



# REPORTER

The electronic magazine of the United Kingdom ACE Association

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The electronic magazine of the United Kingdom ACE Association



Superheroes needed



Please complain!



Judging the judges

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# We are up to the challenge!

It's a truism by now that we are living in challenging times. As leaders in public service delivery, we, and the organisations we lead, have had to cope with a sudden and sharp recession. For some it has meant a substantial surge in demand and has posed serious capacity questions. For others, it has sapped business volumes dramatically forcing managers to face some genuinely tough and painful decisions.

Although the worst of the recession may now be starting to abate and we may return to growth next year, we remain faced with the prospects of electoral uncertainty in the short term and a large public spending challenge for the medium and longer term. The news stories and briefings in this month's ACE Reporter show, once again, that individually and collectively as a key part of government, we are up to and in many cases, ahead of the challenges we face.

Whether it's the National Measurement Office's rapid response to structural change earlier this year, the transformational change being brought

about at the Serious Fraud Office in response to stakeholder concerns or the way that SEEDA had to quickly re-evaluate its economic and business development strategies as recession hit, examples of our ability to adapt and change abound.

These themes – as well as the survey of ACE membership, reported on **page 7** - will form a key part of ACE's annual conference on 26 and 27 November at Sunningdale. We have many excellent speakers lined up and there will be plenty of opportunity for us to network and share our learning and experiences. If you haven't yet signed up, I'd urge you to do so as soon as possible! [Click here to register](#). I am grateful to all of our contributors. I am sure you will enjoy - and be encouraged by - reading their stories.



Best wishes  
**Guest Editor**  
**Stephen Speed**  
Inspector General and  
Chief Executive of The  
Insolvency Service

# Superheroes needed

An appeal to finance staff to be *Superheroes* was a key promotional campaign run by Companies House to support its vision of putting its services 100% online. More than 99% of outputs from companies – all the publicly searchable company data – had been electronic for a number of years but inputs such as annual returns and company accounts were introduced to the online channel at a later date.

Getting annual accounts online has been a tough channel shift, said Lynn Lynch, marketing director Companies House. She said: 'Businesses are used to paper filing and needed a strong proposition with clear benefits to move online. The annual return was identified as the form most likely to succeed.'

The *Superheroes* campaign targeted operational finance staff within accountancy practices after research revealed these individuals were often responsible for filing annual returns and other documents at Companies House. The campaign's central message was to file *everything* online. The theme played on the idea of them being *heroes* for saving time and money for their company and contributing to the green agenda.

A five stage process for moving filing of the annual return online was developed. It included tests that proved the online service to be effective and easy to use; raised awareness;

targeted communications; a cost-recovery based fee differential of £15 to encourage further adoption; and the phasing out of automatic delivery of paper annual return forms.

Online filing of annual returns began in December 2003. In March 2004, 1% of annual returns were filed online, by July 2009, 90% were filed online. Lynch said: 'Our success was down to knowing our customers. Our customer insight team took the lead on the research front. In summer 2000 we did the first of our annual major quantitative surveys of companies who file their forms themselves, and advisors who file on companies' behalf - accountants and solicitors.

'The aim was to find out what the barriers were to filing online and what the benefits were. As the surveys were conducted on a very large scale, we were very confident about the results. Customers were saying that cost, ease of use, speed and security were all benefits.

The ideas were built into an advertising campaign beginning in February 2006 that included our Superheroes campaign. This was backed up by a series of case studies in the regional press.'

Having secured high levels of take-up for annual returns, the next challenge is to improve take-up levels for other documents and ultimately to shift all organisations to file all

their documents online. Company accounts are perhaps the biggest challenge of all.

Lynch said: 'Company accounts information is submitted in multiple formats, unique to each company, unlike the standard annual return form. To better understand our customers we are conducting a customer journey mapping project to learn where filing fits into the process to see how channel shift can be triggered.'



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# Beating identity fraud

Prevention of identity fraud is the focus of a new, targeted ID taskforce established by the National Fraud Authority (NFA). Identity crime is the UK's biggest enabler of fraud and costs the country an estimated £1.2 billion every year.

