processfix

Welcome

Your organisation, whether commercial or public sector, can spend on communication to promote your business as you'd like it to be perceived. But in reality, the people who can make the most difference to your reputation are those that engage with and invest in it.

No one has a bigger emotional stake in your organisation than the people that work in it. What they say about you has power, so it's worth investing in your HR services. After all, you don't just need to recruit great employees, you want to retain them.

First, we hear from Ruth Waight, at Anglia Ruskin University, where the focus for process improvement has recently fallen on staff recruitment and selection. Then Rob Tinley shares with us how Exeter University have been shaping their HR processes.

Finally, in our spotlight this edition, we are delighted to have spoken with Professor Zoe Radnor, who gives us her perspective on the future of Operational Excellence.

NEWSFLASH!

Mayfair, UK — September 2016
Hakkasan the Michelin star Cantonese restaurant group develop new staff recruitment process.

University of Exeter focus on employee services

Rob Tinley is the Head of Employee Services at the University of Exeter, where employees span the diverse range of skills across education, academic and professional services. They are also spread across campuses in Exeter and Cornwall. Since arriving at Exeter in September 2015, one of Rob's key priorities has been to establish how well his administrative team was managing the existing processes for this large body of staff.

When I joined, processes involving my administrative team were working well, but they were old and there was a lot of hard work going on to achieve the necessary outcomes. It was clear that we needed to take steps towards more efficient ways of working."

The initial intention was to carry out a low-key internal review. However, in reality it soon became clear that there was little time to achieve an effective review during standard working hours and it was decided to bring in external help. "In my previous roles, I had experienced both good and

"this would give us a platform to show our commitment to a whole programme of process improvement"

bad externally led process reviews. In this instance, one of our HR business partners recommended we contact Processfix, as they had experience of their rapid improvement approach in another Higher Education setting. My initial conversation with them went well and we moved quickly to set up the workshop." The new joiner process was chosen as the focus for the workshop. "We chose it

because it is a process that touches so many different areas: the handover from recruitment to HR, people development, customers, line managers, IT and support departments. There is a very significant flow through the new joiner process and we felt that starting with this would give us a platform to show our commitment to a whole programme of process improvement."

"Our key objective was to find ways to improve content and quality. We were meeting deadlines, so speeding up was not an issue, but we wanted to reduce the overall workload by eliminating duplication and manual elements; essentially to become more efficient."

Rob went on to say that Processfix was really clear from the outset that to get the most out of the workshop, it was important to have the right people in the room and to have their commitment to the full three days. "My personal experience of the workshop was of building up really good relationships. We all started to understand how the process worked in other places and across other teams. It became clear why it

was so important that everyone who touched the process was represented in the workshop." "On the first day we learnt about how to work together and how to recognise the breadth of a process. You usually only see your own part of any process, but in order to make effective improvement, you have to understand the process as a whole."

By stepping back and taking time to review the new joiner process from start to finish the group was able to see what was really in place, to check and to challenge whether a step was really necessary. "In HR, we do have a strong focus on compliance. What became apparent was there was a bit too much of this going on. Once we started to map the process fully, we could see where it was going around in circles; for example, with three different spreadsheets doing essentially the same thing." At the time of writing this article, the workshop was still very fresh. A plan with clear objectives has been circulated and there is a positive energy around the team.

"We're now going to turn our objectives into an achievable project plan, to ensure that we deliver tangible benefits from the workshop. We came out of the Processfix experience not only with something very practical to help us improve the new joiners process, but also with the tools to develop our general approach to process improvement."

If you would like to talk to Rob about his journey in HR process improvement at the University of Exeter, please contact him on: R.S.Tinley@exeter.ac.uk.

Improving the staff recruitment process at Anglia Ruskin University

Ruth Waight is Assistant Director, HR Services, at Anglia Ruskin University. Over the past decade, HR has been advocating the benefits of process improvement across the university, but have recently taken their own advice, recognising that the time was right to look at the staff recruitment process.

"It's something we've been wanting to do for some time and with the current focus on online, digital and paper-lite processes at Anglia Ruskin, the time is right."

Ruth explained that following her attendance at a masterclass several years ago, Processfix had come in and facilitated a one-day workshop for the HR administration team to highlight the key learning points about continuous process improvement. All new HR team managers since then have attended a Processfix Masterclass to ensure they are also on board with this.

