

# Manage change to secure a winning future



DAK Consulting's Dennis McCarthy explains why manufacturers' ability to manage change is more critical now than ever before. Brian Wall reports

With so much change during 2008, it is difficult to predict what exactly will happen in 2009, says Dennis McCarthy (right) of DAK Consulting. "However, the experience of past recessions suggests that, when things stabilise, 'business as usual' will look different than it did in 2008," he warns.

"To survive and prosper, organisations will need to be responsive to new trends and business models."

DAK's core focus is on working with organisations to develop that responsiveness. And that is why the organisation has chosen to sponsor the Best Factory Awards. "We looked at the Best Factory Award process and saw its potential to unite organisations under a common improvement agenda," states McCarthy. "The awards provide an objective measure of organisational capability, because organisations are independently assessed [by Cranfield School of Management] against robust benchmarks. Award processes that don't have such an assessment are cheaper to run, but are also less valuable."

DAK Consulting, which is sponsoring the award for Best Household & General Products Plant, sees a strong correlation between the aims of the awards and leadership goals for operational excellence. Setting such a goal forces an organisation to step outside of its comfort zone and embark on an improvement journey that develops the business over a period of time.

"It is that ability to continually improve and manage change that will serve businesses well in the days ahead," adds McCarthy. "If you look at the award's scoring criteria, the level of employee engagement with improvement figures highly. This matches our experience of helping organisations to deliver year-on-year improvement. The essential ingredients of such an approach are that companies identify a goal and engage all levels of the organisation in its attainment. The wider the involvement of employees in helping to drive improvements across the business, the faster



the gains will come."

In any case, he continues, no organisation can afford to carry people who won't contribute, and even less so in today's business world. "So continuous improvement, aligned with investment in your people, is what will make the difference between success and failure. Failing to tap into the potential of the people within your organisation is such a waste. Even now, too many organisations seem to feel that employees are only interested in coming to work, doing the minimum, putting in the hours and then going home.

"We never have a problem in getting front line teams to engage with improvement. The biggest challenge is getting managers to change this shortsighted approach. They need to identify the opportunities for improvement and make the communication of these objectives a two-way process."

McCarthy identifies six principles of engagement:

- Create an interest
- Supply just enough information
- Provide practical activity to support learning from experience
- Provide points of conclusion to reinforce sense of achievement
- Help participants to visualise how the new information fits with existing practices
- Provide follow-up coaching.

To help organisations that want to make a start on their journey, DAK Consulting has developed a free improvement programme guide that McCarthy describes as "providing the foundations for award-winning performance". This free resource (available by registering at [www.dakconsulting.co.uk](http://www.dakconsulting.co.uk)) contains a 10-point organisational health check and 10 low-cost, or no-cost, projects to release time and focus the organisation on improving performance in key areas. This includes: stabilising operations at current levels of business; the development of enhanced products/service offerings to find 'new space' in which to operate; and engaging the workforce with these challenges to improve responsiveness to change and accelerate the rate of progress.

The programme is designed to help organisations build on current strengths, in order to prosper during the downturn and emerge stronger and fitter in times of growth. The programme also provides a foundation for applying lean TPM improvement tools to deliver best-in-class performance. "No matter where your organisation is on its journey to operational excellence, LeanTPM improvement templates will help your organisation in several ways," adds McCarthy.

"Our role in making this happen is to provide the Direction And Knowledge [DAK] to guide organisations along that path towards award-winning capability. In this role, we recognise that the organisations that get the most out of the BFA programme are those that see this not a one-off exercise; but as a lever to move their business towards excellence, one step at a time." ■



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