The NFA, established in 2008, works with a range of stakeholders across the private, public and third sector to initiate, co-ordinate and communicate counter-fraud activity across the economy.

It is managing a portfolio of some 15 priority projects, one of which is tackling identity fraud for which it recently established a specific ID taskforce with members from both the public and private sectors.

NFA CEO Dr Bernard Herdan said: 'Fraudsters are equal opportunity criminals who hijack personal or corporate identities. Government agencies and departments are obvious targets for them.'

'The impacts of this criminal activity can have damaging effects on an organisation's reputation and can erode public confidence in their services and management of information.'

'Research suggests 80% of data breaches which enable ID crime are preventable. Simple things such as raising staff awareness, regularly changing passwords or the introduction of a clear desk or document handling policy can sometimes make a critical difference, as can effective measures to protect against

cyber crime.'

The NFA is calling on Government chief executives to heed the messages of National Identity Fraud Prevention Week (12 October) to assess their organisation's ability to prevent ID crime. The campaign aims to increase awareness of ID fraud and offers practical advice to organisations on how to better protect themselves.

Herdan said: 'We recommend chief executives ensure counter-fraud policies, systems and procedures are in place to protect against both external and internal threats. Clear, practical guidance should be circulated and included in staff inductions and business processes. This way fraud prevention becomes firmly embedded in organisational culture.'

'New employees should be thoroughly vetted: check references, qualifications, experience and past employment. Additionally, carry out extra security checks when staff are given new access to confidential information as part of their ongoing work. While this may seem a costly exercise, the pay-off in terms of organisational and stakeholder confidence is a significant reward.'

'However, *fraud-proofing* your organisation is not all about expense. There is a great deal of practical, free advice available. Often the only investment required is time, as new policies or procedures are introduced.'

Find out more at:

[www.stop-idfraud.co.uk](http://www.stop-idfraud.co.uk)



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# Copyright fit for purpose

Copyright used to be straightforward. The digital age has made it more complex – which is why the Strategic Advisory Board for Intellectual Property Policy (SABIP) is undertaking research to ensure the UK has a copyright system that is fit for purpose. SABIP chief executive Robert Bettley-Smith believes that, as with any system of rules, the copyright framework needs to be understood and respected. He said: 'An emphasis on rights and responsibilities, rather than on prohibitions, may help understanding and reduce frustration.'

'Copyright was developed 300 years ago when quill pens were still used. The perception is that it is coming under severe strain due to the continual emergence of new digital media.'

Evidence suggests that, to most people, copyright presents a complex and confusing picture. This is complicated by the ways in which digital technologies are used to create, copy, 'mash up', format and 'space shift' content. The increasing ability of users to take advantage of new technologies means that the use – legal and illegal – of copyright material is an everyday occurrence.

At its simplest, copyright is a legal term describing rights given to creators to protect their creative works and ideas from being copied by others. It embraces two distinct aspects of the creator's rights: economic rights

that allow creators and producers to obtain remuneration for creating and distributing their work, and the 'moral rights' that protect the creator's artistic integrity and reputation.

Consumers, on the other hand, want to be able to access the wealth of cultural and artistic goods that copyright protects, in convenient ways and at affordable prices. Business models, previously based around copyright, have now been called into question. In the digital world, the traditional model of licensing content via formal documents and pursuing breach of copyright through the courts is more difficult.

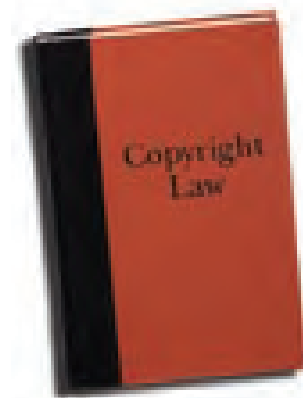
The tools for managing content are changing, and evidence suggests that the mechanisms supporting the copyright framework are lagging behind the technological developments they are seeking to regulate. Research indicates that P2P file sharing is undermining the current copyright framework, with a high percentage of the population in breach of copyright without realising it.

