

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**

Two initiatives are currently underway which are aimed at improving the environmental performance of businesses worldwide.

### **1. Project Acorn**

Small to medium sized businesses (SME'S) are being helped to achieve the international environmental management standard ISO14001 through the support of Project Acorn.

The Acorn Project has attracted nearly 30 large companies and 250 small companies. Active implementation of the pilot programme started in early summer. During this period mentor companies will steer their smaller suppliers through ISO14001. The principle sponsor is the DTI.

### **2. SIGMA**

The role of the SIGMA project is to integrate the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development into a single management system. SIGMA stands for Sustainability: Integrated Guidelines for Management. There has been interest in SIGMA from businesses and local authorities, and some of these will be involved in piloting new systems. Lessons learned will influence the standards development process which is planned in early 2001. SIGMA is financed and endorsed by the DTI and the DETR.

## **EURO DOLLARS - PULPED**

The European Central Bank will destroy up to 235 million bank notes printed in Germany because they can be easily forged. The 100-euro denomination notes were found to have a defective hologram, which meant that using the right paper, perfect forged notes could have been made using a colour photocopier. The European Commission said the detection of the forgeable bank notes, prior to them entering circulation, showed that their quality control system had worked, but have not commented on what preventative actions they would take to avoid it happening again. For example they could review the bank note design process.

The problem arose at the German factory, where despite using some of the most sophisticated equipment in Europe, the security feature designed to prevent forgers was not incorporated into the notes. These notes will now have to be shredded and six months production has been wasted. It will cost over £20 million to reprint the notes and this mistake does not help the credibility of the Euro currency. Unfortunately this has not been the first problem in manufacturing the new currency. Thousands of coins had to be melted down in France when markings for the blind were found to be confusing.

A total of around 14 billion new notes are being printed across Europe ready for the currency launch in 2002.

## **QUALITY BALLS**

Slazenger tennis balls have been used at Wimbledon since 1902 and have been chosen as the ball for the Olympics in Sydney 2000.

The UK factory makes 12 million balls a year and many years of experience and innovation have gone to create them. The rubber, from Malaysia, is compounded with 13 other special ingredients and extruded into precisely measured and accurately weighed blanks. Trays of

blanks are moulded into half shells under controlled temperature and pressure. Shell edges are buffed and the halves glued together in a press and made into a complete sphere. The rubber core is then bonded to extremely durable cloth made from a natural wool/nylon blend. They are then inspected and monitored through a series of tests and inspections. The tests replicate the impact energies and abrasive forces encountered in a game of tennis.

Balls destined for Wimbledon must weigh between 56.7g and 58.5g. Each ball is dropped from a height of 100 inches on to a concrete slab and for Wimbledon quality they must bounce between 55 and 56.5 inches. The balls are also tested for accurate flight characteristics and aerodynamics. The Wimbledon Hi-Vis contains 33% more dye in the cloth than normal balls making them brighter and more visible - giving players and linemen more chance of seeing them - a sophisticated inspection specification.

The Wimbledon event and the association are so important to Slazenger that they individually test every ball provided, to ensure that Wimbledon gets the best.

### **THE MILLENNIUM BRIDGE**

The 320-metre pedestrian bridge, spanning the Thames between St. Paul's Cathedral and the Tate Modern art Gallery is the first new crossing of the river in London since Tower Bridge in 1894. The structure is an arch made of aluminium and stainless steel and design to appear as a "blade of light".

The Bridge, which was taken 5 years to plan and cost £18.2 million, opened in June and then 3 days later had to be closed. Engineers concluded that it was the wrong sort of walking that caused the Bridge to vibrate; as it began to sway people fell into step with the swing and exacerbated the movement.

The Bridge is a rare example of a lateral suspension bridge with the cables strung along the walkway. Concerns were initially expressed over the design, and some experts predicted that there would be problems with vibrations. However, the design engineers were confident that advanced computer analysis had anticipated all possible problems.

Subsequent research has shown that though the Bridge is strong enough to carry the weight required, the designers had not asked the right questions about lateral movement because such problems had rarely been experienced before. The vibration effect produced was greater than expected, but the engineers are now confident that they know what caused the problem and will be able to solve it. They calculated that ten times more damping is needed to reduce the swaying effect, but they do not expect the Bridge will need to be strengthened or given extra support. Further data is being collected prior to ordering the dampers, which act like shock absorbers. These should cure the problem without compromising the architectural line of the Bridge. It is expected that the Bridge will be closed for about six months.

