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Business Change & Re-engineering has become *the* focal point for sharing practical experience and academic research in the areas of major organisational change and business process redesign. The journal provides valuable advice and guidance to help executives achieve their change management and re-engineering goals. Readers benefit by learning from others' experiences, identifying key management issues and understanding approaches which have been successful in other organisations.

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■ Case Study

Learning to Change in SmithKline Beecham

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Director, SmithKline Beecham International

and

Tony Page

Partner, Page Consulting

The purpose of the paper is to show the human dimension to learning and change that accompanied a corporate change programme in SmithKline Beecham called "Simply Better" Way. Training is an important element in any corporate change programme, but how often does training truly reinforce espoused corporate values? What learning and change is really taking place within individuals as a consequence? The viewpoints of three individuals are explored in depth: a sponsor, a process owner and a front-line worker. The paper demonstrates that in training the "medium is the message" and offers five "world class training principles" which help to ensure a training design that effectively drives a corporate change programme.

WHY CHANGE?

SmithKline Beecham is one of the world's leading healthcare companies whose principal activities are the discovery, development, manufacture and marketing of both human and animal pharmaceuticals, over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, health-related consumer brands and clinical laboratory testing services.

In February 1993, SmithKline Beecham launched itself on a major programme of change. SmithKline Beecham, at 11th position in the FTSE 100 index, with 54,000 staff in over 100 countries throughout the world, was highly profitable (1992 pre-tax profit

£1.1 billion) and growing impressively (1992 sales increased 11%, pre-tax profit increased 11%, earning per share increased 14%). So why did SmithKline Beecham want to change?

The reason was simple. The company, faced with new economic and political uncertainties, healthcare reform and changing markets, wanted to use change as an opportunity, not a threat. SmithKline Beecham's Executive Management Committee was convinced that past success was no guarantee of future success and decided to learn to change faster and more comprehensively than its competitors in order to get ahead and stay ahead.

THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

SmithKline Beecham was formed from the merger in 1989 of the US SmithKline Beckman Corporation and the British-owned Beecham Group plc. It was billed as a merger of equals creating the potential of a new and better healthcare company. At the time critics of the merger were saying: "mergers never

Tony Coyle led the design in SmithKline Beecham of the trainer and facilitator training and staff communication events. He is also responsible for the implementation of "Simply Better" Way in the International Pharmaceuticals Division of SmithKline Beecham. Tony Page is working with Tony Coyle and others in SmithKline Beecham to introduce principles of world class training and facilitation into the implementation of "Simply Better" Way. He co-designed with Tony Coyle one of the core facilitator training modules entitled "Facilitating Process Improvement".

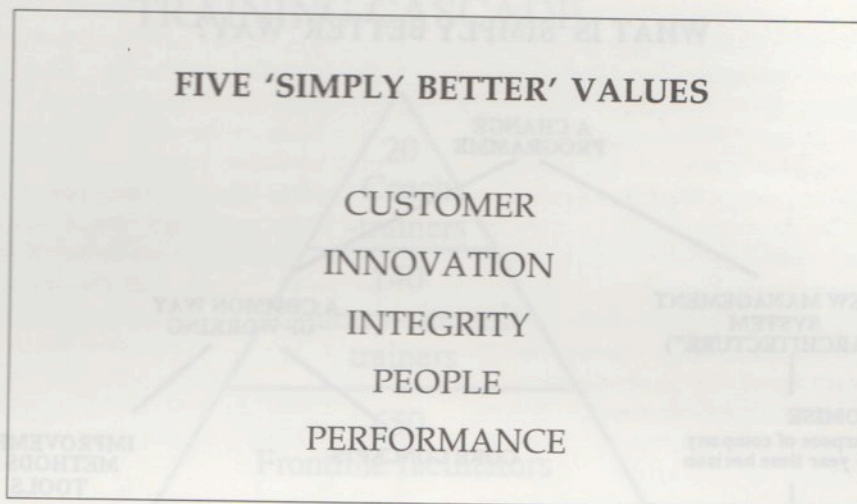


Figure 1 Five values

work", "you cannot do a merger and maintain business momentum simultaneously", "the merger is only about cost savings".

