

Welcome

"Setting a goal is not the main thing; it is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan" said Tom Landry (1924-2000), American football player and coach, one of the greatest and most innovative coaches in American National Football League history.

Today we can be overwhelmed by the many goals both set for us and by us in our professional and personal lives, but it's always worth taking a step back and evaluating how best you will achieve each goal.

At the University of Bristol, Roseanna Cross, Head of Undergraduate Admissions, explains how, to meet their challenging recruitment goals, the admissions team embraced the opportunity to be creative and come up with solutions that really work.

Programme Services Manager, Raksha Bhalsod, from the Institute of Education, University of London, tells us how their approach to the placement process is to take things one-step at a time, looking at how to achieve the desired outcomes sensibly and realistically.

And finally, our spotlight falls on Processfix's Dave Jones, an experienced facilitator who relishes a challenge, whether it's within a rapid improvement workshop or meeting a personal goal of cycling up and down the Pennines!

NEWSFLASH!

Bournemouth, UK — December 2014

Anglo-European College of Chiropractic kick start enquiry to enrolment process improvement programme.



University of Bristol smash admissions target

At the University of Bristol, there was a need to review the processes supporting their new centralised admissions approach in order to reduce workload issues and inefficiencies that had arisen. Roseanna Cross, Head of Undergraduate Admissions, shares with us Bristol's approach and their subsequent achievements.



the current system of an adviser scoring, selector deciding and adviser entering on the system. All this was quite radical, but we had the admissions tutors' buy in, as they were part of the group involved in identifying the solutions at the workshop. We also undertook a separate exercise looking at our admissions policy and made a few changes to rationalise the process and make it more consistent across different programmes."

"we have reduced turnaround time by 5 days"

"everyone had a part to play and the whole team were involved in coming up with the solutions."

"We moved to fully-centralised admissions in September 2012, but rather than enhancing things, we found people were working longer hours and becoming demoralised when they weren't meeting the targets that had been set to process applications. We needed to look at how we were currently doing things, what was causing the inefficiencies in the system and what would make things work better.

We brought Processfix in to help us, as it's always beneficial to have an outside perspective and also to learn new techniques and methods. The workshop included people from the central admissions team and academic staff and was a really positive experience."

Roseanna went on to outline the key findings of the workshop: "We realised that paper was duplicating what we were doing. Scoring and recording

on the database and writing on paperwork as well. We had an existing database that would allow us to work to a near paperless process so that was a straightforward concept to adopt. We also decided that we should change responsibilities within the team to improve efficiencies. It made sense for one group of selectors to both make the decision and process the offer, rather than

Bristol held their workshop in May and had two months to overhaul things before confirmation of results in August. "It was a really challenging time. We needed to change our internal processes as well as the database to reflect the removal of the paper form; the technical team had a lot of work setting up data repositories to track the work. Previously, the paper form had been a way to manage the workflow; you had a depressing pile of paper to remind you what you had to do!

And for the people, those who had been involved in the workshop were reasonably confident, but we had to help the rest of the team to overcome their concerns about how it would be done in the timeframe. We achieved this through a collective approach; we got people together and split the responsibilities. The good thing was that everyone

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School placement process at the Institute of Education

Raksha Bhalsod, Programme Services Manager at the Institute of Education (IOE) describes how the team at the IOE have tackled the challenging exercise that they face each year to place approximately 800 students across 500 schools.

"The majority of the work to place students in schools takes place between July and December, with a huge amount of preparatory work over the summer period. But in education, things change swiftly. In schools across London there is a huge turnover of staff, so whilst we try to complete the exercise before September, the reality is that it's not until September that we find out both who our students are and what's really available in the schools for the year."

"the team were experiencing a lot of frustration, angst and stress"

Raksha went on to explain that secondary and primary school placements have different challenges. In secondary, the IOE train in about 19 subjects. Some are quite big, for example English which has approximately 120 students, or have complex needs such as specialisms for languages, meaning that the requirement for placements is huge. The biggest impact on secondary placements is when the schools make decisions on how many people they can release to support students. That's out of the IOE control.

In primary there is a slightly smaller number of placements, but schools are also smaller, so if a school withdraws from the

scheme, the whole school and associated placements are gone and this can happen very quickly. In addition, finding part-time placements is a real challenge.

"We brought in Processfix because the team were experiencing a lot of frustration, angst and stress. I was aware we had some inefficiencies in the system, but there was nothing that we were immediately able to identify. We needed help and our Registry recommended Processfix for their systematic, process driven approach. Through the workshop we were able to draw together the different teams: administrative, academic, registry, computing and identify the real challenges."

