

The Investors in People Standard Refreshing its Focus

Background to the review

Since its creation in 1991, the Investors in People Standard has evolved as a result of rigorous three yearly reviews designed to ensure that the Standard remains relevant, accessible and attractive to organisations of all types and sizes.

Consequently, Investors in People has been extremely successful with over 56,000 organisations currently involved with the Standard, representing 36% of the UK workforce. Commitments and recognitions continue to increase with awareness of the Investors in People brand being very high. Research conducted in March 2003 indicated that approximately 97% of organisations surveyed had heard of the Standard. Customer retention is 87%.

This growth is a testament not only to the work of Investors in People UK's partners in the delivery network but equally to the growing reputation of the Standard as one of the key business development tools available to organisations today.

Since the last review in 1999 which introduced changes in the structure and content of the Standard making it more accessible and relevant to organisations, work has continued to secure high levels of recruitment and retention. In order to tackle the former, the Small Firms Initiative has been launched to attract and provide financial support to smaller organisations. With regard to ensuring that organisations who have used the Standard for some time still feel that the process is providing significant added value, a number of developments have taken place including the introduction of three new Models, the formalising of Internal Review and the launch of Profile.

However, with challenging targets of at least 45% of the workforce to be employed in organisations that have achieved or are working towards Investors in People and at least 40,000 small firms to have achieved or be working towards the Standard by 2007, there is still more to be done.

In addition to recruitment and retention issues, other factors driving the review include the changing business environment and the political agenda. With regard to the former, pressures on organisations to demonstrate better corporate governance, greater Corporate Social Responsibility, improved management of workplace stress and flexible working practices are encouraging employers to review the way they manage their business. The government's desire to ensure that Investors in People is supportive of the basic skills agenda will also have an impact on this review.

Given these targets and drivers for change, it is time once again to establish what change, if any, is required to the Standard in order to ensure that it remains at the forefront of the people management and development agenda and continues to provide real value to potential and existing customers.

Purpose and scope of the review

In order to achieve Investors in People UK's vision of increasing the productivity of the UK economy, by improving the way in which organisations manage and develop their people, the Standard must be a "must have" for good employers and continue to be a vehicle for continuous improvement.

The purpose of the review therefore is to ensure that the Standard exists in the most appropriate format to meet customer and stakeholder needs. This will involve reviewing customer needs, challenging our existing assumptions about how best to meet them and identifying ways of delivering continuous improvement. In this way, we will ensure that the Standard remains relevant, accessible and attractive to organisations of all types and sizes.

An important aspect of the review will be to look at how we can make the Standard more attractive and valuable to smaller organisations. The Small Firms Initiative is proving successful but there is still a long way to go before Investors in People UK meets its small firms target. In addition, the review will also pay special attention to why some larger organisations are not tempted to work with the Standard.

It is also critical that this review enables the Standard to continue to deliver to organisations that are already Investors in People. These organisations have worked hard to achieve the Standard and so it must remain something that they value. In this way we will safeguard the commitment and involvement that these organisations have already invested.

In terms of its scope, the review will concern itself with the structure and content of the Standard and any resulting changes that are required to the assessment and recognition process. It is not about changing the Models, linking to other Standards / Models or changing Profile (although any changes to the Standard will impact on Profile). In addition, the review will not be exploring the relationship between Investors in People UK and the network or the company's effectiveness as custodian of the Standard.

Fundamentally, this review is about evolving the Standard, making sure that it continues to be a market leader in the field of management and people development. It must remain cutting edge, incorporating issues that are with us now and in the near future.

Review methodology

A key requirement is that the review process achieves an outcome that employers and stakeholders support. As such, a tried and tested methodology involving a process of consultation, testing and review, will be adopted as a framework for the project. In addition to extensive consultation with the delivery network, customers of the Standard and key stakeholders such as employee representatives, a Visioning Group, representing employers and key stakeholders, will be employed to provide guidance to the project and steer the development of the Standard.