The immediate priority in 1989 was to bring the two companies together under one banner with a shared future direction and some shared support systems. In the year following the merger, the company, aiming to unite the two companies further and build greater competitive awareness, embarked on an ambitious culture change programme called "Simply Better" in which the new company culture of SmithKline Beecham was made explicit in the form of five values (Figure 1).

To what extent was integration of the two companies into the one new SmithKline Beecham company culture achieved by "Simply Better"? The journey had started successfully, instilling in people a commitment to see change positively and to live by the values and practices. Management behaviour was influenced through new performance appraisal approaches. For example, in the international division of the pharmaceuticals business, a new appraisal system ensured that staff were assessed according to how well they performed against the "Simply Better" values and practices.

In 1992, it became apparent that creating one corporate culture under "Simply Better" programme *what* the new SmithKline Beecham culture was, but not *how* to achieve improvement. There was a need for one corporate approach to unite the four business sectors (Animal Health, Clinical Laboratories, Consumer Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals) of SmithKline Beecham. There was a need for guidance, for standardized methods and tools and support systems with which to pursue improvement across the entire company. "Simply Better" Way was born from this need.

THE CHANGE PROGRAMME

What is "Simply Better" Way? It is built on, and develops from, "Simply Better" principles. It is both a new management system called an "architecture" and a common way of working. It provides a new language for use across the entire company (Figure 2).

The architecture starts with the "Promise". This is the purpose of SmithKline Beecham. It defines the mission of the company and points to the value it adds to the world. It will not be achieved overnight. It might take 25 years or more to accomplish its purposes fully.

The "Strategic Intent" is a stretching but achievable business target for the next 10 years out, towards the achievement of the longer term "Promise". The five "Simply Better" values listed in Figure 1 are carefully and precisely defined to provide measurable targets for the company.

Together the "Promise" and "Strategic Intent" are designed to help harness the collective power of everybody in the company and focus that power on the right target.

The mechanism that pulls all of the elements of the architecture or management system together is "10-3/1 planning". Each business unit has a 10-3/1 plan which describes what that unit needs to do this year and over the next 3 years to achieve the 10-year target.

"Simply Better" Way, in addition to providing a management system, also provides a common way of working, based on six simple commonsense concepts backed up by powerful improvement methods, tools and techniques to build and develop everyone's skills in problem solving and improvement. This is the "Simply Better" Way of Working.

WHAT IS 'SIMPLY BETTER' WAY?

