



The business keys story

More than a business transformation consultancy, businesskeys™ was formed to empower organisations to deliver to their full potential.

HOW IT STARTED

Do you know anything about standards? Stephen Munden is passionate about the subject.

He created businesskeys™ when he realised that people were having difficulty accessing standards and when they did access them they didn't know what to do with them. It was so complex and confusing and the language being used within the documentation was unnecessarily difficult.

Most businesses use standards as a benchmark to measure results, but the sure way to do business is to use standards to create change.

When businesskeys™ started out, it produced an integrated audit model for businesses to use. Other organisations were auditing against quality, environmental and health and safety standards in isolation and in a so-called 'integrated' way instead of helping business leaders to run a business as a value delivery system.

Businesses purchase 'off the peg' standards and achieve certification but when they are implemented the standards and the certification becomes a secret between the quality manager and the auditor. Businesses receive a badge but not the true benefits that standards can achieve.

businesskeys™ are turning this around by focusing on the business leader. It is at the strategic layer where you can make the most impact. Making this a reality for all businesses is the businesskeys™ vision.

Trade associations could be instrumental in educating their members in the benefits of standards. They have the potential to be the bridge between government and business. One of businesskeys™ aims is to help trade associations and make them stronger: Help is needed to show trade associations and their members how to set up essential processes to reap the benefits of standardization.

LESSONS FROM BIG BUSINESS

The team at businesskeys™ has gained valuable insight from various industries. Managing Director, Stephen Munden learned some important lessons from Kodak.

Kodak had all the resources, money, people, talent and creativity as well as many patents coming out. With all that capability Kodak still crashed. Why was that? Companies that have been sustainable and have delivered dividends over the past 50 years such as Proctor and Gamble and until recently Toyota, have been delivering quality of a superior nature consistently. They have not taken the fast track but they have taken the considered route, the surer route to market. In the drive to cut costs and meet targets, could management have overlooked the basics?

At BSI, Stephen worked as part of a team that was trying to demystify standards. The National Standardization Strategic Framework was developed to create a step change in the use of standards and that is what businesskeys™ is continuing to do today.

If you talk to a standards body their definition of standardization is often about a process to develop the standard. businesskeys™ says, forget the standards document itself, it's what the document does that counts, and this is businesskeys™ law of standardization – 'standards are what they do' and is one of the most useful things for a business to focus on.

Whether standards are ensuring consistency, stability or compliance, or whether the focus is on innovation and change (because standards can act as change agents) both are available but the problem is businesses are often on one side or the other: Neither is right or wrong they are both appropriate at different times and good companies will blend both.

LESSONS LEARNED IN A SMALL COUNTRY

businesskeys™ has worked in Kosovo on several occasions. Examples include creation of a certification strategy for the country and inward investment work.

There were people out there building the standards development organisation as well as testing organisations. businesskeys™ job was to develop a certification strategy to try and bridge what they were doing and make it palatable for businesses to demonstrate compliance. The idea was to give a small country the infrastructure to get ISO9000 and similar certifications in place. In a departure from the norm, businesskeys™ proposed a strategy which was focused on the goal of building and promoting the Kosovo brand to world markets through an industry-led quality drive. The work done by businesskeys™ was used and taken forward into the country's overall development strategy.

On another visit, they took the work further and looked at how businesses could be helped with quality and design as well as getting their products to market. Stephen Munden helped approximately 100 small businesses who knew very little about standards and certification. They needed practical help to implement standards and legislation so that they could navigate the huge bureaucracy of the EU and all the laws that were coming into Kosovo which had to be complied with. They also needed the knowledge of how to run a business and how to make it profitable.

To make standards and compliance simple, workshops were broken down into small areas. The sessions encompassed subjects like: creating customers by complying with the laws to be able to access the market and then getting customers to accept what it is they were marketing. Businesses had to learn to make their offer different so that they could rise above the masses.

If Kosovo businesses wanted to create cash they would have to work in a compliant fashion and do it regularly and consistently to meet European standards. Their businesses also had to be structured efficiently and put in a simple infrastructure. businesskeys™ created a work book enabling them to do this showing them how to implement this in interactive workshops.

The people attending the workshop could take templates away with them on areas like business planning and marketing. This gave them a framework to hang their business around.

The audiences in Kosovo varied from government department members and people who were leading trade associations in Kosovo, right down to the other end of the scale - a woman who had been given a cow as a business and had to survive on that. So there were two extremes but the principals are the same.

WORKING WITH TRADE BODIES

Business Keys visited Texas where Stephen Munden was invited to speak to the members of Energistics, the standards consortia looking at data management across the oil industry. Energistics appreciated that standardization was the key to collaboration and most of the oil projects are collaborative in nature. The whole thing has to be knitted together and the focus is around data exchange between those parties which has to be standardized. There are hundreds of bits of data on oil well descriptions and the resources they hold. It is important that members can talk to each other in a way that everybody understands.

Trade associations, particularly in the UK are under constant pressure from their members and have to show value all the

time to make members want to be there. The only reason you would go to a trade association is because collaborating with your competitors is advantageous, working with your peers is advantageous, cracking common problems is advantageous. This is exactly what standards are and how they achieve success. They are about commonality and about collaboration.

Trade associations understand their industry but they may not understand all management systems that have a bearing on their area of business. Do they understand quality management systems, data management, health and safety and governance systems?

Looking at technologies that are not specific to one industry, such as nano technologies, there may not be the expertise in the traditional trade association. Not only is there nano technology but there are dozens of other technologies. How do trade associations get that wealth of knowledge into membership when the trade association themselves don't appreciate or track all those technologies? businesskeys™ is addressing that.

WORKING WITH FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES

businesskeys™ has also worked in the area of regenerative medicine, helping to create a new market that will be built out of stem cell and tissue engineering technology. In order for this to happen, the technology being created needed to be tested and regulated. There is a whole regime of safeguards that need to be put in place from the regulatory right down to the voluntary to create this market. You have to define the products and the supply chain because it is not a direct one.

You don't just suddenly knock up stem cells and bingo out comes a regenerative medicine product. There are all kinds of steps along the way, the stem cell bank has to align with stem cell industries and all those components are the infrastructure. So just as you have an infrastructure within a business such as an organization chart or a process map you have an organization for the industry and the market. This is what businesskeys™ was trying to create, from this technology and the drivers for that technology, things like an aging population and the fact that we are going to live longer. How do you get the business drivers through the technology into the market - the bridge is standards. This process is the essence of the businesskeys™ Technology Leadership Programme.

Stephen Munden helped to facilitate meetings of technical experts such as stem cell scientists, people who were in the testing regime, those in universities and people with the potential to get this product to market. This will eventually occur over a ten year span, it is not an instant thing. One of the products businesskeys™ helped to produce was a roadmap to overcome the regulatory hurdles. A Publicly Available Specification was created giving manufacturers and others within the supply chain a roadmap to get the product to market.

Now if you can create a roadmap for an industry like regenerative medicine which is new, think what you could do with an existing market that already has benchmarks. You can do this at company level, industry level and national level.

In essence the tools are the same to get the result, it depends on whether you are trying to map it from your company's point of view in which case you have a different attitude as to how you build the map and who you invite to help with the map building process; to a trade association where you have a specific interest group; to the national level where you are trying to reach policy objectives.