### **LRQA NEWS**

LRQA in the USA has established a permanently staffed helpdesk to provide support in the interpretation of the growing body of management system standards. The help desk is available to answer questions on management system standards, including clarification of applicability,

accreditation rules, interpretation of requirements and other general queries. It is available to companies in the USA, both LRQA clients and for companies who are not yet certified.

### **IIE New Initiative**

The Institute of Incorporated Engineering (IIE) has launched a new initiative to encourage universities in Britain to meet the requirements industry demands of its engineers. This closely follows from the Engineering Council's redefinition of its role and the role of the engineering profession. The IIE has said that it is committed to assisting all colleges and universities who wish to develop courses which place greater emphasis on employer's needs in modern industry.

### **NEW STANDARD FOR LABORATORIES**

Over the next 3 years UKAS is replacing its own standard M10 with the new ISO 175025 standard as the basis for accreditation of laboratories. UKAS have kept the preparation of this standard very low key and some laboratories have been surprised that was about to be published. The standard was developed with UKAS' participation, but laboratory technical managers were not consulted. However, as an international standard, information has been available through the usual channels.

### **POOR QUALITY DENTAL WORK**

It has been reported that many patients have received inadequate treatment from their dentists. Government has been urged to investigate and review dental provision looking at access to service, quality and remuneration.

### **CHARITIES**

Even though many charitable organisations are trying hard to reach the recommended quality standards, only half of those surveyed showed they used quality standards that fit their own mission and purpose.

### **QUALITY BOUNCERS**

A new scheme has been launched to introduce the BS7960 standard for nightclub security. With the image the profession has, many nightclubs will benefit from these new guidelines on hiring staff and training programmes. The bouncers will receive the BSI Kitemark on successfully completing their training and assessment.

### **CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

The new ISO standards will put increasing emphasis on satisfying customers, but what makes the customer satisfied? You can either try and define what things are important yourself or you can ask your customers. It is often easier to ask for key incidents, either a positive or a negative performance. Then group similar ideas together to formulate a list of things they consider important about your product or service. From these formulate a questionnaire to gauge customer satisfaction. There are a few points which should be kept in mind when putting together a Questionnaire.

1. The questions should be unambiguous, short and to the point. They should only have one concept / question and should not contain double negatives.

2. Ask for either Yes/No type responses or a response on a scale from 1 - 5. The latter will provide more information.
3. A brief introduction should be written to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and instructions for its completion.
4. Select the questions to be asked (not too many).

The response from your questionnaire will give you an insight into what people think of your service and ideas for improving that service.

If you would like further details on Measuring Customer Satisfaction, including areas not touched on here such as sampling, reliability and validity then please feel free to contact us on 01483 453511 or check out our new Web Site - [customer-satisfaction.co.uk](http://customer-satisfaction.co.uk)

### **DRINKING WATER**

The latest reports are British tap water is better quality than bottled water. The Environmental Minister Michael Meacher said "The quality of drinking water is second to none in this country. It is good as anywhere in the continent and I would say considerably better than bottled water." He also added the improvement in water quality was partly due to investments made under the previous Tory Government, but he also made it clear that it was "extended substantially" under this government.

### **SOLICITORS & COMPLAINTS**

According to a report published recently there have been over 17,000 complaints made against solicitors in England. Ann Abraham, the Legal Services Ombudsman, says in the report "It is discouraging that so many lawyers still view complaints as an attack on their professional integrity rather than as valuable feedback on ways to improving their service." The figures will cause more tension between the Law Society and the Lord Chancellor over the processing of complaints. Ministers have said that if there is no improvement by the end of the year, the society will lose its self-regulatory powers.

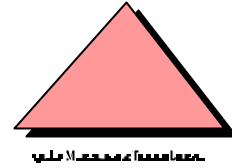
### **DIARY DATES**

30 August 2000	Design for Six Sigma Forum Contact: IQPC Conference 020 7430 7300
12-13 September 2000	Quality in Manufacturing Exhibition Contact: Nexus Media 01322 660070
12 September 2000	Metrology for World Class Manufacturing Awards Contact: Nexus Media 01322 660070
9-10 October 2000	EMS Implementation Contact: IQA 020 7245 6696

**Contacting QM&T**

If you would like to learn more about either of the above or any other quality issue, please contact Edda Saunders at the following address:

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**TOTAL WORDS 1773**