

# Management -



## Think About It



Cyngor Rheolaeth Cymru  
Wales Management Council



Management -



Think About It



Cyngor Rheolaeth Cymru  
Wales Management Council



© Wales Management Council 2008

Reproduction of sections of this document is permitted provided that full acknowledgement is given to the Wales Management Council as publisher.

---

The Wales Management Council is an employer-led body, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to promote the development of managers in the private, public and voluntary sectors in Wales.

---

The Wales Management Council aims to inspire, motivate and drive change in the perception, delivery, take-up and funding of management and leadership development in Wales.

---

### The Wales Management Council

P O Box 61  
25 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff CF11 1AA

**Tel:** 029 2022 4114    **Fax:** 029 2022 4113

#### e-mail:

Chief Executive:	<b>Christopher Ward</b>	<a href="mailto:christopher.ward@crc-wmc.org.uk">christopher.ward@crc-wmc.org.uk</a>
Marketing Executive:	<b>Gwyneth Stroud</b>	<a href="mailto:gwyneth.stroud@crc-wmc.org.uk">gwyneth.stroud@crc-wmc.org.uk</a>
Development Executive	<b>Siân Rees</b>	<a href="mailto:sian.rees@crc-wmc.org.uk">sian.rees@crc-wmc.org.uk</a>

---

For more information about the work of the Wales Management Council, please visit our website [www.walesmanagementcouncil.org.uk](http://www.walesmanagementcouncil.org.uk).



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

# Introduction

Wales Management Council works with partners within and beyond Wales to promote better management performance at all levels in the economy.

As part of that task we encourage managers to consider how they can expand their own capabilities and become better at what they do.

Each month on our website we publish a monthly digest of ideas, comments and suggestions to help managers think about the practical challenges that they face, every day.

This annual collection brings together a selection of these ideas from the last twelve months.

We don't pretend to have all the answers, but we hope these questions promote thinking that is helpful.

If you have any views on any of the issues raised, please let us know. Our contact details are on the opposite page.

Wales Management Council  
June 2008

# Team

In the classic, and recently republished book 'The Unwritten Laws of Business', US engineer and author W J King wrote: "Every manager must know what goes on in his or her domain, but that does not mean keeping up with all minor details. Your involvement should never impede operations".

**What are your techniques for keeping abreast of how your team are getting on with work you have assigned to them? Are you confident you can get the information you need without frustrating, irritating or discouraging them?**

Business authors Gordon Bell and Heidi Mason wrote in their book *The Care and Nurture of Intrapreneurs*: "Silicon Valley has developed a 'genius' business model. You find a genius and build a business around them."

**Is it ever wise to structure a team, department or company around a single individual of exceptional ability, even if this opens up a major business opportunity? If you did this, what steps would you take to guarantee the individual's loyalty, or how would you cope if they decided to leave?**

New research by nationwide financial services firm, Bibby, indicates that six out of ten UK companies are more than 50% family-owned.

**If 'family' is a factor in the running of your business how do you ensure that blood ties never distort business judgements and that non family members in the management team remain fully engaged and loyal to the enterprise?**

Richard Reeves, director of leading business consultancy, Intelligence Agency, argues that leaders who are uncertain of themselves avoid criticism or dissent, whereas ideal leaders combine utter confidence in their own ability with a willingness to listen to others and admit mistakes.

**To what extent do you allow members of your team to express open disagreement with you and how can you manage this dissent to benefit the business while avoiding a loss of your own authority?**

Former international rugby coach Sir Clive Woodward said that, to succeed in sport or business, a manager should identify the basic tasks his or her team must carry out and concentrate on getting those basics right almost all of the time. He identified the basics of rugby simply as winning line-outs, scrums and re-starts.

**Can you identify simply and clearly to your team what the basics of your business are? How often does the team get these basics right and what steps could you take to improve the frequency of success in these fundamental tasks?**

## Recruitment

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reports that 85% of organisations have recruitment difficulties. In particular they are struggling to find people with specialist skills or relevant experience. As a result many are having to make compromises in their selections.

