

# processfix

Autumn newsletter 2014

## Welcome

There are so many different faces of process improvement: different structures, levels of complexity, timeframes, desired outcomes. How do you know what's best for your organisation, your issues, your people?

The answer is simple: you don't. You might have an idea, but you need to immerse yourself in the improvement cycle and delve into each individual process to confirm that you're heading in the right direction. And of course, how you approach that will be individual to each company or institution.

In this quarter's newsletter, Paul Swift outlines the demands of leading a customer experience programme within the BT Group under the framework of a highly complex and regulated industry. Mark Ricketts at the University of Bath then provides his unique insight to process improvement, as Head of Internal Audit on secondment to the new role of Director of Process Improvements. Finally the spotlight falls on Helle Stenneke, from UCAS, who shares with us the importance of positive interaction with their customers on process improvement.

Whatever your process challenge, we hope you'll agree that there is always value in hearing about others' experiences. If you would like to find out more from any of our contributors to this quarter's newsletter, please contact Processfix for an introduction.

## NEWSFLASH!

### County Durham, UK – July 2014

Processfix facilitator Dave Jones completes the Etape Pennines challenge raising over £1,000 for Marie Curie. Read all about it in next quarter's newsletter



## Embedding continuous improvement within BT

Back in 2007 Processfix worked with BT to develop a suite of performance dashboards to support their customer experience programme. Seven years on we catch up with Paul Swift, Head of Business Improvement and Programme Director, to find out what's been going on.



"I head the customer experience programme within the BT Group. This involves leading customer experience projects and driving change across BT, including Retail Consumer and Business, Wholesale Markets and Openreach.

Because of the nature of the group there is a high level of complexity in terms of not only getting the BT businesses to deliver change, but also to realise benefits across their operations and other communication providers linked with BT.

The industry is regulated by Ofcom, whose 'General Conditions of Entitlement' apply to anyone who provides an electronic communication

service or an electronic communications network. Indeed there is a requirement for individuals such as myself to be registered on an annex list at Ofcom, certified to be able to work across different lines of business and with other communication providers."

Paul went on to tell us about some core projects in the customer experience programme such as 'lead to cash' and 'trouble to resolve' processes: "We identified a high number of repeat faults and used the dashboards to understand what was going on. Once identified, we needed to incorporate the testing of new diagnostic tools and processes across the group. Wherever possible, we get people together into one room to understand the drivers. We then use a selection of techniques, from process maps to complex data models, to create a programme that integrates the utilisation of new tools and processes with different end agent procedures."

**"Wherever possible, we get people together into one room to understand the drivers"**

We asked Paul how things have changed since the dashboards were implemented: "They have embedded our continuous improvement approach and have enabled a very collaborative approach. This has been supported by the executive team with commitment right from the top; I attend fortnightly CEO meetings to discuss progress.

One of the things I've noticed over the past few years is that the whole programme has become more formal in terms of demands; we've moved to bigger business cases to support more radical transformations and there's more on the way!"

## Audit and process improvement – a novel partnership

Mark Ricketts has been Head of Internal Audit at the University of Bath since 2005. His team has always been interested in helping the University improve its processes, so he was a natural choice to take on a one-year part-time secondment to the new role of Director of Process Improvements. We spoke to Mark to see how things have progressed since he started his new role and to see what similarities or differences he's noticed between the two functions.

"There are a lot of common aspects between audit and process improvement. When looking at what an organisation does and how it's done, there's a lot of analytical thinking. And hard data is crucial. Audit naturally tries to get that wherever possible, and to be objective. Our role as auditors is to stand apart from management and give an objective view. For process review it's similar. You might approach it from a different direction, but hard data is vital to enable a thorough evaluation of the process. Plus, from what I've seen, being objective about the process builds trust with those taking part.

Another similarity is that to be an effective auditor it is important to listen to the people involved and gain an understanding of what issues they manage. A Processfix workshop is a powerful method to achieve the same end.

The in-house audit team focuses on managing risks as a university. That fits alongside how we do process reviews because a process review should only take place if there is a point to it; making the process more effective should help to manage

risks better. You need to think: why is it done this way? Does it still need to be done this way? Is it achieving what it set out to achieve?

But it's not everyday that you can take a step away from day-to-day activities, and that's where the Processfix workshops have been very useful."

