

Fellow Profile

Mike Rimmer (FMM66)

Following the successful completion of a 12 month change management programme during his Industrial Phase as Lean Manufacturing Facilitator with Whiteghyll Plastics Ltd., in Bradford, West Yorkshire, Mike has been appointed Head of Operations.



Starting his career with a BSc(Hons) degree in Applied Chemistry and both an ONC and HNC in Physical Chemistry, Mike's first 15 years were spent in fine organic, pharmaceutical and speciality chemicals, involving research and development, commissioning of chemical plant, process optimisation activity and production management. However, he found himself pigeon-holed in a position of middle management and not able to progress to senior management in a large multi-national organisation. It was then that he turned to the Fellowship in Manufacturing Management.

"The Cranfield FMM programme offered me a lifeline to not only redirect my career but also to learn and experience at first-hand the very latest thinking in 'World Class Manufacturing'," explains Mike. "The FMM promised a package combining a prestigious education with relevant industrial experience, further enhanced by full funding. The added attraction of continual support from a Cranfield tutor made the choice to move onto the programme a certain must.

"The 10 week long residential phase presented me with a highly challenging learning experience during which I frequently questioned my abilities, my personality and my self belief. The benefit of constant support from the other fellows on the programme, reassured me that my previous industrial experience was relevant and that joining the programme was the right choice. The foundation phase provided a focus of my previous process improvement experience with the very latest in lean manufacturing techniques. The sessions on personal effectiveness were particularly valuable to me, in enabling me to understand my psychometric profile and enable me to gain confidence, strength and understanding of the role of a 'change agent'."

During the 12 months of his industrial phase placement at Whiteghyll Plastics Limited Mike's terms of reference were to implement 'lean manufacturing' methodology to reduce customer complaints and to reduce the loss in gross margin by 2%, saving the company an estimated £80,000.

Whiteghyll Plastics manufactures visual display, point of sale products and undertakes supply and fitting to customer retail premises. The company had experienced a rapid growth in its sales turnover. This, coupled with staffing level increases and manufacturing strategies, led to a shortfall in the company's performance.

"The company culture was one of rapid sales growth, combined with out dated manufacturing and accounting practices that could not keep pace with the substantial sales growth. The company displayed the classic problems of high costs, high stocks, reactive production planning leading to a slippage in gross margin of 6.5%. The Managing Director and his senior management team recognised the need for change. This combined with my personality, drive and enthusiasm to implement improvement within Whiteghyll Plastics Limited, to make a superb fit that was pivotal in ensuring the success of the 12 month project."

Continued.....

Employment Issues

EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS AND UNFAIR DISMISSAL - THE REVOLUTION IS HERE!

The most radical overhaul of the Employment Tribunal system ever will come into effect on 1 October 2004 with the message from the Government that employers who get it wrong will pay up to 50% more in compensation to their employees.



Although the Employment Act 2002 first introduced the prospect of minimum procedures which must be followed in cases involving discipline, dismissals or grievances, it is only now, over two years later, that the detailed framework of rules and regulations has been published.

Jonathan Whittaker, Employment partner at SASlawyers and a Part time Chairman in the Employment Tribunals for over 11 years says that the training for Chairmen has spanned two exhausting days, making clear to everyone the urgent need to come to terms with the new regime.

For the very first time the law will require employers and employees to follow basic minimum procedures and to make sure they get their message through. The Government has backed up these procedures by giving Tribunals draconian powers to increase levels of compensation by up to 50%. This raises the statutory maximum to over £80,000 and Jonathan warns that having recently recovered over £61,000 for a client in unfair dismissal proceedings that this is a real risk for employers.

The changes also affect how the Tribunal will deal with cases and over 63 new rules of procedure will be introduced.

Furthermore the Disability Discrimination Act will now apply to every single employer and the small employer exemption will disappear. Tribunal compensation in discrimination cases has no financial limit and awards are regularly in the tens of thousands of pounds.

The ACAS Code of Practice, which has for years given guidance to employers as to how to follow fair procedures for discipline, dismissals and grievances, has been completely rewritten and Tribunals must take this new guidance into account when deciding whether employees have been treated fairly.

Jonathan reminds everyone that there will be no hiding place for employers and that every case presented to the Tribunals after 1 October will be subject to the new Employment Tribunals regime.

