

## Innovative method outlined for bridging strategy and management development

\*A new method for introducing and accelerating strategic behaviour in individuals and organisations was explained at a recent Development Group Meeting.

Dr. Laurence Lyons and Anne Minter, who developed the technique jointly, claimed that it addressed important challenges being faced by organisations today.

### Struggling

"Human resource professionals are grappling with the problem of relating strategic thinking to management development", said Lyons. "For their part, strategic planners are struggling with how to actually make strategy happen.

"By concentrating on the management team - the strategic cell - in a safe 'support and challenge' environment, we can demonstrate positive and measurable benefits." The team described strategic cell

development as a practical solution to a widely-known and seemingly impossible situation occurring in many mature organisations.

"Over time, management thinking tends to focus on optimising operations," said Lyons. "But as the environment changes, simply running the business faster will not address the strategic threats. A new kind of thinking is needed to make it different.

"To ensure that the changes are genuinely integrated, this has to mean extending and coaching existing managers who already have the major advantage of first-hand understanding of the business."

### Technical

The presenters said that technical planning skills were important, but pointed out these would be useless unless the decision-makers and peer managers bought into the idea. To address this, techniques like the 'presentation and politics audit' and

the 'board room rehearsal' formed integral parts of the strategic cell technique.

Anne Minter described a client case study at McKechnie Vehicle Component Division where these techniques had been used to reduce business risk. She said the payoff was the production of better quality plans from higher calibre people in the organisations.

### Dependency

"The avoidance of client dependency is built into the technique, as we succeed when they say they do not need us anymore," said Minter.

"Managers start off believing that someone will do their planning work for them. Very shortly we have to demonstrate we can provide immediate added value, but through support and guidance. The acid test comes after we are long gone - having left behind sustained attitudes, approaches, language and behaviours."

Laurence Lyons specialises in organization behaviour. Anne Minter is an Open University MBA tutor.

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