The project will be led by Investors in People UK with the support of Penna Change Consulting and comprise the following key stages:

Stage

Timescale

Project set up

August 03

Stakeholder consultation

- “Ashridge” Think tank
- 1:1 interviews with key stakeholders
- 1st meeting of the Visioning Group September 03 – December 03

Employer and Practitioner consultation

- Employer / practitioner focus groups
- 2nd meeting of the Visioning Group January 04 – mid March 04

Drafting and labbing

- Drafting
- Labbing events
- 3rd meeting of the Visioning Group
- Redrafting Mid March 04 – End April 04

Piloting and market testing

- Assessor training workshop
- Market testing briefing workshop
- Analysis of piloting feedback
- Assessor follow up workshop May 04 – Mid Aug 04

Refinement and final recommendations

- Refinement
- 4th meeting of the Visioning Group
- Final recommendations Mid Aug 04 – Mid Sept 04

Stakeholder / employer / practitioner consultation

Initial consultation with key stakeholders will dictate the direction of the project and as such will be fundamental to the success of the review. The consultation process has already commenced with a 24 hour Think Tank event on 25 / 26 September 2003 which brought together employers and key stakeholders. The event provided them with an opportunity to review some of the issues facing Investors in People and the implications for the future development of the Standard.

The outcomes of this event will inform subsequent consultations which will comprise:

- thirty 1-1 interviews with key stakeholders to discuss in depth the issues and outcomes from the “Ashridge” think tank and gain their views on the desired future

- a 1st meeting of the project Visioning Group to discuss the results of the think tank and the 1-1 interviews and identify and explore options for the further development of the Standard
- 32 half day focus groups for practitioners and employers to test the issues raised by the previous stakeholder consultations and determine the level of change required
- a 2nd meeting of the project Visioning Group to consider the outcomes of the employer / practitioner consultation and to make recommendations for change.

Drafting and labbing

At the end of the consultation phase, the project team will be in a position to produce a first draft of a revised version of the Standard and recommendations on the assessment and recognition process.

In order to ensure the success of the subsequent piloting and market testing stage, a labbing stage will take place. The purpose of the labbing will be to test the appropriateness of the draft revised Standard and assessment and recognition process in a safe environment in order to establish whether we are going in the right direction.

The labbing phase will involve employers and practitioners ‘walking through’ the revised Standard and assessment and recognition process to identify any potential problem areas / challenges. The outcome of the four labbing sessions should be a fairly robust revised Standard and assessment and recognition process which have been tested on a theoretical basis against ‘customer value added’ and ‘practical application’ criteria prior to going live during the pilot stage.

In addition, the results of the labbing stage and the resulting pilot version of the Standard will be approved by the Visioning Group. As such, the drafting and labbing stage should be sufficiently extensive to minimise the amount of refinement required following piloting and market testing.

Piloting and market testing

Having pre-piloted the revised Standard and assessment and recognition process in a ‘safe environment’, the next step will be to ‘road test’ / ‘reality check’ the recommendations with practitioners and a sample of recognised and committed organisations.

The methodology for achieving this will involve both piloting of the Standard and assessment process with organisations (via a diagnostic / assessment process) and market testing of the Standard with organisations via the network.

The purpose of piloting will be to gain quantitative and qualitative evaluation data on the applicability and effectiveness of the revised Standard and assessment and recognition process.

The purpose of market testing will be to gain quantitative and qualitative feedback on the marketability, attractiveness and potential added value of the revised Standard and any proposed changes to the assessment and recognition process.

Refinement and final recommendations

A process of refinement rather than redesign will follow the piloting and market testing stage in order to incorporate the issues highlighted by the feedback. The end result will be a revised Standard and assessment and recognition process which meets the needs of customers and can be practicably applied.

The final version of the revised Standard and the revised assessment and recognition process will be discussed and approved by the Visioning Group prior to the final recommendations being presented to Investors in People UK's Board. It is anticipated that the revised Standard will be launched during Investors in People week in November 2004.

Source;

<http://www.iipuk.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/edfclzv3sa2gvx1hurulzxsjxkrjkgttc6e3jc4g2xh63jguww456dx7iyf2pixq4qwbs24cna1hgoasaaaawovsub/Review+background+paper.doc>