**If under pressure, would you risk filling a key vacancy with someone who wasn't fully equipped for the job? If so, how would you manage the risk involved and how would you ensure the chosen candidate had the potential to grow into the role?**

Leading HR manager Jane Smith claims that too many managers leave new recruits 'to their own devices' forcing them to learn about their new employer organisation through trial and error. Meanwhile a recent CIPD survey found that more than a third of firms are having to improve their induction process in order to increase staff retention.

**How good is your induction process for new recruits? How much time and thought goes into making newcomers feel welcome and explaining their new roles to them? Crucially, how would you like to be a new recruit joining your company?**

Jane Harper, director of IBM's University Talent Programme, always warns high-flying new recruits against selfish ambition. She says: "I urge them not to worry about getting credit for great work. If they are making bold moves and developing good relationships they will get the opportunities to succeed." She argues for what she calls 'humbition' – a blend of individual ambition and humble recognition of the importance of the group.

**How do you handle your most talented new recruits? Are you able to nurture that balance between their personal ambition and their commitment to the team? If you have tended to indulge the egos of high performers has it ultimately benefited the whole company or just the individual concerned?**

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found in a survey that three quarters of firms would not be deterred from employing somebody with a criminal conviction, if the person had the right skills.

**Would you take a chance on a candidate with a criminal past if they appeared to be right for the job? How would you monitor the person to protect colleagues and customers without causing resentment and making the employee concerned feel under suspicion?**

# Work

In a new survey by the Chartered Management Institute, six out of ten managers said they believed enjoying work was essential for success. However only six out of 100 believed their employers shared that view.

**To what extent do you make enjoying work a priority in your organisation? If you do regard this as important how do you communicate that view to your managers and staff?**

As part of a nationwide fundraiser for a cancer care charity, British managers are being urged to spend a full day on the shop floor working side-by-side with those who are normally their subordinates.

**Would you find this a helpful exercise? For example would your performance 'on the tools' boost or undermine your credibility with your staff? Does it sometimes scare you how out of practice you have become in undertaking the ordinary operational tasks which create and deliver your company's product or service?**

Following the recent discovery that BBC producers had misled viewers to avoid embarrassment over interactive TV programmes that went wrong, the organisation's Director General Mark Thompson apologised unreservedly and ordered that thousands of staff be retrained in ethical behaviour.

**Do you believe your staff would cut corners on a project in order to overcome or disguise a problem? Is this ever justified? If so could they distinguish between a 'harmless' shortcut or something more sinister that would constitute a breach of trust with the customer?**

In a new book entitled “Detox your Desk” Theo Theobald and Cary Cooper argue that a cluttered desk is used by many managers both as badge of honour, proving how busy they are, and also a shield covering up for acts of ‘self-sabotage’ which waste time and prevent the manager achieving his or her objectives each day.

**Do you have one of those desks? Have you ever analysed how a cluttered desk hinders your ability to concentrate fully on each piece of work you undertake and ultimately undermines your productivity? How can you rectify this?**

## Equality and Flexibility

A survey by retail trade union USDAW found that 62% of workers who became pregnant felt their boss behaved more negatively towards them as a result, and 25% felt marginalised or ignored.

**As a manager are you ever guilty of consciously or unconsciously ‘sidelining’ a pregnant worker? Do you plan properly to ensure maternity leave works positively for the staff member involved and the business? Have you considered how you might make constructive use of new rules that allow you to keep in touch with employees who are on maternity leave?**

According to a new survey by telecom company Mitel, three in ten Welsh managers believe staff who say they are working from home will in fact be using the time to attend to their domestic affairs.

**Given that technology makes ‘home-working’ an increasingly practical option these days, how well equipped are you or your supervisors to manage employees who are working remotely – ensuring they are accountable for their time without being intrusive and causing friction?**

French employees are renowned for working no more than their official 35-hour week yet still managed to be 7% more productive on average than the 'super-efficient' Americans. On a similar note a new UK study by employment consultancy Cronor found that staff working long hours and missing lunch breaks are actually becoming less efficient.

**Does your workplace have a long-hours culture where people skip breaks and stay late? Do you feel this is necessary or healthy? Would you still be able to function as a business if all of your staff stuck strictly to their designated hours?**

New surveys by the Employers Forum on Age and Eversheds Solicitors indicate that a big majority of UK firms are failing to manage older workers effectively. However, the UK Pensions commission has warned that, by 2001, older workers will be needed to fill nearly two thirds of all vacant posts in the economy.