"Our main goal was to try and find a process that worked for both primary and secondary placements, taking into account the requirement for each of them individually. We hoped to be able to develop an aligned process, without forgetting the individual area needs." Raksha continued "up until this cycle, we had been collecting information from schools and students on paper, then inputting it. It was taking hours and hours with thousands of forms from students and hundreds from schools."

We asked Raksha how things had improved: "For secondary,

"Inputting data used to take us weeks and weeks; now it's all done at the point of source so we are confident that the data is accurate"

The team piloted the new process just before confirmation, spending 2 days going through and seeing what issues emerged and what worked well. Roseanna told us that it was challenging and at the end of the first day there was a lot of anxiety with people being worried about the risks of making the change so quickly and moving forward. But then they regrouped and



really well, especially in terms of gathering information from the schools. Those at the IOE with overall responsibility for placements have been keen to support this move; the buy in from all sides has helped and this has made a huge difference to the team's workload. Inputting data used to take us weeks and weeks; now it's all done at the point of source so we are confident that the data is accurate and not prone to human inputting error at our end."

"Primary has moved forwards at a slower pace due to staff changes and the approach being a significant change for some schools, but we have a clear plan and have identified internal Champions which will make a big difference in helping us move forward."

One crucial step to success was getting the computing department and internal stakeholders involved right from the start. "There was a lot of background work that went on, especially in the computing department. We had to work very closely with them to get an

online form which would feed directly into the database and were supported by a Systems Analyst and Project Manager to help us do that. Having them involved at the outset in the Processfix workshop meant that there was clarity of what was needed and what the key requirements were."

"sometimes the things that we focus on may not be what is causing the problem"

"Our next step will be how to get the student information efficiently and to look at other areas of our work such as School Direct information. We've all learnt a huge amount. We had so many spreadsheets; we've cut those down significantly. The biggest lesson is that sometimes the things that we focus on may not be what is causing the problem, so we have started to look at our processes much more closely."

If you would like to talk to Raksha about the IOE approach please contact her on r.bhalsod@ioe.ac.uk

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had a part to play and the whole team were involved in coming up with the solutions. Of course, we discovered more issues as we went on, but what was useful was the Processfix approach: we have an issue, we know we need to get round it, so let's be creative and come up with a solution."

brainstormed how to get around the various issues and came up with a plan as to how to move forward. "As a result we have reduced turnaround time by 5 days for home applicants and by 3 days for overseas applicants." "It's made us more efficient and we are now meeting our turnaround targets which is fantastic. We also did a survey to see what our team felt now

and they couldn't imagine going back to paper. What's been really good is the change of culture we've experienced. A problem is no longer immediately seen as negative; there will be a creative solution found by groups working together. The team deserves a lot of credit as this is one of the quickest implementations ever seen!"

In the spotlight: Dave Jones, Processfix facilitator, “Ninja Warrior” and cycle enthusiast

Dave Jones is an experienced facilitator who has worked with Processfix since the inaugural workshop back in 2005. He started his process improvement journey when he answered an advertisement for a “Ninja Warrior” at Marconi in the late 1990’s. In this quarter’s spotlight, Dave gives his insight into the key components of effective facilitation and how you can use process improvement techniques across all facets of your life, just as he did for the Etape Pennines challenge.

Did you know what you were applying for when you saw the “Ninja Warrior” advertisement?

When all were predicting chaos from the Millennium Bug, or Y2K, I was seconded from my job as a sales manager to project manage a new IT system. This is when I was first exposed to managing change and the interaction of process and people, elements of the work which I really enjoyed.

I was intrigued enough by a picture of a “Ninja Warrior” in a Marconi advertisement to apply for a job as a Change Agent. Of course, it turned out that they were referring to Six Sigma, a set of tools and techniques for process improvement and people trained in it to reach the level of “Master Black Belt”, hence the Ninja Warrior picture.

It was the first time I had personally come across a structured process improvement methodology, but I got the job and then trained up in both Six Sigma and Lean. Over the fifteen years, I’ve worked across numerous industry sectors covering both transactional and manufacturing environments.

How do you put this training to use for Processfix?

The improvement tools and techniques are important, but anyone can learn them, whether they originate from Toyota, Lean or Six Sigma. What’s more important is facilitation: knowing how to engage people in the process, asking the ‘why’ questions and when to be flexible, ready to adapt depending on the answers to the question.

In theory, our Processfix Rapid Improvement Workshops, could be similar each time, but in reality, they’re all completely different because they involve different people and a different process. The skill of the facilitator is to select the appropriate improvement techniques and engage all the attendees in the process of improvement, after all it is their process!

The attendees need the chance to contribute: they know what they do, they know the problems and as they are creative humans, not machines, will always come up with solutions. The facilitator must draw out and focus on those contributions which have real value, versus those which are a bit more of a diversion, whilst keeping everyone on board.

