

February 2007 Issue:

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This Month's Hot-Links
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Previous *Think Procurement* bulletin's back to January 2004 www.brianfarrington.com and go to 'news'

"Combating the Salesperson's Agenda" Presentation by Stephen Ashcroft at CIPS Kent Branch 28 February 2007. Details:

<http://www.cips.org/membership/branches/events.asp?branch=43&record=130>

Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply have launched a re-designed and user friendly website: <http://www.cips.org/>

"IT & Software Procurement" Hawksmere Seminar Co-presentation by Stephen Ashcroft at Strand Palace Hotel, London 20-21 February 2007. Details:

<http://www.hawksmere.co.uk/hawksmere/event.php?product=192&type=public>

For overnight accommodation call Strand Palace on 020 7836 8080

"Winning Public Sector Business" Hawksmere Seminar presented by Stephen Ashcroft 20-21 June 2007, London

<http://www.hawksmereltd.co.uk/hawksmere/event.php?product=2318&type=public>

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1. The value of Brian Farrington Ltd (and of your internal procurement resources)

One of the greatest confusions in talking to clients, suppliers and contacts about Brian Farrington Ltd is that we tend to answer the questions about our services at face value. You might see some similarities in talking to other professionals and technical specialists in your own organisation in communicating the value of your internal procurement resources.

The first question everyone asks us is "What do you do?" That's THE question. But if we answer it at face value we don't communicate much of real value:

"We are procurement consultants and training specialists." (OK, now I have your label, but I really don't know what that means to me.) or...

"We design, deliver and evaluate workshops on procurement and negotiation." (Better, but still I'm not seeing a big benefit here.) or...

"We work with public and private sector firms to manage third party expenditure and mitigate risk." (Yeah, I could see that this would be valuable.) or...

"We work with local authorities who are want to enhance their CPA rating through better use of resources." (Bingo! That's what I need says the Deputy Chief Executive)

So what's the underlying question to "What do you do?" An observation is that it's, "Are you someone who can help me?"

Now the person I'm talking to may not work for a local authority wanting to implement shared services, but if they do (or know someone who does), I've hit a vital nerve with my answer. None of the other answers even get close.

Wouldn't it be great if it got easier from there? Well, it doesn't! Because people keep talking in code. And you have to decipher the next one as well. Here it is:

"That's great, how do you do that?"

Translate the question as follows: "What kind of results do you produce for your clients?" Then answer like this:

"The clients who work with us get these kind of results: They make major cost reductions in six months or less and start to really support the organisations business plan."

Or

"We delivered a range of shared services through a strategic partnership valued at over £100m, creating over 300 new jobs and achieved the award of DCLG Beacon Status with and for a Local Authority client"

This is the language of results. Make sure you talk about what you can really deliver. This approach will get the other parties' attention and interest, and make them want to know more. But you're not done yet. You're going to get more coded questions:

"That's terrific. But how does your service work?"

Don't go down that path. Better men and women than you and I have gone there never to return. The vast majority tends to go in one of two directions: technical talk or a generic introduction to procurement.

Both of these approaches are dead ends. The hidden question behind the question is: "Do your services actually work?" The best response:

Provide a case study. Successful stories that outline how you helped a specific client with a specific problem have a listener engaged:

"We were retained by a merchant bank who didn't think a ship repairer they were funding could hold on another 6 weeks. We helped them get their cash flow working, worked with their suppliers, got them some more money and then showed how they could offer more effective – time and costs - services to their target market. Nine months later they were profitable and growing."

You can do this quite successfully with a little practice. Prepare several success stories in verbal and written form. They are a powerful persuasion tool.

To be convincing about the value of procurement (or Brian Farrington Ltd) to your internal clients, suppliers and other stakeholders you need to understand that the fundamental question everyone is asking is "What's in it for me?" Answer that and you (and your procurement operation) will do fine. Just make sure you deliver and if we can help please call us.

2. Evaluating benefits of training activities

We are often asked how we evaluate the benefits of our training activities. Donald L Kirkpatrick who first published his ideas in 1959 informs our approach and that of today's leading HR/training and development. Kirkpatrick observed that training and development could be validated and evaluated on four basic levels, namely:

Level 1 Reaction. Brian Farrington Ltd, the in-house training specialist and the in-house sponsor evaluates the learner's reaction to the learning event, usually by a feedback questionnaire at the end of the event.

Level 2 Learning. Brian Farrington Ltd measures what learning took place, and identifies the knowledge/skills increase. Measurement can be by the use of formal tests to check learners' level of understanding/learning or via our Metrics of Purchasing Excellence.

Level 3 Behavioural change. Line Management evaluates whether the participants are effectively using what they learnt on the training course back at the workplace. Has performance improved?

Level 4 Results: organisational performance. This is the linkage between the altered job performance and the overall organisation's performance, and ensures that Value for Money is achieved. Data is collated/analysed from all previous 3 levels.

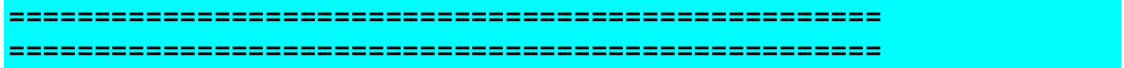
All these measures are recommended for full and meaningful evaluation of learning in our client organisations, although their application broadly increases in complexity, through the levels from 1-4. Interested in details of how Brian Farrington Ltd can deliver tangible and intangible benefits for you and your organisation through enhancing procurement related competencies?

Please email s.ashcroft@brianfarrington.com

3. A new contact for you

We are pleased to say we have appointed a new secretary, Kathy Peace, to our business. Kathy joined us in January having worked in similar roles with the NHS, Chartered Institute of Marketing and a local Convent! Kathy is taking on managing our quality assured processes, co-ordinating our 'best practice' activities and keeping

all our consultants in check! Welcome Kathy! Please contact Kathy for details on Kathy.peace@brianfarrington.com



Until next month,

Stephen Ashcroft
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Helping procurement and related professionals manage third party expenditure and mitigate risk.

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