We recognise that process improvement is an iterative process and we're comfortable with that; we're pragmatic about our approach."

"process improvement is an iterative process and we're comfortable with that"

James told us that going forward, the pace of change is likely to be their greatest challenge: "Everybody wants to improve their part of the organisation. Despite my best efforts, there is still a determination to believe

that technology is the solution. Fundamentally, writing code is easy; what is difficult is understanding what we're trying to achieve with

the code that is written. That requires lots of people to come together and use their collective knowledge. In a way, it's crowdsourcing for process improvement. That's where the Processfix approach

shows that you can make an improvement to any process; you don't have to make fundamental changes to the infrastructure."

One key piece of advice that James shared with us is that when you're starting on your process improvement journey, look for the open door: "Some people take a lot of time to convince; they have the right to be sceptical. But some are really keen to make improvements, so go for them first. Even if it's not going to deliver the greatest value to your bottom line, it will deliver value in proving the methodology works and then you can start to win round the sceptics. Whatever you do, don't overpromise and under deliver!"

About us

Organisations rely on processes to get things done. Often these simply evolve over time and become inefficient ways of working. Processfix bring powerful, proven and behaviour-changing techniques to bear in a professionally facilitated environment.

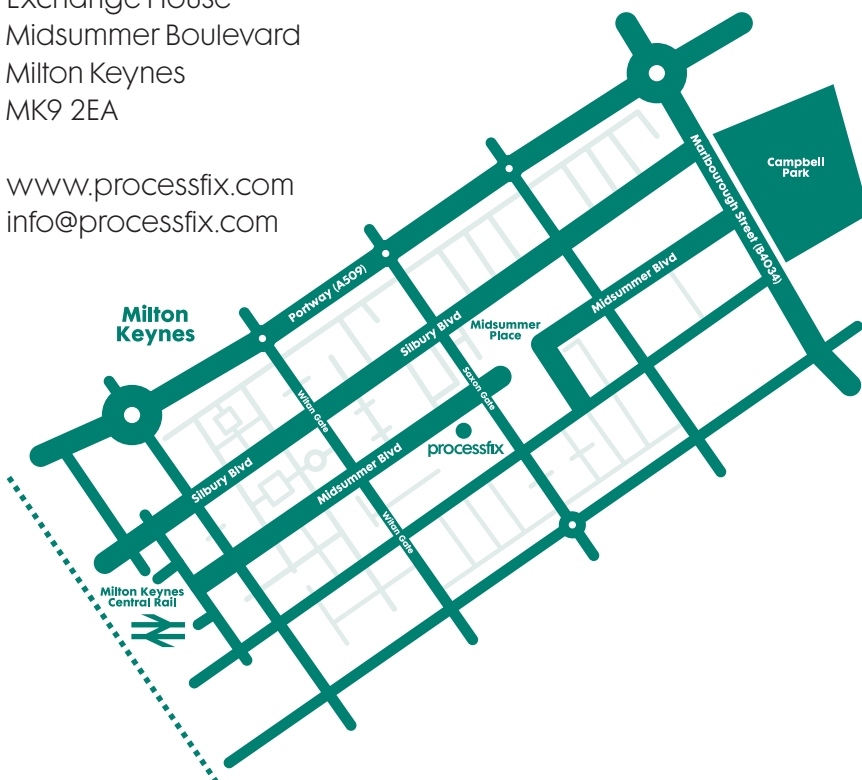
We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re-evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

Whether you require Rapid Improvement Workshop facilitation, training, project leadership or an organisational wide process improvement programme. Processfix specialise in facilitating your team, delivering immediate benefits and instilling continuous improvement across your organisation.

If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

Processfix Limited
Exchange House
Midsummer Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 2EA

www.processfix.com
info@processfix.com



And Finally...

Processfix MD Jules Cross completes Paris to Nice cycle challenge, together raising £104,000 for Willen Hospice



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