



**Derek Medhurst,
D&D Excellence**

Interview with Derek Medhurst of D&D Excellence

Derek Medhurst (along with Dave Richards) runs D&D Excellence Limited, which specialises in the use of the EFQM Excellence Model to help organisations improve their performance. In 2003 Derek was one of the first two recipients ever of the Personal Recognition Leadership Award from the EFQM.

Derek won the New Year quiz published in the December edition of Red Thread. Along with a prize which will be sent to him, he is the lucky subject of this month's interview.

Red Thread (RT): Tell us about your background to the EFQM Model: when did you first get involved with it and why?

Derek Medhurst (DM): Back in 1993, while working in the quality, service and sales function at NatWest bank (a large UK retailing bank) I was amongst the first group of managers to receive EFQM Assessor Training. I was increasingly involved in the use of the Model within the bank, and took on the role full time within the Group Business Excellence function from 1996. The culture of the bank was to be quite decentralised, and the thirteen different business divisions were free to decide if they wanted to use the model or not. At Group level, we wanted to ensure that good practices were shared and that divisional managers who could most benefit from having an excellence programme heard about the model and how to apply it effectively. I worked for the next four years promoting the use of business excellence within the bank, convincing the majority of business units to take up the approach in some way. In 1999, the UK Insurance Services division won the UK Excellence Award, and I had the opportunity to leave the bank to pursue my interest in helping companies use the Excellence Model.

RT: In an article you recently shared with us ("How many reasons for not using the EFQM Excellence Model are just excuses?" available for download in the EFQM Knowledge Base) you wrote of the experiences you have had in facing objections toward the Model. Can you tell us a little about this?

DM: The article describes how to overcome some of the most common objections to implementing an improvement programme based around the Excellence Model. It may provide some useful suggestions for individuals who need to persuade their senior managers. In our case, in D&D Excellence, we work with companies who are already committed to using the Excellence Model, and prefer to focus our attention on how to go about it. Overall, I would say that the Model is a framework that can be adapted to the needs of any organisation, but requires careful thinking and interpretation for its practical application. Convincing someone to use it is more about understanding their particular needs than promoting the model by itself.

RT: Are some motivations for following a path toward Business Excellence better than others?

DM: Some companies are particularly motivated by achieving a 'badge on the wall': getting recognition for what they have done. While this may not be the most important aspect for many people and organisations, I have encountered many situations where the challenge of pursuing an award has been well worth the effort: giving the organisation focus and energy to improve.

RT: What are organisations missing out on that do not follow an Excellence Model?

DM: Nobody would claim that the Excellence Model is the only way to pursue systematic improvement, but it does have a number of attractions. Key is that the Model is systematic in covering all of the

organisation's activities. One of my clients gave the explanation that "it forces us to look into some of the dark corners of the organisation that we otherwise tend to forget". Within the process of building an effective strategy this can be very useful – identifying strengths or areas of vulnerability that would otherwise be overlooked or given too superficial a reading.

RT: What advantages do you think that the 2010 Model update presents?

DM: It is good that EFQM has taken the effort to review the model: it gives confidence that it is still applicable. The update has made some language clearer by removing much of the jargon. I think the Fundamental Concepts are easier to understand, and it is an improvement that they now link to the criteria more closely. Overall, we have been working with companies on issues of sustainability and innovation for the last ten years: it is good to see these now explicitly mentioned, reflecting how most assessors have interpreted the Model for the last few years. The new Model provides a real opportunity for the EFQM, national and regional excellence bodies to work together to spread its use to more organisations.

RT: How do you plan to inform clients about the update to the Model?

DM: From now on we will be using materials that relate to the EFQM Model 2010, but we will not be conducting any specific updates to training for clients. It has never been the objective to create experts on the model, just better performing companies. Even if the new model is a better tool, it must still be used correctly.

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