It is not however all doom and gloom for employers! The House of Lords has recently decided that employees cannot be awarded compensation for injury to feelings in unfair dismissal cases. This was a band wagon that everyone acting for employees had been only too happy to jump aboard but we now know for certain that these claims have no merit. This door has been firmly shut!

To request any further information on the changes which will be introduced on 1 October and to learn how to ensure that your organisation is fully equipped to deal with these radical changes contact Jonathan and his Employment Team at SASlawyers on 0161 475 7662.

Jonathan Whittaker is Head of Employment Law at SASlawyers in Stockport, an employment law expert for over 20 years and a part time Chairman of Employment Tribunals since 1993.

Great Food for Thought

A mayonnaise jar and beer

When things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar... and the beer.

A professor stood before his philosophy class and placed some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

He then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar and shook it lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "yes!!"

The professor then produced two cans of beer from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty spaces between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things - your family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favourite passions - things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else - the small stuff.

"If you put the sand in the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand."

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the beer represented. The professor smiled, "I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of beers."

Soap Box

Ticking the Boxes

I am constantly irritated and somewhat perplexed by the present Government's continual obsession with Key Performance Indicators, Key Stage Testing (aimed, I suspect, more at the teachers than the children), outputs and targets, that are imposed on all and sundry.

The danger is that those upon whom they are imposed become so fixated and under pressure to achieve them - often because they cannot draw down vital funding unless they do so - that they develop 'Tick Box Mentality'. A kind of tunnel vision in which the outputs become an end in themselves rather than the means to an end, i.e. the outcomes, the benefits gained by achieving them, the end result.

Take for example achieving the Government's desired percentage of the workforce trained to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent.And then what? The real performance indicator should be the outcome - and I don't mean just the obvious theoretical one that it places them in a position to obtain a better job. I mean, what percentage of them actually go on to bigger and better things within, say, 12 months. Where is the follow through?

There is also a danger of devaluing achievements, such as obtaining a degree. The Government has set a target of getting 50% of school leavers into university. Why? Have they thought this through properly? I suspect not.

The greater the number of young people who have a degree and the more common it becomes to obtain one, the less value they will have.

Already I have come across students who have no specific career plan and have chosen their degree subject not because it will be necessary or helpful to a particular aspiration or goal, but simply because they were going on to university and had to choose something. And only the other day in conversation with a marketing manager about to interview six candidates for the position of marketing assistant, he advised me that they all looked good on paper and they all had degrees. So, at the end of the day, it would still come down largely to personality and the ability to work compatibly with himself and the team.

Surely, in many cases, technical training and/or on-the-job learning might be more appropriate and practical for both student and employer.

Bright Ideas

That brings me neatly to another beef I have about our present Government - its penchant for re-inventing the wheel and serving up to us as something totally new and exciting, as if none of us can remember back beyond last Wednesday! Viz. 'Apprenticeships - A great idea!' (www.apprenticeships.org.uk). I heartily agree - but it's hardly a new concept to most of us; it's an idea that has been in practice for centuries.

Continued.....

Fellow Profile (*Continued*)

The main achievements were:

- Implementing benchmarking and KPIs to target and develop an improvement programme
- Using process mapping and lean manufacturing techniques such as single piece flow, small batch and kanban systems, generating significant process throughput improvements and increasing gross margin
- Introduction of robust production scheduling systems that improved lead time from 1 week to 1-2 days (improving customer delivery performance)
- Implementation of cellular manufacture techniques, providing a significant improvement in Floor Space Utilisation
- Using workplace organisation systems and 5'S' principles to improve layout and promotion of flow through the shop floor, providing a reduction in waste.
- Releasing significant working capital by disposal of obsolete and slow moving stock
- Development of a 'Lean Thinking culture through training, posters and newsletters

"Whiteghyll Plastics Limited has provided a significant learning curve for my change management, senior managerial, business and personal effectiveness skills. The busy nature of supply to the retail sector often threw up barriers to the change programme and this proved to be the most difficult challenge to overcome.

"The support and encouragement from my Cranfield tutor, Melanie Armstrong was pivotal in ensuring the success of the project.

"The FMM programme has been instrumental in re-launching my career in manufacturing and has allowed me to make the transition from middle to executive management."

Industrial phase tutor, Melanie Armstrong comments, "Mike more than fulfilled expectations, bringing achievement and success to Whiteghyll, as well as setting up some superb examples of visual lean manufacturing, which would stand scrutiny from the best. Mike also learned much about himself, and his skills and capabilities leading others. To his credit he kept his nerve, listened and focussed on his goals."