**In this fast changing employment market, with a growing shortage of young entrants, are you confident that your policies and work practices will make your firm attractive to older jobseekers or persuade some existing staff to postpone retirement and continue giving you the benefit of their skills?**

The recent Queen's Speech signalled the Government's intention to extend the right to request flexible working to people with teenage children as well as smaller youngsters. Some observers have expressed concern that this may cause a backlash among staff not entitled to work flexibly.

**Are many of your staff working flexibly at present? Does that cause resentment among other employees? If so, how can you apply the concept of flexibility in ways that seem fair to all?**

# Competitiveness

'If you do not have a competitive advantage, do not compete' was a classic piece of advice for business people from Jack Welch, former Chairman and Chief Executive of General Electric.

**How much time do you spend chasing contracts speculatively when you are clearly not best placed to win the particular business concerned? Do you spend enough time developing a genuine competitive edge and pursuing more business that you have a real chance of winning?**

William C Taylor, author of 'Mavericks at Work', argues that most companies in most industries suffer from tunnel vision, essentially thinking in the same way and chasing the same opportunities in the market.

**Does your company fall into this category or do you try to offer anything different? If you went out of business tomorrow how badly would your market miss you?**

In some fields of business it has become common practice to invite proposals from contractors simply in order to glean information or ideas, or just to test the market.

**How can you spot these phantom opportunities before you waste precious time preparing tenders or pursuing them in other ways? On the other hand how can you make sure that you don't inadvertently let a genuine business lead slip through your fingers?**

# Communication

The University of New South Wales claims to have proven that the all-pervasive Powerpoint presentation system isn't as useful as many managers assume because audiences can't handle both written and verbal communication at the same time.

**As a manager do you follow the crowd when it comes to styles of presentation or do you try to innovate to ensure you are communicating effectively with staff, customers and others?**

In his best-selling book, 'The Rules of Management', Richard Templar argues that managers should keep written records of everything they do and say. This, he says, is to ensure they are consistent in their actions and decisions and can also prove how they have achieved their results.

**Is this overkill or does he have a point? Would keeping records make you more consistent or would it simply drown you in a sea of paper or computer files? How important is strict consistency anyway?**

Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi never saw differences of opinion as something to worry about, In fact he said: 'honest disagreement is a sign of progress'.

**Do you allow enough room for disagreement to take place safely within your team, particularly during times of change? Are you able to discern when such disagreement is 'honest' and not simply the product of someone jockeying for position or pursuing a personal agenda?**

Legendary business thinker Peter F Drucker warned of the dangers of giving too much information. He said: “The less data needed, the better the information. An overload of information, that is, anything much beyond what is truly needed, leads to information blackout. It does not enrich, but impoverishes.”

**Is brevity a virtue in your business? Have your managers and staff got the skills to convey key information without providing an avalanche of detail that can submerge the important points? How can you give people the confidence to be brief?**

Psychologist and author James Borg wrote that: “the power of persuasion is, maybe, the ultimate source of competitive advantage in life and work. It can be the critical separation factor between the successful and the rest”.

**How persuasive are you or the members of your team with customers, colleagues or others? If you agree with James Borg’s analysis, what do you do to improve the persuasive powers of those within your business? Is persuasion simply a natural talent or can it be taught?**

Writer and stock market tipster Seth Jayson advises investors to: “look for companies run by a team that explains things clearly and briefly. If management can’t explain the business in plain English, move on to another firm. If you see phrases like ‘creating knowledge-based value in emerging markets’ someone is trying to pull the wool over your eyes”.

**How well are you and your management team able to articulate to outsiders just what your business is about? Do you ever find corporate jargon creeping into your management discussions or documents? What do you do to discourage this?**

# Learning

Writer Alvin Toffler, who is renowned for his insights into the technological revolution of the 20th century, commented in his book 'The Third Wave' that "the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."