“The facilitator must draw out and focus on those contributions which have real value”

So in theory, anyone could be an effective facilitator?

With time, practice and confidence, yes, as it’s not so much about your specific work experience as your people experience; you will never know the attendee’s process as well as they do. They are the experts in their process, you need to be the expert in the improvement process. In fact, not knowing the process in question



helps, as you can legitimately ask the ‘stupid’ questions as to why is it done that way!

Interpersonal skills are crucial; you need to get everybody engaged in a workshop, to get everybody contributing. Someone in the workshop will have probably been responsible for some or all of the existing process that we are trying to improve. By nature some people will be more forthcoming, more vocal than others. That’s why day one of the Processfix workshop is so important: it helps to build individuals into a team and understand the improvement process we will go through.

Preparation is also key. Before any workshop, we have a scoping meeting to agree what the process is, where we need to start, where we need to end, who needs to be involved and what is it we are trying to achieve; in essence, why are we having the workshop? This enables me to identify the improvement tools required and the agenda for the workshop. We also identify any existing data that is available and get that ready to present in the workshop so we can focus on what is really going on, rather than rely on perceptions of reality.

Time management is another important element of facilitation. The facilitator is the timekeeper, driving each session so that everyone understands the objectives, completes the task in hand and pulls the outputs together so we can move on to the next session. We only have a set time and we have to end with the agreed outputs, plus,

as I often point out, I probably have the longest journey home so I like to finish on time...

And for your recent challenge, the Etape Pennines road sportive, how did you train for that?

I cycled up lots of hills! It’s not a particularly long challenge at 62 miles, but within that there are 7,400 feet of climbing. You’re either going uphill or downhill, there’s very little on the flat.

“you need to get everybody engaged in a workshop, to get everybody contributing.”

From a process point of view, I drew on the seven wastes technique. One of the wastes is unnecessary transport and this was as true of my training programme. I’m lucky enough to live near the Peak District, but I soon realised that I was wasting a huge amount of effort in getting to this training ground and changed my programme to drive rather than cycle the additional 50 miles roundtrip to the hills. I’m pleased to say that my process improvement worked. My objective was simple: to complete the course. And on the day, I finished in 5 hours and 27 minutes and came 495th out of a field of 900. Job done!

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.

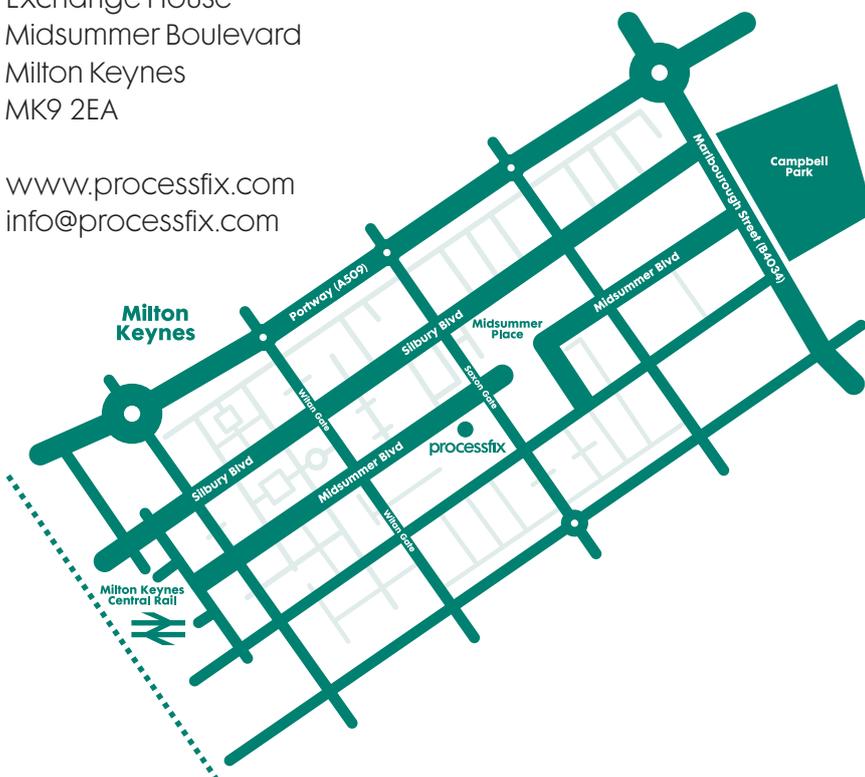
We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re-evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

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:

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And Finally...

University of Southampton host the eighth annual Processfix operational excellence network meeting.



Read all about it in our next newsletter and to register your interest in future events contact jenny.hocking@processfix.com.

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