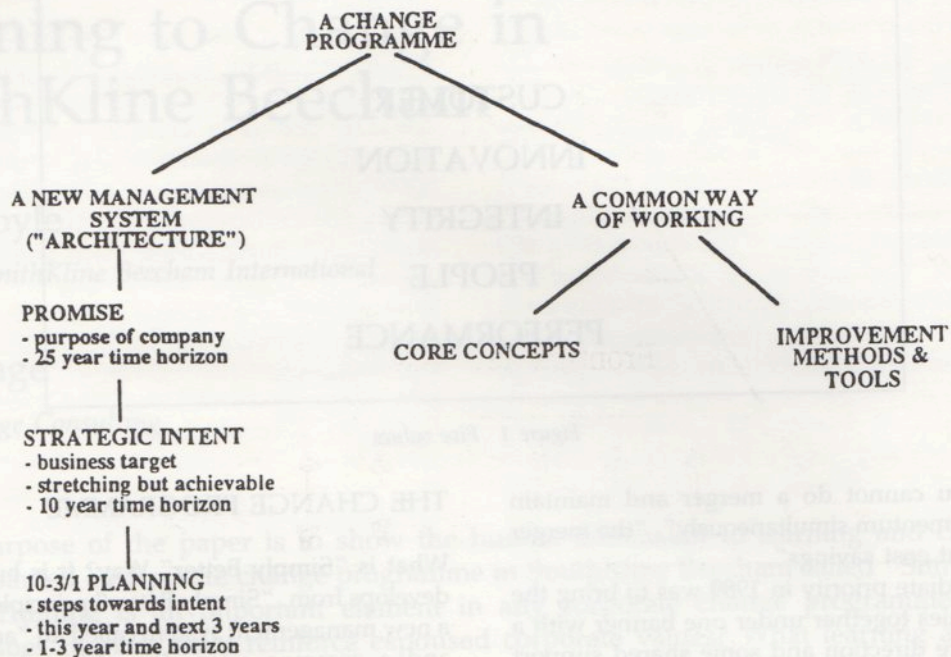


Figure 2

"Simply Better" Way has the potential to transform SmithKline Beecham over the coming years into a unified learning organization. It is designed to deliver company-wide cultural change, a shared language, a commonly understood way of working throughout the world, total employee involvement and continuous improvement. In short, "Simply Better" Way affects everybody and everything that is done in SmithKline Beecham.

BRINGING PEOPLE INTO
"SIMPLY BETTER" WAY

The questions in early 1993 were how to breathe life into the concepts, methods and tools of "Simply Better" Way, how to gain acceptance for them and how to bring them into daily use across the entire world. What methods were used in SmithKline Beecham to bring people into "Simply Better" Way?

Management Conference

The first successful training milestone was SmithKline Beecham's February 1993 management conference, attended by 350 top managers from 38 countries. The programme consisted of presentations, breakouts and an evening of employee recognition.

The presentations were well prepared; the message was "we've done well but we cannot stand still" and there was an open and clear explanation of "Why change?" and strategically "What it will mean?". All members of the Executive Management Committee took turns to present an aspect of "Simply Better" Way. "Learning by Doing" was announced as the corporate theme for 1993. The Executive Management Committee were seen to be convinced that "Simply Better" Way was the right route to take, but also as acknowledging at the outset that no one could see the full path to the finish. It would be necessary to be a learning organization, experimenting, innovating and learning from mistakes.

The breakouts were very interactive, providing a live demonstration of "Simply Better" Way facilitation skills and techniques. Breakout groups worked on issues including "the challenges of implementing 'Simply Better' Way". The results from the breakouts were played back to the conference the following morning.

Individual, team and sector achievements were celebrated in the evening by prizes presented by the Chief Executive and sector heads, naming high achievers who were called to the stage, loudly acknowledged by all. The evening culminated in a 3½-minute video of people in SmithKline Beecham achieving great things backed by a Tina Turner