"I felt the HR members involved were very much aware of the challenge we faced rather than all starting from scratch: they had already grasped the basics of process improvement, so this helped us to steam ahead in the workshop. Even the other stakeholders in the group who had not been through the experience before had an openness for change. The group's mindset was that the status quo was unsustainable and we just needed to make it better."

The group chose to concentrate on the process from submission of documentation from the recruiting manager to HR, through to the issuing of the formal contract to the new hire.

"Using brown paper on the wall, we stuck on more than 80 post-it notes which identified our current process steps. The flow seemed to be extremely chaotic, rather than a logical, easy to follow process. At the end of the workshop, we got this down to 52 activities."

"The group's mindset was that the status quo was unsustainable and we just needed to make it better"

There was a mix of both academic and support service recruiting managers in the workshop. It was challenging to get people there, but it was crucial to get a balanced mix of both academic and support stakeholders. As a group, they've agreed to continue meeting and reporting back on the progress of implementing the proposed improvements. This way, these recruiting managers become champions of the process. The managers all really engaged and are looking forward to piloting the different improvements that we have planned." Ruth had only one negative thought about the composition of the group: there was no grumpy participant! "It's a strange thought, but if I was at all critical of who we had in the group, we didn't have anyone who was grumpy or resistant to the idea of change. That could have helped us to identify how to overcome issues likely to arise."

She went on to stress the positives from the workshop: "We have an action plan and although it's very early days, we know what we need to do. Timescales have been set in terms of investigating what's possible using our existing e-recruitment system; a lot of delays we and stakeholders encounter could be resolved by using the functionality better and by better communication. As and when we progress an improvement, we'll be asking our recruiting manager champions to test it and then we will roll it out to

"The managers all really engaged"

the rest of the organisation as part of the new process." Ruth concluded by outlining her three key things to get right:

– As a team, be open to change and to constructive criticism. It's really hard when you 'own' a process to have others come in and give honest feedback, even if that's what you've asked for. It can be a bit demotivating, so try to make sure that everyone is clear why you have engaged; it's about making things better.

– Do the work in-house, but get the help of an external facilitator. You'll find this is critical to keep you out of the 'day to day', to keep focused on the objective and move you all forward.

– Make sure you have the right people in the room.

If you would like to talk to Ruth about her journey in HR process improvement at Anglia Ruskin University, please contact her on: ruth.waight@anglia.ac.uk

In the spotlight: Professor Zoe Radnor, University of Leicester

The newly established School of Business at Leicester (August 1st 2016) is the ideal platform from which Zoe, Dean and Professor of Service Operations Management and her team can 'practice what they preach' about Operational Excellence (OE).

This quarter's spotlight focuses on Zoe's experience of OE over the past 20 years and her thoughts on its future.

What motivated your initial move into academia?

Back in 1994, I was working in a consultancy delivering business process engineering. I was enjoying it, but had reached a crossroads in my career and was unsure of my next steps. Then my mum showed me an ad for a government scheme to get practicing managers back into academia. It sounded interesting; I went for it, took up a post as ESRC Management Teaching Fellow and it went from there.

Where was Operational Excellence at that time?

In the 90s, it was all about business process re-engineering; OE has really come into being over the past decade. Other buzz words in the late 90s and early 2000s were "BPI" (Business Process Improvement), "TQM" (Total Quality Management) then "Lean" and "Six-Sigma".

"What we fundamentally need to do is recognise that we are actually offering a service"

However, people were becoming hung up on the labels and the connotations that went with them. For example, Lean was associated with redundancies and cuts. OE was seen as a much more positive term and idea.

My preference is to talk about good service management. What we fundamentally need to do is recognise that we are actually offering a service. This is particularly critical for the public sector and Higher Education, as we are more and more in a |pseudo-commercial marketplace.

Why is the language of service so important?

If we recognise ourselves as offering a service, then by understanding the touchpoints of that service, we can identify and deliver improvements. We need to turn the thinking on its head: OE does not come from identifying how to make our working lives easier, rather through thinking about how we deliver what is important to our customer (internal or external) at that point in time.