If it is hard to explain user rights to the public in straightforward terms, it is likely to be even harder to secure their support and compliance. Complexity tends to raise the costs of enforcement. Any effective copyright system must encourage willing compliance, and be enforceable and cost-effective for rights-holders.

SABIP has commissioned studies to develop understanding of changing attitudinal and behavioural characteristics connected with the consumption of content via the internet and related digital technologies. The objective is to assess the significance of these for medium- and long-term copyright policy and regulation.

Bettley-Smith said: 'There is much work to do and SABIP is just beginning to expose the areas where more research and evidence is required. SABIP is continuing to forge partnerships and to work with a wide range of stakeholders to add real value to this exciting policy debate.'

**More information:**  
[sabip.org.uk](http://sabip.org.uk) or [twitter.com/SABIP](https://twitter.com/SABIP)



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# Rapid response to recession

Getting help to recession-struck businesses has given the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) a much sharper focus. SEEDA chief executive Pam Alexander said: 'Even before the extent of the recession became clear SEEDA was reviewing its priorities but the speed and depth of the recession has left no time for change management. We have had to get help to businesses – fast.'

Part of SEEDA's £15m rapid response package included setting up a Continuing Employment Support Service with Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council to avoid and mitigate redundancies by job matching with companies that were expanding – and they do exist, said Alexander.

She said: 'BMW in Oxford, Ford in Southampton and Vestas on the Isle of Wight have seen big lay-offs and we have been in there helping. But many more redundancies have come from our multitude of small and medium sized businesses. Business Link has provided over 15,000 free health checks, many focused on dire financial challenges as their easy sources of credit evaporated.'

Banks in the South East have been brought together for the first time in a new South East Financial Services Forum. Alexander said: 'We are able to discuss what might for some almost be seen as *truth and reconciliation* with their customers, many of whom are

hurting and mistrustful. Through our subsidiary, Finance South East, our transition loans fund – a last resort for high growth businesses unable to get funding – has awarded more than £2.5m to over 20 companies, safeguarding nearly 800 jobs.'

The South East covers 74 local authorities from Oxfordshire to Hampshire and across to Kent. A recent PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) report showed that between 2002 and 2007 for every £1 invested, SEEDA generated a return to the regional economy of £5.60 – bringing a total of £2.6bn into the South East economy that PWC concluded would not otherwise have been created.

The report highlighted which types of interventions pay back fastest in terms of jobs. 'That has been very helpful,' said Alexander, 'as we have focused sharply over the last 18 months on understanding and addressing the challenges of the recession for businesses across the South East.'

'Manufacturing jobs across the UK are being hit hardest by the downturn in global trade. Here in the South East there are still many companies growing and investing, benefiting from the fall in sterling and the continuing growth of new markets, such as environmental technologies and digital media.'

'These are some of the key sectors we now plan to focus on. This major challenge

comes with no increase in resources – SEEDA's budget is reduced by £50m to £280 million over the next two years and we will lose over 100 posts. With *emergency services* organised, SEEDA is reorganising to target the high tech, high value and high growth sectors which will lead us out of the downturn and provide high quality jobs. In doing this we aim to be the best economic development agency a top global region could have.'



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# Networking is key value

Networking, communication with the Cabinet Secretary and the opportunity to debate issues of common interest are what members most value about ACE. In the Association's first membership survey, members have identified networking as a key value of the Association.

ACE lead on the consultation Malcolm McKinnon, Chief Executive of SITPRO, said the ACE Board had been encouraged by the considered replies received. He said: 'We have really got something to work with here. Members have taken their time to tell us what they think.'

He said the responses would be discussed in more depth at the annual conference. 'We are still a fairly new organisation and keen to learn from members about what they want us to do and what we could do better.'

Questions asked in the survey included: What do you value from ACE? What should we do more or less of? Are there new activities or services we should consider offering?