**As a manager are you able to let go of managerial and operational practices that are no longer of use to you and embrace new methods, or do you find yourself clinging to old familiar attitudes and approaches even when you're trying to move your department or your business forward?**

According to research from the Chartered Management Institute and Ashridge Business School a high proportion of managers are reluctant to undertake placements overseas. Kai Peters, a Companion of the CMI, expressed concern about this, saying such experiences help managers understand their home country business better and give them insights into global best practice.

**How important do you feel it is for you or your managers to experience foreign cultures and environments in order to do a better job 'at home'? Have you considered cost-effective ways you might lever such experience into your business, for example short-term secondments with overseas customers or suppliers?**

Legendary General Electric boss Jack Welch once commented that “an organisation’s ability to learn and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage”.

**If this is true, are you confident that you and your management colleagues are consistently adding to your knowledge and skill, either through formal or informal learning? How do you ensure relevant new skills are put into action? If you felt your managers or staff had lost their enthusiasm for learning new things how would you re-motivate them?**

## FOCUS

New research by online training firm WebEx found that on average employees felt over one third of meetings they attended were ‘pointless’, and more than a quarter spent meetings worrying about other work they should have been doing instead.

**What criteria do you use when deciding whether or not to call a meeting, and do you genuinely consider alternative ways of communicating information and making decisions other than bringing everybody together?**

In his best selling manual ‘The Rules of Management’, Richard Templar argues: “Some projects are just not going to work and the good manager knows instinctively when to back off, bail out and walk away.”

**Have you persevered for a long time trying to change an obstructive person or introduce a scheme that just doesn’t work? Are you willing to pull the plug and part company with the person or drop the scheme and try something else?**

Nineteenth century British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli once said: "The secret of success is consistency of purpose."

**In running your business or department you may work hard and have a determination to succeed, but are you clear in your objectives and are you sure your efforts are always focused clearly on achieving those specific objectives?**

## Leave and Hours

According to the Work Foundation, 30% of British employees don't take their full annual leave entitlement because they are too busy.

**How closely do you monitor whether or not your team are taking all of their holidays, or do you cynically pretend not to notice any shortfall and quietly benefit from the extra time they give the company?**

A recent TUC report found that, on average, British managers work 78 minutes per day beyond their contractual obligations. Only one in four say they do it voluntarily, while the remainder say they are trying to meet deadlines or simply keep up with the workload.

**Is it inevitable that managers will need to work more hours than the rest of the staff simply in order to stay on top of things at the office? Could your firm survive if you and all your managers worked no more than the basic nine to five each day?**

# Decisions

According to Allan Leighton, chairman of the Royal Mail: "there is no need to get pressured into making snap decisions if you don't want to. You've always got more time than you think, whatever anyone tells you."

**Is he right in your experience? Do you sometimes rush to make management decisions when you could take more time to reflect? Are you worried that taking more time over a decision might lead people to believe that you are dithering and being indecisive?**

US World War Two leader General George Patton urged people to take 'calculated risks' but he warned them against being 'rash'.

**How often do you need to take risks in your job and what methods do you use to calculate the degree of risk before taking action? Do you systematically weigh up the pros and cons or do you simply follow gut instinct?**

# Blogging

Growing numbers of people keep their own weblogs (blogs) and a rising number also use them to let off steam about work. HR firm Croner found that around a third of bloggers would get the sack if their boss ever saw what they said about the firm or colleagues.

**Have you got a policy on blogging by employees? How would you know if your staff were posting damaging comments about colleagues or the firm on the net and how would you tackle this problem if it occurred?**

A police constable recently caused a stir by writing a regular blog on the Internet in which he complained about red tape and paperwork in his job. The blog was visited by over one million people, embarrassed his employers and resulted in the officer being interviewed by BBC's Panorama programme before resigning to join the Canadian police.

**Are you aware whether any of your staff are writing blogs or talking about company business and workplace situations on Internet social networks such as Facebook or MySpace? How would you find out?**

## Customers

According to leading management development consultant Deiric McCann of Profiles International, the only way to retain valuable customers is to build relationships that are mutually beneficial.

**Are you confident that your service adds real value to all of your customers' businesses? If so, do they understand fully how important you are to their success? If your current contacts within those organisations were to be replaced tomorrow would their successors regard you as an indispensable supplier?**

The world's first mass-market motorcar manufacturer, Henry Ford, once said that, if he had asked people what they wanted before he created his business, they would have told him they needed a faster horse.