Tony Coyle and Tony Page

TRAINING CASCADE

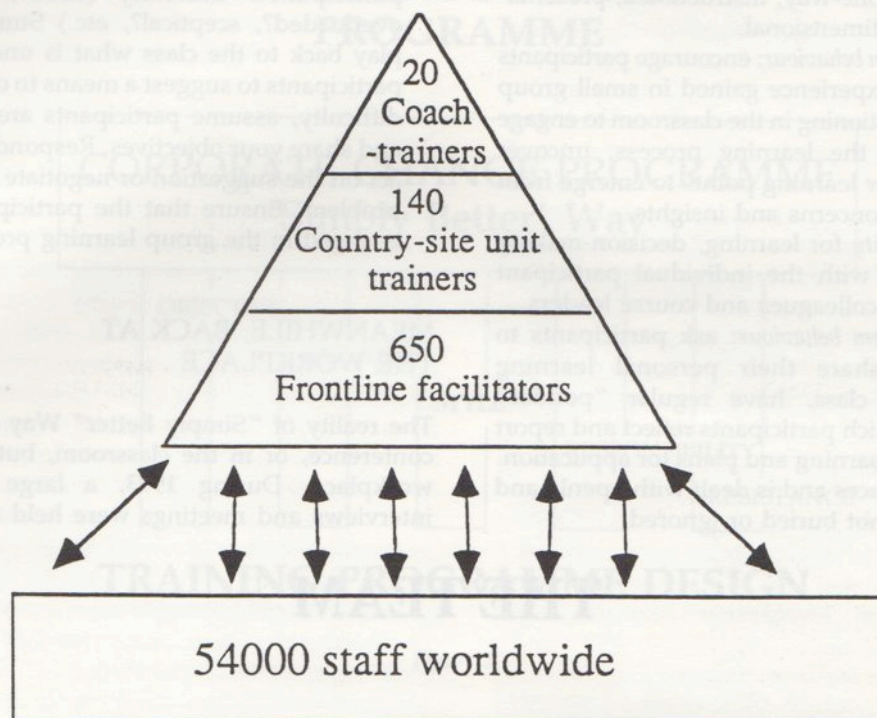


Figure 3 Cascade

soundtrack blasting "Simply the Best". Spontaneously, 350 managers rose to their feet clapping in time with the music. There was a great sense of being one company; bonding had taken place and expectations were being raised for the future.

The positive mood at the conference was fuelled by the positive recognition of achievements to date. The merger was taken to be totally successful and complete, the past was put behind and interest was moving outwards, into how to maintain and build competitive advantage for SmithKline Beecham.

Following the conference, the 350 top managers provided implementation leadership through attending training sessions, sponsoring and participating in improvement projects and selecting their best people to be trained as facilitators.

Trainer and Facilitator Education

During the period from April to December 1993, over 1300 people received "Simply Better" Way education: 550 sponsors who drive "Simply Better" Way in each company unit, 20 coach-trainers, who in turn trained 140 country/site/unit trainers, who in turn trained 650 facilitators in "Simply Better" Way

methods and tools. The facilitators then went on to train and help sponsors, process owners and team members to set up and run process improvement teams (Figures 3 and 4). More than 500 starter projects were initiated.

The education was designed in accordance with five "world class training principles", which serve to maximize learning and change in the individual participant and to model a style of involvement intended to be used by trainers and facilitators as "Simply Better" Way unfolds (Figure 5).

1. The *objective* is to improve performance in the role.

Trainer classroom behaviour: describe, explain, demonstrate and model successful performance as a facilitator, encourage participants to practise and develop their skills, explain the method for self-assessment and development planning.

2. The *content* is real-life exercises in pairs and teams, not abstract knowledge or theory.

Trainer classroom behaviour: devote the bulk of time to participant work in small teams of four or five using exercises based on a relevant case example; debrief and discuss learning points in class.

3. The style is facilitative, experiential, collaborative, involving, multidimensional, exploratory and engaging, *not* one-way, instructional, presentational or one-dimensional.

Trainer classroom behaviour: encourage participants to reflect on experience gained in small group work, use questioning in the classroom to engage the group in the learning process, uncover concerns, allow learning points to emerge from participants' concerns and insights.

4. The responsibility for learning, decision-making and action is with the individual participant supported by colleagues and course leaders.

Trainer classroom behaviour: ask participants to define and share their personal learning objectives in class, have regular "ponder" sessions in which participants reflect and report on their own learning and plans for application.

5. Resistance surfaces and is dealt with openly and directly; it is not buried or ignored.

Trainer classroom behaviour: when the trainer senses resistance, question and probe to uncover participant's difficulty (tired?, confused?, overloaded?, sceptical?, etc.) Summarize and play back to the class what is uncovered, ask participants to suggest a means to overcome the difficulty, assume participants are responsible and share your objectives. Respond flexibly and act on the suggestion or negotiate to overcome problem. Ensure that the participant remains engaged in the group learning process.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE WORKPLACE . . .

The reality of "Simply Better" Way is not at the conference, or in the classroom, but back in the workplace. During 1993, a large number of interviews and meetings were held at which the