McKinnon said: 'The primary value of ACE was seen as networking. Respondents also valued ACE's role in communications, both down to CEOs and up to the Cabinet Secretary. The annual conference received several mentions, as did the opportunity to debate issues of common interest.'

Asked if ACE could improve its

communication with members, the general feeling was that ACE was doing a good job. He said: 'When we asked if we should produce more member briefings or more issues of ACE Reporter the feeling was that the frequency was right. However, one respondent questioned why it had taken 18 months for him to hear about ACE, and why ACE did not seem to him to be well supported by his sponsor department. This suggests some scope for ACE to get its message across better.'

Suggestions for new services ACE could consider offering include mentoring; advice on dealing with capability reviews; sharing experience from bodies that have managed efficiencies within Treasury guidelines, such as redundancies, and mixed resourcing models; and possible 'corporate raids' where different organisations could visit each other for a half day.

In response to a question whether ACE needed to understand better the nuances of all its member organisations (bearing in mind that agencies, NDPBs and other forms are represented in membership) the answer was an emphatic 'No'. McKinnon said: 'There were some interesting thoughts in response to this question. But the main theme was that ACE cannot, and should not try to, understand the nuances of all the organisations represented in membership.'

- Join the debate about what ACE does or doesn't do at Annual Conference. This year's Conference will provide a forum for members to discuss key issues with each other and informed representatives. Speakers include Sir Hugh Orde and Roy Wilsher who will be talking about the lessons from Buncefield. The conference will be held at Sunningdale on 26/27 November. **Find out more at:** [www.ace.gov.uk/conference](http://www.ace.gov.uk/conference)



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# Not such a weighty problem

Peter Mason tells how a modern Agency can combine a massive new commitment with a very old Act

The phrase 'Weights & Measures' has a distinctly old-fashioned ring to it and indeed the Weights and Measures Act is just about the oldest major piece of consumer legislation on the statute books. But the National Measurement Office (NMO), the Executive Agency responsible for that Act and quite a bit besides, is busily engaged in establishing itself as a modern, forward-looking organisation.

NMO is unusual, but by no means unique, in being an Executive Agency responsible for the legislation under which it operates. 'The Act has been criticised for decades but it has never been rated a priority for primary legislation,' said CEX Peter Mason.

'We consulted our stakeholders last year – businesses and the enforcement community – who told us, yes it is a mess and please tidy it up as soon as possible. But actually you operate it and have patched it up well enough for us to soldier on for a few years yet.'

And in fact NMO and its predecessor the National Weights & Measures Laboratory, have been able to make piecemeal changes over the years, one of which was among the first uses of the new Legislative Reform Order procedure. Now NMO has massively increased its remit by taking over the programme management of

the National Measurement System and with it responsibility for the whole of the Teddington site, which includes the National Physical Laboratory.

'The smooth transfer of this work is the success of the last 12 months I am most proud of,' says Mason. 'The effect will be to increase our income from £4.4m to a little short of £70m.'

The Act has been criticised for decades but it has never been rated a priority for primary legislation

Staff concerned were told in early January. By 1st April they had moved to desks in NMO's Teddington building, plugged into NMO systems with their activities described on a completely rebranded NMO website.

Mason observes: 'That's less than three months and at a cost of less than £20,000 – a saving we have already realised in the first three months of the new arrangements.'

But there were plenty of other successes last year. From its building in South West London, the Agency provides certification and calibration services, mainly connected with weights and measures, primarily to manufacturing industry. But while that could have left it vulnerable to the recession, its commercial income held up pretty well and in some key markets – the competitive overseas market and management systems certification – it actually increased.

'We earned a surplus within £1k of that projected in our Corporate Plan, on a turnover of £4.4m,' says Mason. 'We won a second contract to act as a national enforcement authority for the restriction of hazardous substances in batteries. Some 96% of paying customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied and last year we saw a 7% increase in efficiency, directly measured by productive hours.'

Looking back on the development of the NMO, Mason notes: 'For us, small has to be beautiful. We have to run like a small firm. Fortunately, we have enough people with

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commercial experience to keep us clear on what that means. So for us agility and flexibility is second nature.