**How imaginatively do you interpret your market research? Do you take potential customers' stated desired at face value and simply deliver a better version of your current product or service, or do you try to work out what they really want and need, and develop innovative solutions that could set your business apart from the rest?**

Microsoft boss Bill Gates maintains that a company's most unhappy customers are its 'greatest source of learning'.

**Do you see things that way? Do you regard complaining customers an irritating fact of life who must be appeased or a valuable opportunity to pinpoint underlying problems in your business and put things right? How do you capture information from these customers and take advantage of such opportunities?**

Deiric McCann in his book "The Bathroom Business Bible", advises managers to focus on selling their 'whole offering' to the client before discussing the price. He said "if you understand what aspects of your offering are most important to your client you will have a better feel for how much importance they place on price".

**Do you sometimes rush to cut your price in order to make your product or service more attractive to prospective customers, before taking time to work out whether that aspect of the deal really matters very much to them?**

## Problems

New research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has found that 40% of firms regard alcohol misuse as a major cause of absenteeism and poor productivity, while the Health & Safety Executive estimates this problem costs the UK economy 14m working days and £2 billion every year.

**Are you or your managers trained to identify a staff member with an alcohol or drug abuse problem and would you know how to handle the situation in a way that stayed within the law and helped both the individual and the business?**

A recent survey from the human resource experts Ceridian found that 58% of British workers would keep quiet if a colleague's bad habits – such as laziness or gossiping – stressed them out. This 'suffering in silence' culture is, said the firm, contributing significantly to the 25% of total UK absenteeism each year which is linked to stress.

**What are the tell-tale signs of colleague conflict? Are your managers skilled or sensitive enough to spot underlying tensions between workmates and to address the problem, or do you need to wait until the issue results in open hostility, illness or resignation?**

Up to half a million UK employees sought medical advice for work-related stress last year according to new figures from the Health & Safety Executive who have not produced guidelines to help managers reduce stress levels among their staff.

**Would you recognise the signs of stress in your staff and would you know how to address the problem? Have you thought how you would cope if a key member of your team took long-term sickness absence due to work-related pressure?**

A study by Hudson, the global talent management company, found that, while 77% of managers believed that an 'annual cull' of underperforming staff would make their businesses stronger, most were reluctant to do this as they felt it would generate an unhealthy climate of fear that would hamper others.

**What is your approach to people who perform well below par and lack the potential or motivation to improve? Would taking steps to remove them, within the law, risk unsettling other staff or does keeping them risk making other harder-working and higher-achieving staff feel disillusioned and more likely to leave?**

# Behaviour

A new survey by business equipment giant, Canon, found Cardiff to be the UK city with the 'angriest staff'. Almost seven out of ten staff there admitted an outburst of rage in the office. Across the country the study found that being 'spoken down to' by superiors was the most common trigger for this kind of incident.

**As a manager how do you monitor the atmosphere in your office to spot signs of tension before such outbursts occur? Are you happy that you and managers under your supervision use the appropriate tone when speaking to staff?**

New research commissioned by Royal & Sun alliance found that one in four UK employees has experienced bullying at work. Meanwhile the Andrea Adams Trust, which organises "Ban Bullying at Work Day", claims that firms with very hierarchical management structures are the ones most likely to harbour bullies.

**How would you recognise and root out bullying if it occurred in your workplace? For example could you tell the difference between a robust management style and a case of bullying? Does your management structure encourage or discourage bullying?**

HR specialists The Hays group say that research shows 80% of unhappy workplaces are run by managers with predominantly 'directive' or 'coercive' leadership styles. However Hays director Chris Watkins argues that managers still need to be able to switch to this style in times of uncertainty or crisis.

**As a manager have you got the ability to alter your leadership style to suit the circumstances without confusing or alienating your staff? On the other hand do you feel your style should remain consistent in all situations?**

Nineteenth Century American politician Henry Clay once remarked that: “courtesies of a small and trivial character are the ones that strike deepest in the grateful and appreciating ear.”