THE TEAM

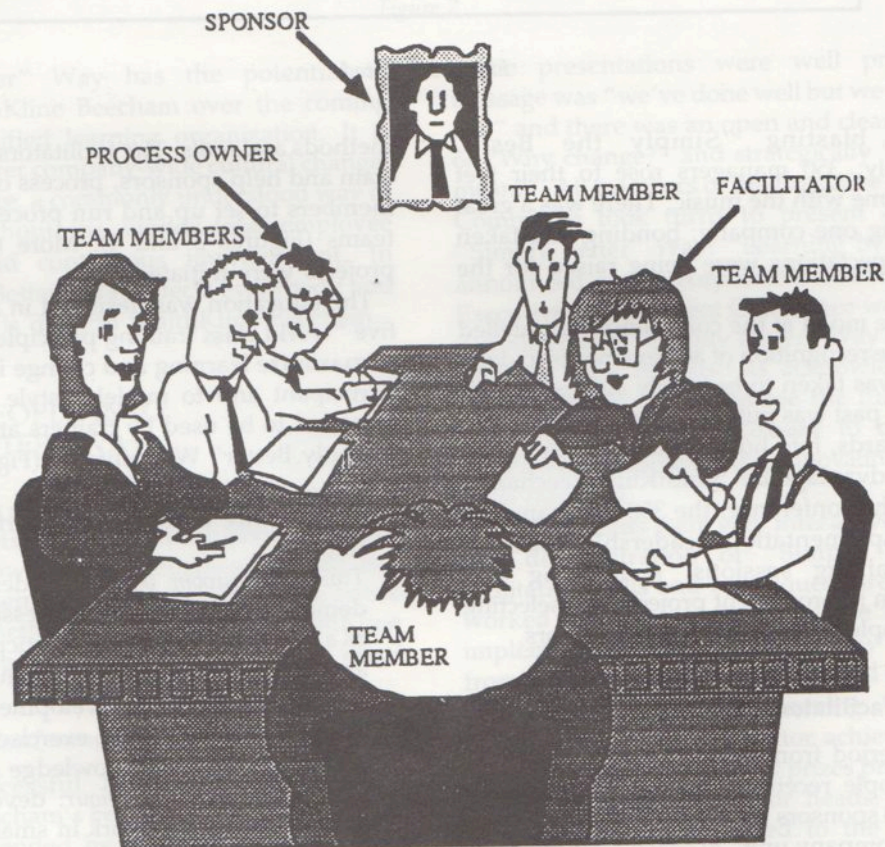
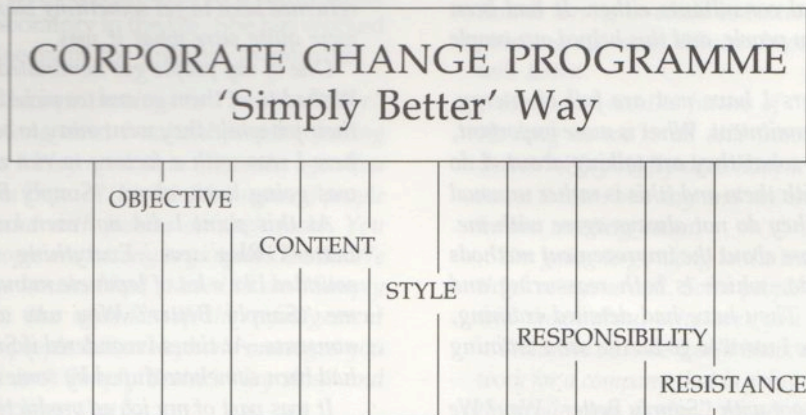


Figure 4 Team

TRAINING THAT DRIVES CORPORATE CHANGE PROGRAMME



TRAINING PROGRAMME DESIGN

Figure 5

question of workplace response to "Simply Better" Way was discussed. Three vignettes give disguised but representative viewpoints distilled from the many discussions. They aim to tell the story of "Simply Better" Way through the eyes of three people who were directly involved: a sponsor, a potential process owner and a telephonist in a front-line service role. They portray how company-wide change, designed to involve ultimately 54,000 people throughout the world, was actually experienced by three individuals in SmithKline Beecham.

The "Sponsor's" Viewpoint

Lionel Brown is the Factory Manager at one of SmithKline Beecham's UK-based pharmaceuticals manufacturing plants. He has been in this role for 4½ years and has worked for the company in total for 25 years since gaining his PhD. During his time with the company his promotion has been rapid. Apart from a few brief visits abroad for meetings he has always been based in the UK.