'We follow very strict financial and project management disciplines. Team leaders are answerable for the income as well as the expenditure in their areas. That income is mainly from contracts with other parts of Government but if milestones are missed they can't claim this income.

Mason stresses that they avoid using the mantra 'people are our most important asset' but the skills of NMO's staff are at the core of everything they do. 'We don't have a separate sales and marketing force,' he says. 'Our best salesmen are those who can show they can do the job. And the best person to manage customers is the one whose income is on the line. Even with the development of policy and programme management, the heart of the

Agency is still in the professionalism and expertise to be found in our laboratories.'

In developing this philosophy, Mason admits he has 'borrowed shamelessly' from others in the public and private sectors: 'I've borrowed ideas from Agencies whose Boards I sat on and from my parent Department. ACE gives me a lot more to borrow from! I spent two "weeks in business" under the old DTI scheme. And there is a lot you can learn from your contractors – the trick is to talk to them about things other than your contract!'

Mason advises: 'It is really vital to work on the relationship with your parent Department. They are your stakeholders. They need to have enough confidence and understanding to back you if things do get rocky. But it is also important to recognise that Agencies can do policy – not just as an ancillary activity but as a core function. And finally, Civil Servants have shown they can be good at managing money. They can learn, speak and apply the language of commercial disciplines. They only need the structures, the training and the opportunity!'

■ Peter Mason is chief executive National Measurement Office



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# Hovering over change

Now we look out for accidents before they happen, says Peter Cardy

Life at sea is changing. And the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) is changing with it. We are embarking on an important new role, to monitor large and small vessels all around our coasts. Instead of reacting to accidents after they happen, the Agency will switch to monitoring and prevention.

The 20 miles of the Dover Strait is full of leviathans, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of

steel, cargo and fuel in a traffic routing system monitored by the UK and French Coastguard. Because of the growth in offshore renewable energy, the Thames Estuary, a vast shipping interchange, is quickly being forested with huge windmills.

Ships now transmit their identity, position and course. As part of a European initiative, ports share their data with us 24/7, about who

is going where. Adding radar gives us highly accurate images. Now the Coastguard can 'see' so much more, we are better able to distinguish what's normal from the start of a disaster, and warn ships accordingly.

Technology means it is increasingly immaterial where Coastguard stations are located. Instead of looking after only one stretch of coast, there is the potential for new centres to see and hear what is happening at sea anywhere around the coast. The days when there were 500 stations armed with binoculars and phones are long past. Nowadays, even an accident taking place under the window of a Coastguard station is managed through electronic communications.

Maritime losses of life and ships have reached historically low levels, but there are still spectacular disasters. The 2007 wreck of the huge container ship MSC Napoli was finally removed in pieces this summer. It was a remarkable example of the international co-operation that is the cornerstone of shipping safety.

It began to break up in the French sector of the Channel, its Eastern European crew was rescued by British helicopters, it was taken in tow by French tugs, beached on the UK's



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Jurassic Coast and cut up by Dutch salvors. Its cargo belonged to owners worldwide.

The MCA, formed by the merger of the Marine Safety Agency, a hard-nosed regulator, and the Coastguard Agency, a uniformed friendly rescue service, has a worldwide reputation. Its influence is out of all proportion to its size. So why does it need reshaping? The reason is the same as always: shipping and seafarers change, technology advances, public expectations continue to escalate.

Some industry sectors continue to be difficult to regulate. Fishing has changed beyond recognition in the last generation – except that it remains many times more dangerous than construction or farming. As I write this, one fisherman is saved but his three shipmates drown when their small vessel sinks in the North of Scotland. None was wearing a lifejacket.

Yachting increases in popularity and generates at least 60% of the MCA's search and rescue activity, featured regularly in the BBC Seaside Rescue series. In both fishing and yachting, education and peer persuasion are the way we try to improve the safety of seafarers and their vessels, rather than the regulatory big stick.

