

A profession with a strong future

This is an insight from a business heavily involved in both the Institute and productivity for the last 40 years. Richard Taylor, managing director of Scott-Grant Ltd, shares what the market is asking today of the productivity professional and how the role of the Industrial Engineer has evolved over the last few decades.

How great is the need for productivity professionals, 75 years on from the inception of this Institute?

We're in a good position to see productivity activity across all industry sectors and in many countries, and to gauge how this is developing. This is based on our position in the market, providing productivity professionals on either a project or contract basis. We're also a leading training provider of productivity courses, including the professional qualification of the Institute of Management Services Certificate. So what are people asking for these days when they recognise a need for help to improve productivity?

Construction industry: A manufacturer of millions of products used in construction said: "We have to improve because we're now falling short on volumes that we've committed to the market. We need to know why and to what extent." (Within four days, it was the application of work measurement techniques that established their production line was only 28% effective and identified remedial cause and effect opportunities.)

Distribution: "Our business grew by 80% last year and this year it will grow another 80%, so our pick and pack targets are all over the place." (Work study techniques provided the much needed, accurate and reliable data.)

Manufacturing: A thriving and progressive producer using a sizeable bank of CNC machinery to create bespoke products wanted help to achieve quicker design to delivery times. (After process mapping, some detailed measurement of activities and tasks with 5S and other lean initiatives, an accurate foundation was created to enable the whole process to become more productive.)

Public sector: "Our huge six year contract for installation and maintenance works for the public sector is going massively adrift. We need help to get it back on track." (Detailed work measurement and a review of the effectiveness of processes, activities and costs were undertaken which provided a clear route forward.)

Jewellery retailer: "We need help to assess the time it should take to perform all the tasks in the day-to-day

operation of our business, to set time targets and develop a 'model store' programme."

Service and leisure industry: In both a luxury spa retreat and a national hotel chain "Target times" were needed for improving housekeeping standards and turnaround times, which were being severely stretched by increasing demand.

The legal profession recently needed help to provide evidence of tangible time measurement of certain activities to help in a court case.

And it's not just established industries who are wanting industrial engineering help: **the high tech sector** also recognises the need for such capability. Manufacturers of graphene needed an independent assessment of the production capability of their equipment, as did a company at the cutting edge of medical diagnostic equipment.

This is what the market is telling us they need. As a profession we have to meet these needs, be energised and rise to the challenge, help businesses address the pressures of changing circumstances and demands. We have to fully understand the type and level of the information they need and provide solid guidance on how the data is interpreted and successfully applied.

What's in a name?

Productivity professionals are called by all sorts of names! We are seen in different guises – from industrial engineers, productivity analysts, lean engineers, continuous improvement and management services people, to name but a few. 40 years ago, it was more like simply time and motion or work study engineers. At the end of the day, the most important recognition is that you're someone whose role is demonstrably about providing help to improve productivity. That is serious help.

Some businesses or organisations who haven't had a 'conventional' productivity function for some years, are now looking to reinstate them. Essentially, they look to the industrial engineer to help them make effective and efficient use of any or all their resources.

Continuing to raise the profile of industrial engineering

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and productivity qualifications is encouraging both for the profession and the Institute. A variety of work measurement, lean and process improvement techniques are being taken increasingly seriously. For instance, the IMS has added its weight to the credibility and stature of the annual performance rating certification, by endorsing our training and regular calibrating of analysts. They recognise the influence and impact of work measurement in a business, and want to ensure that appropriate standards are always maintained. Scott-Grant increasingly holds regular open Rating Clinics in at least four locations throughout the year (and several in-company) to address the demand of analysts who need to maintain the integrity of their professional certification. It is the duty and responsibility of the profession to ensure that all time data is accurate, fit for purpose and meets the needs of employees, management and union representatives. There is increasing union encouragement to have formal and transparent measurement used in all functions of an organisation.

Industrial engineering professionals invariably find they have a route to a senior management position. We are regularly approached by people in executive roles, who have identified the need for IE techniques to address productivity issues in their business or organisation. Their own work study background gives them confidence in the effectiveness of these techniques, which can deliver immediate, short-term and long-term benefits.

Whatever your role and title, if you have formal training with IMS Certificate qualification and have kept it current, you have a great opportunity to be involved in beneficial and very fulfilling work. Our profession really can make a difference.

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