When did I first become involved in "Simply Better" Way? I did not attend the Florida conference but I soon heard about it: my boss, Roger, came back fired up.

I haven't seen him charged like that since 3 years ago he returned from a head office meeting with plans to build a new factory on our site. I naturally felt wary of what to expect. The worst thing about it was the fear of the unknown, of having my ideas of "the world as we know it" reconfigured to suit a new management fad.

My first direct involvement in "Simply Better" Way was an event called a leadership forum, which was attended by hundreds of senior managers in SmithKline Beecham. It was held in Brighton, England, and lasted 3½ days. We all had a lot of fun and got to know colleagues from other parts of SmithKline Beecham for the first time.

During the forum I began to get the flavour of "Simply Better" Way and understood that it is my role to drive it. I was heartened to learn that "Simply Better" Way is actually about our work itself rather than the vague concepts, values and hard to apply principles we have had in the past.

What happened next? It was June and halfway through the year. I felt a real urgency to get on with "Simply Better" Way. I wanted to get started with some improvement projects in the factory. The bad news was I needed a facilitator before I could start a project properly. The person I had previously nominated as facilitator had not yet been trained. We had to wait for a space on a corporate-run course.

Training took time. Each facilitator had to go through three separate courses, in total equating to 10 working days of training.

How effective was the training? When the facilitator arrived I must admit to being impressed. The training was not actually run by a corporate faculty and was not run by external consultants either. It had been delivered by our own people, and this helped our people to relate to it.

All the facilitators I have met are full of energy, enthusiasm and commitment. What is more important, they seem to know what they are talking about. I do not always agree with them and (this is rather unusual as I am the boss) they do not always agree with me. They know a lot more about the improvement methods and tools than I do, which is both reassuring and unsettling for me. They have had detailed training, which is good. Now I want to go on the same training myself.

How far have we got with "Simply Better" Way? We have kicked off our starter project now, which is a "learning piece", and I am more interested in what we learn about the "Simply Better" Way methods and tools than in the result.

Normally on an improvement project I will be outside it as "Sponsor", but for the first one I am getting directly involved. I like this because I can get to know the detail of the method and see how my people are affected by it. I am concerned that because of my position I might be inhibiting the others a little bit so I keep my mouth shut a lot of the time and leave it to the facilitator.

How do I see the future of "Simply Better" Way? The buzz on the grapevine is good. I expected to be faced with more cynicism and resistance from the die-hards who have worked in the factory for year after year. For these people there is a lot of change to take on board. If it was unsettling at first for me, it must be much worse for them.

I expect there are still some difficulties ahead. I am concerned that as a company we are rushing at it very fast, but so far we have not tripped up and the momentum seems to be carrying everyone along with it. The communication events that we ran involved literally everyone, so perhaps that helped.

Now I'm looking forward to the results of the starter projects. Privately, I am desperate to use the methods and tools on some of our more critical processes and generate some worthwhile results which might help to justify all of this effort so far.

The Potential "Process Owner's" Viewpoint

Melanie is the production manager in one of the SmithKline Beecham factories that produces Lucozade. She was recruited by SmithKline

Beecham 10 years ago, direct from her production engineering course at university.

When did I first become involved in "Simply Better" Way? After everyone else I think! First, the Factory manager went away to a course in Brighton and returned keen to get something started, but none of us were quite sure what it was.

One of my people got nominated to be a facilitator. We had to let them go and we picked up the pieces doing their job while they went away to be trained. I felt that here I was with a factory to run while everyone else was going loopy about "Simply Better" Way!

At this point I did not even know what "Simply Better" Way was. Everything everyone told me sounded like a lot of Japanese management jargon. To me "Simply Better" Way was a lot of incoherent nonsense. At times I wondered if SmithKline Beecham had been somehow duped by some clever consultants!

It was part of my job as production manager to run communication events to inform all of our staff about "Simply Better" Way. These events each took a day and I was pleased now to be in a positive role with "Simply Better" Way: bringing people in to it, including them and explaining to them how "Simply Better" Way will affect what we are doing in the factory.