**How important do you make genuine politeness and consideration in the culture of your business? How big a difference do you think it makes to your bottom line and how much do you do proactively to encourage such a culture?**

Microsoft is reported to be developing software that can check, via a worker's computer, on his or her productivity, physical wellbeing and competence by monitoring things like heart rate, body temperature, movements and facial expressions.

**How do you feel about this? Could it be a useful HR tool or a technological monster that replaces your core judgment with a form of people management by statistics? What impact would such a system have in your workplace?**

## change

Charles Darwin who developed the theory of evolution argued: “it is not the strongest of the species that will survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

**Are you aware of the changes taking place in your business sector and over what timescale this change is occurring? More importantly how are you and your company preparing for or responding to those changes?**

David Sadtler, an associate of the Ashridge Strategic Management Centre wrote recently in Management Today: “Your very success in building a large enterprise through superior competitive performance can eventually be your undoing. Ultimately just faring well in known competitive battles won’t be enough. You’ll want to grow ever bigger and that’s when problems start.”

**Have you considered how large you would like your business to become and why? If your business does grow do you have a plan to cope with the cultural and organisational changes that will bring? Could size undermine your enterprise?**

## Loyalty

A YouGov poll of 40,000 UK employees across many different sectors and job titles found that only 56% would speak highly of their companies to others and only 48% said they felt ‘loyal and engaged’ with their employer.

**Would you be happy if those figures applied to your firm? Would you mind some staff not feeling loyal to the company as long as they turned up, did their jobs properly and felt engaged with their colleagues? Should you probe how people really feel about the company and try to change their view or just accept that many are just not ‘company people’?**

Richard Templar in his best selling book “The Rules of Management” commented: “Your team would die for you if you are prepared to take the rap when the going gets tough. Nothing generates more loyalty than a boss who is prepared to stand up and take responsibility.”

**When things go wrong in your company or department, do you instinctively point the finger at subordinates or do you reflect on how you as manager contributed to the problem? How can you take the rap for the team without being too soft and sending the wrong signal to individual members who fouled up?**

# Salaries and Rewards

A new survey by the Institute of Payroll Professionals found that only seven percent of UK workers were prepared to discuss the details of their salaries with colleagues.

**Do you agree that employees should be discouraged from discussing their salaries with colleagues or should the level of people's remuneration be completely transparent? If your staff's salaries were to become known to each other, would you, as a boss, be able to justify in all cases the amount being paid to each individual?**

Mark Gerzon, president of the Mediators Foundation, said concerning staff incentives: "if you create rewards for people to behave like separate competing teams you will get separate competing teams but if you create rewards for people to behave in the best interest of the company you will get people who work in the best interests of the company."

**Have you examined your staff incentive schemes recently? Have you thought about what behaviour they are intended to encourage and considered whether or not they are actually achieving this objective?**

According to a recent survey from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, almost half of UK businesses have ditched the annual across-the-board cost of living pay increase. Instead many firms now give budgets to departmental heads to distribute among staff based on individual or collective contribution to the business.

**Do you still have a cost of living increase for all? If not, are you confident that you can reward staff fairly and ensure that the process of pay reviews doesn't become a trigger for internal discord followed by the loss of key staff?**

# Procedures

Legendary scientists and thinker, Albert Einstein, once observed that: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."

**Are you confident that the management systems and processes in your organisation capture the information that really matters? Is there a danger that you expend too much energy monitoring things like timesheets because they are easy to track, while failing to analyse more vital things like the level of creativity in the company?**

A survey by the Asset Based Finance Association found that 50% of small and medium-sized companies in the UK have difficulty getting paid on time. Many expect the current credit crunch to make the problem even worse.

**How often do you review your credit control processes? How well are they working at the moment and do you plan to make any changes in order to avoid cash flow headaches in the current economic climate without causing ill will among good customers?**

# Recruitment

Recruitment firm Office Angels discovered in a recent survey that bosses who fail to impress and inspire new employees in the early days can expect to lose them within seven months, on average.

**How much time and energy do you devote to new recruits? Do you simply ensure they are doing the job you want done or do you make the effort to discover whether or not the job and the company are also meeting the individual's career aspirations?**