Originally formed during the Napoleonic wars, the Coastguard has, in the succeeding 200 years, seen its role shift from the defence of



Technology means it is increasingly immaterial where Coastguard stations are located. Instead of looking after only one stretch of coast, there is the potential for new centres to see and hear what is happening at sea anywhere around the coast

the borders to the protection of life at sea. It has constantly changed and adapted to new technologies, from the rocket line and breeches buoy for rescue from shipwrecks, to the search and rescue helicopter, to the adoption of VHF radio and electronic identification and tracking devices for ships.

The public often worries that if the Coastguard is not looking at their specific beach they are not safe. In fact the local watchers are our *other* workforce, 3,500 volunteer community-based Coastguard Rescue Officers organised in about 400 shore-based teams around the coast, who carry out cliff, mud and quicksand rescues, guide the rescue helicopters and liaise with the lifeboats of the RNLI.

There is the scope then to improve the safety service, by tackling more challenging jobs with new skills and getting better pay in return. Change rarely takes place without turbulence and the MCA has had its share, including industrial action, in the past three years. Yet underlying any concerns about pay or job security there remains a powerful shared commitment to the mission of the safety of life at sea.

■ Peter Cardy is MCA Chief Executive

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# Coming of e-age

There has been a paradigm shift at The National Archives, says Natalie Ceeney

When I tell people what I do, the most frequent comment I get is 'The National Archives, isn't that a bit sleepy?' My answer is 'Not any more!' Today, we serve over 20 million people globally with a range of current and historical information, support (and in part, regulate) an information economy based on the use of public sector information worth upwards of £1 billion, and are an organisation of just 650 people renowned for innovation. We, like the world, have changed hugely over the past few years.

My impression of The National Archives when I joined it in 2005 was of a well performing organisation with satisfied customers. But, operating in the information economy, the world was changing fast around us. Electronic information had made government information management a major new challenge. Historically, our strength in service delivery was in face-to-face services and, like many organisations in the early 2000s, our online services – that now support 20 million people – were being developed and run as something of a side activity.

A lot has changed in four years. We have grown, through mergers with two other parts of government, to take on the remit of government's information manager, and are now credibly leading in the field. We've made

online service delivery mainstream. We've taken on some large challenges for government as a whole, including a pan-government shared service project to tackle digital obsolescence, work to keep government web links readable long after the content is deleted, and e-enabling legislation to better inform policy development and citizen engagement. We're leading policy development on issues such as

The huge and successful launch of the 1911 census earlier this year gained 22 million hits in its first 48 hours

the reuse of public sector information and on a new government policy for the wider archive sector – over 200 bodies across local government and the private sector.

And we are serving more and more people. The huge and successful launch of the 1911 census earlier this year gained 22 million hits in its first 48 hours. And at the same time, our face-to-face services have continued to develop, as has our expertise in supporting

government's information challenge. The change is internal as well as external. We have become a more integrated organisation, which passed iIP with flying colours just 18 months after failing it on all counts, and which has a high performing leadership team not just at director level, but at all management levels.

How did we get there? Anyone who has led change will know that there is no single 'silver bullet'. My own philosophy in leading change is that there are four things that matter: 1) being absolutely clear on where we are going (with no room for ambiguity); 2) ensuring that you have the right people with you to lead the change; 3) building strong relationships, internally and externally, so that people trust you and know what you personally stand for; and 4) being clear on what standards you expect, and showing that they matter by not tolerating anything less.

What all of us learn about leadership pretty quickly is that *people throughout the organisation* make change happen – not documents, and not senior managers working in their offices. As a new Chief Executive, I found that I spent my time very differently from how I did as a 'no. 2', spending more time than I

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could possibly have imagined having chats with people, coffee with teams, walking the floor to talk through our new direction, and generally doing everything I could do help people at every level 'get it', and get 'why' we needed to do this, and internalise what it meant for them.