Mike Rimmer enjoys some well-earned relaxation scuba diving in the Red Sea



Cardinal Talent

Keeping you in mind

It's worth noting that **Cardinal Talent** has just had its best trading year to date. Success often goes unnoticed in the hurly-burly of daily life and so too does acknowledgement, which invariably is part of any achievement. In this case, heartfelt thanks to all of you who have partnered Cardinal in the delivery of successful solutions be you Fellows or not, AMM members or not, candidates, clients, personal introducers, passers of market intelligence, fellow recruiters or confidants. Your support and collaboration are greatly appreciated and your trust and faith in our abilities to deliver quality solutions to what may be some of your most treasured clients is heart-warming.

Thanks must also be extended to the AMM Council for its continuing support and endorsement of Cardinal's services. Cardinal is not unaware that some Fellows believe the relationship between the AMM and Cardinal Talent to be unhelpful and one complainant recently wrote, "*It prevents those looking for a job from advertising their availability to a key group of potential employers, and stops Fellows who are recruiting from giving the inside track to other Fellows and possibly saving some money in the process.*"

On the evidence to date, the above argument doesn't stack up for long. Recruitment is a people business and thrives on strong relationships built through well-maintained networks, backed by domain knowledge. These ingredients are vital to the process of matching clients and candidates. Without a structured approach and people-centred focus not much of value would be achieved for Fellows in the medium to long-term. Naturally, everything is open to review and one way to reflect upon an issue is to garner opinion so please feel free to contribute your thoughts to either Susan at the AMM Office (office@amm.org.uk) or me at Cardinal Talent (mel@cardinaltalent.com), whether you're a collaborator or not and particularly if we've not heard from you recently.

Meanwhile if you need help with recruiting whether it is reflecting on the issues involved, writing role specs or advertising copy or simply finding the talent then please call **01484 687 587/07831 476 818**.

If you're at the other end of the spectrum you might find our new coaching products of interest. Designed through coaching many individuals and aimed at coping with change including job loss or uncertainty at work and the resulting, often prolonged and painful, transition, Cardinal is offering an introductory package to fully subscribing AMM Members.

For further details please call and ask for Mel on 01484 687 587/07831 476 818 or email mel@cardinaltalent.com Web: www.cardinaltalent.com

Mel Armstrong is an Accredited Coach, Fellowship In Manufacturing Management, Cranfield University.

Soap Box (Continued)

In many industries and professions - engineering and hairdressing, to name but two - apprenticeships have always been the norm. Organisations such as KITS (Kirkdale Industrial Training Services) in West Yorkshire, have been working in partnership with employers for many years, providing the apprentice training specifically required by its member organisations and other customers.

If apprenticeships have become less common than previously and a less familiar option for potential employees, it is because many companies have become so lean and 'had the pips squeezed out of them' by the economic climate over the last decade or so that, whilst they recognise the benefit of on-the-job training they no longer have the time or resources to provide it and, therefore, seek employees with previous experience or sufficient further education and training to be able to 'hit the ground running'. Furthermore the administrative burden resulting from the plethora of legislation and red tape thrown at them often results in smaller businesses looking to outsource work rather than take on staff. This must be taken into account by the Government in this new campaign with its stated aim of 'encouraging more employer to get on board'.

Don't get me wrong, I positively welcome the idea of encouraging on-the-job training, but I do hope that, for once, the Government has thought things through. The proposed support of the Learning & Skills Council should help - provided that it doesn't come so wrapped up in red tape that businesses are discouraged. However, the existence of an Apprenticeship Task Force does fill me some considerable apprehension.

If you have views you would like to air - or just want to get something off your chest - e-mail your copy with **NEWSNET SOAP BOX** as the subject to office@amm.org.uk



Fellows on the Move

Andy Beaumont (FMM11) - Production Engineer, Flexible Lamps Ltd., Haverhill, Suffolk



Congratulations

To **Elle Davis (FMM57)** on her marriage to **Alastair George**.



Congratulations!

To **Debs and Paul Jose (FMM61)** on the arrival of **Amy Bethan** on 26th June (8lb 8oz) & to **Louise and Garry Jackson (FMM58)** on the arrival of **Lucy** on 15th July (5lb 7oz)

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