How effective was the training? I do not know because I have not been included on any courses myself. If you are talking about the management workshop and the communication events, then I would say these have been well designed and were effective, but that was really up to us wasn't it?

How far have we got with "Simply Better" Way? I am involved as a team member on our starter project. More usually I might expect to be in the process owner role, but for the first project the boss is taking that role. Being a team member gives me a chance to experience the methods and tools in a low-risk way, learning them as we go along.

I'm feeling a lot more positive now and I can see how "Simply Better" Way is of value to SmithKline Beecham.

How do I see the future of "Simply Better" Way? It is going to become unstoppable. In fact it already is. I have nailed my colours to the mast as a supporter of "Simply Better" Way by delivering the communication events to all my staff. I cannot go backwards now: I have to make sure that it works and I believe that it will.

There is nothing strange or different about "Simply Better" Way any more. It is accepted as good plain common sense. Certainly we have plenty more to learn about it, but now no one is afraid of "Simply Better" Way.

The starter project is not complete yet, but I do not even think that matters now. Gradually "Simply

Better" Way is becoming part of the way we think, talk and behave in the factory.

The "Front-line" Viewpoint

Emily works as a clerk/telephonist in a SmithKline Beecham clinical laboratory in the US. She has worked for SmithKline Beecham for around 18 months.

When did I first become involved in "Simply Better" Way? Not for a long time. I noticed people referring to "Simply Better" Way more than 6 months ago. You pick things up you know in this job. You notice if people are walking around with frowns on their faces. You find out what people are having arguments about. We chat about it over lunch. I had started to see "Simply Better" Way on the agendas of the management meetings. When people leave telephone messages you start to notice it is "'Simply Better' Way this" and "'Simply Better' Way that".

I began to wonder when someone would tell me what "Simply Better" Way was.

What happened next? I did not become involved in it until the big meeting we had. I got invited to the meeting. We all did. It lasted all day. It was called an "event". I was wondering what kind of thing it would be. I did not know what to think. We were chatting about what was going to happen. We wondered why couldn't they just tell us what it was in the usual way.

We went to a local hotel because we did not have a room big enough at the lab. The room was all decorated with posters. The best thing was hearing Tina Turner blasting out "Simply the Best"! It was good. I got interested. Everyone got really involved. It all made sense. It told us about the company we were part of and where the company was heading.

We were still a bit worried. Why was the company putting in all this effort? What were they going to get back for it? But I am not as worried now as I was.

We spent a long time doing exercises to learn about the core concept of "Simply Better" Way. I really did feel I understood it. It's common sense really. The company has competitors and we want to beat them, but the game is changing so fast so we have to keep improving. We all need to be involved in making improvements; it is no good leaving things to someone else to improve.

How effective was the training? It wasn't really training like in a classroom or like when I was training to be a telephonist. It was more to do with discussing things, having our say, giving our ideas. It felt good to be asked. I felt that the company was really interested. But I don't know how effective it was really.

How far have I got with "Simply Better" Way? Since the event I've noticed some new activities going on around me. The meeting room is always booked up for team meetings. On the wall outside the meeting room

is a big display called a "storyboard". It tells the story of the project the team is working on.

When you read the faces, there is still the same mixture of expressions: some happy, some tense and some stressed out.

I feel a little bit more included. If I see something that is wrong or could be better I feel that it is worth pointing out now. I know I could find someone who will listen.

How do I see the future of "Simply Better" Way? As long as we're all still involved I think "Simply Better" Way really does have a future. I want to get in on a team one day and see what really is going on in the meeting room.

I'm going to go along to the training sessions. I don't think everyone will. Some people are just negative; they will moan about whatever you give to them.

With the outside world bleak as it is, I would rather work for a company that is going to beat the competition than one that is about to get beaten. If I can play a part in making our company the best, I'll do it.

BENEFITS ACHIEVED

Each coach trainer trained seven country/site/unit trainers, who each trained seven front-line facilitators. So far, 650 facilitators have been trained in SmithKline Beecham, and their ratings of the training provided have been excellent (4+ on a 5-point scale where 5 is the top score). Facilitators are currently working on starter projects, each with a sponsor and a process owner and a number of team members.