Mark went on to outline a couple of key processes that have been the focus of two recent Processfix workshops. In 2013, Processfix went in to the University to review the process associated with research grants and contracts. "One outcome has been the development of new software to support the new process design, which has just gone live. The indications are very positive and the spirit of the workshop has carried on through; those people involved in working the new system have kept actively engaged with it."

More recently Processfix went to Bath to help Mark review part of the assessments process. "This is the first time we've looked at the teaching and learning side in this way. We discovered



that there were areas that had different views about the same assessments process and also huge amounts of paperwork were being generated. We thought that if we could bring everyone together, at a minimum we'd be able to solve these challenges. But as we went through the workshop, it opened other suggestions and wider opportunities for improvement, which was a very nice surprise." A total of 15 people attended the Processfix workshop, including administrators, more senior people in faculties, professional services and the academic viewpoint was represented too. "It was quite difficult to select who would attend. A lot of people wanted to be involved, either because they'd heard about the research grants workshop or had been to a Processfix Masterclass. That was an unusual, but great, position to be in!"

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**"we will have halved the steps of the current assessments process"**

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Mark noted that as yet he has not had a conflict of interest between his two roles because the workshop attendees designed the new process and are taking forward the improvements. Also, the Senior Management Team at Bath has provided the support necessary to help keep the two roles separate.

### Feedback from workshop attendees: What did you find most useful?

- "Meeting colleagues across different functions of the University. Taking time out to review processes and a broader appreciation of issues"
- "The opportunity to work collectively in a positive environment with committee colleagues. The Processfix experience was hugely motivational and the enthusiasm carried us all through"

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**"Get the key people into a room, give them a positive environment to think about what to do; you really will make a lot of progress and find a fresh way to do things"**

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"The group that we eventually chose worked well. A lot of people noted that this was the first time they had all got together in a room. As a result, they left with a better understanding of each other's roles and challenges and that was just from the first two days. Day three, where we focused on redesigning the process worked really well. When the implementation plan has been followed through we will

In conclusion, Mark explained how at the end of the day, it's all about the people: "On the audit side, even though you're looking at risk management and controls, a lot comes down to people. It's the same with processes. You can get deep into a process map but it is the people involved who make it work. Get the key people into a room, give them a positive environment to think about what to do; you really will make a lot of progress and find a fresh way to do things."



## In the spotlight: Helle Stenneke, Business Analyst at UCAS

Helle Stenneke has been a Business Analyst at UCAS for eight years. A key part of her role is to keep university and associated bodies up to date with the development of UCAS processes. In this quarter's spotlight, we hear how Helle came to work at UCAS and what changes she's seen.

### **Brought up and educated in Denmark, what brought you to UCAS?**

I'd been living near the UCAS offices, and had always kept my eye open for possible roles within the organisation. When the opportunity came up with a role as part project manager, part business analyst, I took it and found that I enjoyed the analysis role the most. We realised that we needed to look at the impact of doing things, otherwise there might be unforeseen circumstances and so a formal business analyst role was established, which I moved into.

### **How does your current role link with your customers?**

As part of my role, I represent UCAS when working with university and associated bodies on UCAS process matters.

We're trying to make sure that the 350 universities and colleges get the most out of their interaction with UCAS, that they understand what they can get from us and how we can help them. A key part of that is realising how, when we've sent out a message, it's understood, seen or accessed by different customers. For example, in some universities there can be quite a distance between the IT department and the admissions department; in the majority, student records systems are usually provided by a third party and we work closely with these as well to provide support and information.

### **You recently attended a Processfix workshop at the University of Salford. Was that helpful in developing your understanding of the customer?**

Definitely, yes! We need to make sure that our messages are read and interpreted in the same way by all of our customers. So it was great to have the opportunity to be part of this workshop, to hear what our customers are saying first hand; how they feel we interact with them; how they really access information and services from UCAS.

Being part of the workshop raised a couple of key thoughts. It's become clear that we could help universities use the functionality of 'Invitations for interview' that exists in the UCAS system, rather than them having to make their own.

It also showed clearly that we need to be careful about removing any capabilities that exist already. For example, it's important that we provide the information during confirmation and clearing in its current format until universities and colleges have had a chance to adapt their processes to other methods.