Put yourself in the place of a hotel guest. They have a choice ranging from 5-star through to budget. What they are prepared to pay at each end of the range differs significantly: the hotels have to articulate clearly their service level and what experience to expect, in order for the guest to make an informed choice.

In Higher Education, the same thought process should apply as regulations on what universities can charge are likely to change in the future. By recognising and understanding that you are a service organisation and by defining and understanding the touchpoints (research, teaching, external relationships), then you will be in a good position to deliver a positive user experience.

What are the key steps towards good service management?

Two key things that always arise when I speak with organisations are the importance of leadership and the importance of

"We need to capture the benefits to your customer and communicate what they are to all stakeholders."

communication. At the highest level, the organisation needs to be engaged with the idea of service management, to challenge what is really meant by OE and then it needs to be communicated in a way that reaches many different individuals. Both quantitative measurements and qualitative feedback, such as the National Student Survey, will be important. We need to capture the benefits to your customer and communicate what they are to all stakeholders. This is how everything else will fall into place: understanding, processes, metrics.

In our own newly established School, we have a fantastic opportunity to practice what we preach. We deliver and receive services. We have reviewed our delivery offering, set baselines, established indicators and communicated our aims to our users and stakeholders (both internal and external). From this platform, we will be able to manage our effectiveness and where necessary, make informed choices on change and improvement that will benefit our customers.

One analogy I often use is that of rearranging deckchairs on the Titanic: you can do as much as you can in terms of getting rid of crazy practices, but unless you understand that you are service based, the ship is still going to sink!

If you're interested in staying afloat on the journey to good service management, Zoe recommends the following article:

Osborne, S.P., Radnor. Z.J. and Kinder, T. (2015) "The SERVICE framework: a public service-dominant approach to sustainable public services." British Journal of Management, 26(3), pp 347-568, ISSN 1467-8551.

To contact Zoe, please email her on: zjr1@le.ac.uk to help them understand the data available through UCAS.

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.
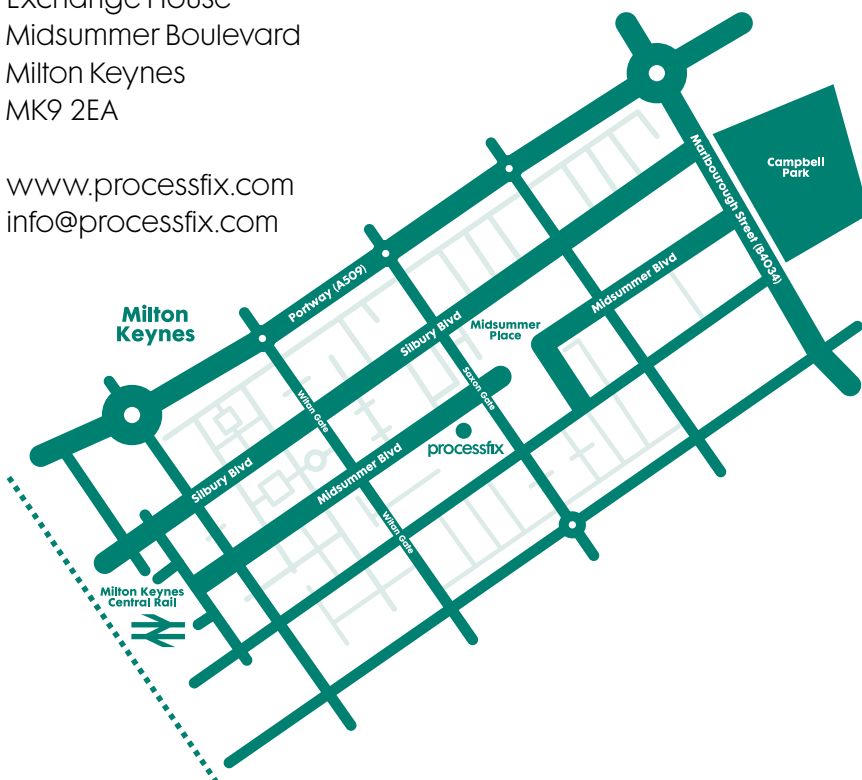
And Finally...

Sir Ian Diamond, author of the Higher Education efficiency review, confirmed as keynote speaker at the Operational Excellence Network hosted by King's College London on 17th November 2016

To book your place please contact jenny.hocking@processfix.com

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

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