Steadily, during 1993, "Simply Better" Way extended itself from a set of ideas in a manual into a language used by thousands of people throughout the company, a method applied in teams in the workplace to drive change. With the new language and methods has arrived a new attitude that seeks improvement, learning and change that is starting to replace an older, deep-rooted and quite widespread change-averse attitude.

It is too early to assess bottom-line benefits gained or to weigh these against the costs of the programme. The company results for 1993, despite turbulence, continued the trend established during the 5 years since the merger (pre-tax profit £1.22 billion, sales increased 18%, pre-tax profit increased 12%, earnings per share increased 15%). We do not yet have all 54,000 directly involved in "Simply Better" Way, but we expect to along the journey. Facilitators do not yet all feel totally confident with their new skills set. What is apparent to those working with facilitators is the high level of knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm they demonstrate.

THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

MD



TRAINER



RISK OF TRAINER BEHAVIOUR UNDERMINING CORPORATE VALUES!

Figure 6

LESSONS LEARNED

The three individual viewpoints presented here underline how change really happens: each individual "buys in". Individuals who have "bought in" bring more people in with them.

For all training activity, the "medium is the message". Trainers and facilitators are role models for "Simply Better" Way. The words expressed by the trainer are rather less important than their non-verbal behaviour and their belief in "Simply Better" Way (Figure 6).

Authentic behaviour by the trainer or facilitator translates directly into belief and buy-in to "Simply Better" Way. This is what creates a multiplier effect (rather than a dilution) as the training cascades out to 54,000 people. The five principles for world-class training served to create a medium which underpins "Simply Better" values and reinforces the "buying in" by each individual and drives the corporate change programme.

Is well-designed training sufficient to achieve "buy-in" to a programme of change? No. Other factors are clearly important too, including:

- Having clearly defined roles (sponsor, coach-trainer, facilitator, and so on). Why? Change can be confusing and disorienting. Defined roles provide a sense of certainty, a clear job role and level of performance for individuals to work towards.
- Giving real responsibility out (e.g. to coach-trainers, to country/site/unit trainers and to facilitators). Why? This requires decision-taking by individuals, which in turn triggers active thinking, engagement and commitment to a programme of change.
- Providing the right kind of support (e.g. in practical methods and tools, training to use them, a new infrastructure). Why? "Simply Better" Way added practical support to the "Simply Better" values and practices in the form of methods and

tools, a major education programme and infrastructure in the form of facilitator, country/site/unit trainer and coach-trainer roles. Each facilitator is in a support network headed by a country/site/unit trainer who in turn is linked in to a coach-trainer. Our experience is that where the individuals are making positive and deliberate use of these networks, the best results are being achieved. Without support from the network, the facilitator can feel isolated and ineffective. This is where scepticism about the overall programme could begin to set in.

What would we do differently next time? Provide training for middle managers, correctly timed so that the process owner population consider themselves fully part of the programme. Their training would teach them about the change process they are in and how to manage change. We expect that this would help them as individuals by reducing stress, creating a feeling of support from their colleagues, converting them from resisters into positive agents for change and thereby accelerating company-wide change, improvement and learning.

CHANGE HAPPENS IN UNITS OF ONE

In conclusion, "Simply Better" Way is launched and taking root. Thousands more people are due to receive training this year and next. The mood of the 1994 management conference was different, more relaxed but still alert to future challenges, less emotion around "Simply Better" Way, a symbolic shift away from a centralized drive towards sector-based decisions about the pace of implementation. This is seen as a measure of the maturity of the "Simply Better" Way programme.

Measures and feedback channels are being installed in 1994 to enable continuous improvement of the training, the methods and tools and the programme as a whole. The "Simply Better" Way programme is becoming integrated as distinctive and yet a normal and accepted day-to-day way of doing business.

In summary, what distinguishes the "Simply Better" Way programme from so many other corporate change programmes is the recognition of the importance of the individual and the belief that change happens not at a stroke, but within individuals, in units of one, leading to changing the whole organization.