### **How else does UCAS support the customer?**

It would be lovely if my team and I could spend more time out and about, but those 3 days at Salford were a real luxury. Day-to-day, each university is supported by a team of relationship managers, both general and technical. These teams regularly feedback questions such as: "Can we? Is this available?".

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## **"We're trying to make sure that the 350 universities and colleges get the most out of their interaction with UCAS"**

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Our support then takes many forms. It may be further discussion with the relationship manager, or perhaps an email trail. We recently had a successful email conversation with one university who were trying to map UCAS schools data to Department of Education data.

Customers should contact UCAS by their normal route with questions around the data they can get or specific queries. If it's outside



the scope of their relationship manager, it will come to me and the team for prompt resolution.

We also aim to minimise the impact of any changes we make, to plan well in advance so that we can provide notice of change and ensure our relationship managers are trained and ready to respond to queries.

### **What about understanding the external drivers?**

We have a team that deal with policy in the Higher Education sector both nationally and regionally. We want to make sure that whatever we do can work across all the countries of the UK. And from a technical point of view, we liaise with the software houses and support any queries from universities on the IT side of things. We also run things by our advisory groups. If people want to be part of this group, we generally ask for new members in our regular bulletins, at our annual review in the autumn and at the admissions conference we hold each spring.

### **What are the most significant changes you've seen since being in this role?**

I would describe our approach as 'ever evolving'. We are much more consultative now. In the past we felt that we knew what our customers wanted and just got on and did things. Now we want to do the things that matter to our customers.

And of course, we now have social media. Twitter is a great part of our connection with students;

we also have a Twitter handle for universities and do a lot on our UCAS Facebook page.

### **And going forward?**

For me, one of the best times is results day. That's when everything comes together. It's a very exciting day and takes a long time to build up to it.

But at the moment, I wonder if we've been good enough about telling our customers everything they could get from UCAS to support that whole process. We will continue to consult with universities and find new and accessible ways to help them understand the data available through UCAS.

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## About us

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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.

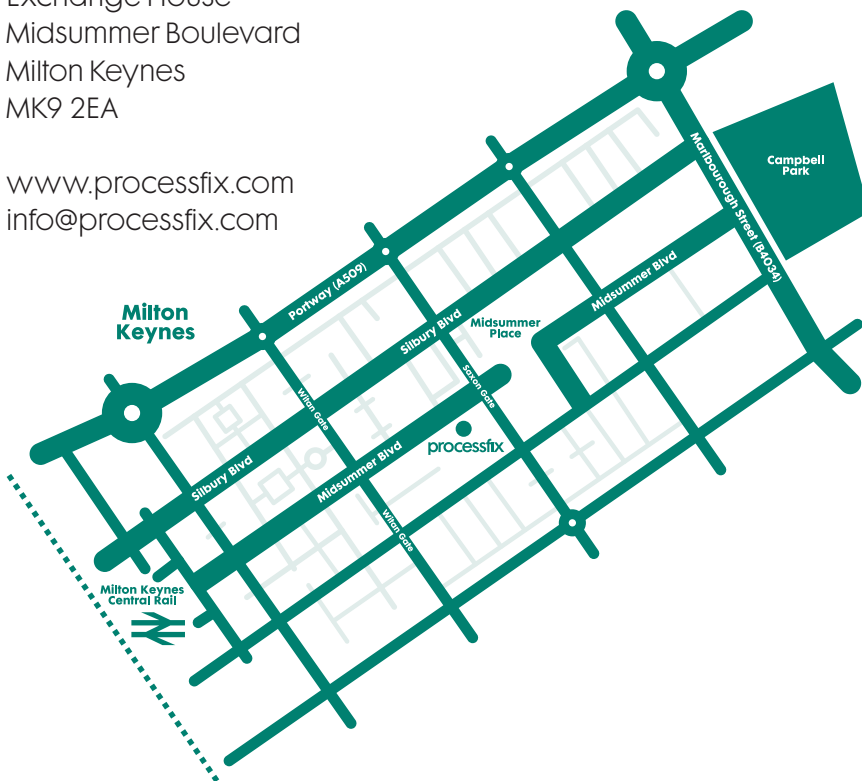
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## If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

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## And Finally...

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Bath achieve triple first in The Times University Guide 2014 for student satisfaction, accounting and finance and university campus



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Processfix masterclass at  
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