The paradigm shift has taken a lot of time – in some cases, a lag of years between the clear direction and people's own reality changing. One moment I recall vividly that signalled the change was when one of my Non Exec Directors bumped into a long serving manager in the car park. 'How's it going?' asked the NED. 'Good,' said the manager. 'The reading rooms are really busy.' Then he paused, frowned and said, 'Actually, no... The fact we are busy is not good. There are lots of people using us who could better use us online and we need to make it easier for them to do it themselves.' I've learned a lot over the past few years, and I have two tips for anyone doing this for the first time. The first – change takes time, and you need to keep at it. All the theory of why change fails highlights that the biggest failure factor is managers getting bored, changing direction or announcing the next new initiative. What's really worked in this change programme is that our vision, announced at the beginning of the programme – so over three years ago now – has remained constant,



and been the driving guide for all of our work. And my other tip? Work out very early what you are not willing to tolerate – and anything that crosses your threshold, deal with there and then, however painful. For me, everything I tolerated in the first few years that bugged me came back to bite me – and was far harder to tackle second time around!

■ Natalie Ceeney is chief executive The National Archives

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# Fighting financial fraud

With financial crime on the increase fighting fraud is a constant battle, says Phillippa Williamson

Financial crime has doubled in the last four years and is expected to rise further and faster as a result of the global economic downturn. This is a challenge to law enforcement agencies around the world.

Here in the UK, where the Serious Fraud Office is the lead body on complex fraud and overseas corruption and bribery, responding to a changing fraud landscape has meant the SFO undergoing the biggest transformation in its history.

In leading this transformation, I can say it has affected every part of our organisation. In 2008 former US prosecutor, Jessica de Grazia, reviewed the work of the SFO and her report showed we were failing in a number of areas. We needed to act quickly.

We looked outside our organisation, sometimes outside the UK, to adopt best practice, so we could slim down processes, work more flexibly and adopt the latest developments in computer and forensic investigation.

Our main focus has been our people and our structures. We developed a new vision – one SFO, victim focused and delivering what society demands of us; attacking fraud in a timely and cost effective way. We also

introduced a new organisational structure. We did all this in six months – a rapid timescale by any standards.

By involving our people from the start we have delivered some quick wins. We have shown that change does not need to be long and drawn out. This helped galvanise enthusiasm internally and I have to say the speed at which we have transformed the SFO has surprised many.

I am delighted with the progress our people have made. Not only have we continued to deliver our day-to-day business, we have produced some of the best results in the SFO's history. We have significantly cut the time it takes to review a potential case. We now aim to do this in 20 working days – in the past this has sometimes taken over two years. We have set up a new intranet site and a fraud referral line – which saw a 200% rise in reports of potential frauds. We have hugely improved the service we offer the victims of fraud and corruption and developed better working relationships with colleagues in other organisations in the UK and abroad.

Such radical and rapidly implemented changes were not without pain and for some of our staff it has been a difficult time. Indeed,

many people did not feel the need for change and others felt it was just being done to them. We worked hard to engage staff and soon got volunteers to manage and lead projects and initiatives.



A huge milestone was achieved when over 40% of our people took part in a series of workshops that reviewed and improved our processes, identifying significant financial savings and ways to considerably shorten case turnaround times. Culturally, the workshops were important. Staff could see it was people like them, in jobs like theirs, that were leading the change process.

■ *The SFO is a small, independent department under the superintendence of the Attorney General. It employs 330 people. Phillippa Williamson is Chief Executive Officer*

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# Please complain!

## Why one chief executive wants to hear more complaints not fewer

The more complaints, the better, is not the usual cry of a chief executive but that is the case for Jane Furniss, head of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

In the five years since the IPCC was set up its workload has increased sharply. Direct complaints to the IPCC have risen from 4,000 to just under 15,000. Referrals from the police (which involve death, serious injury, corruption cases or similar) have gone up from 1,500 to just over 2,500, the number of independent investigations has risen from 31 to 106, and the number of appeals has gone up from 1,000 to just over 4,500.

The rise in complaints is good news for the organisation because it is a clear indication they are fulfilling the job of making the complaints system more open and accessible. Furniss said: 'More complaints does not mean the police aren't doing their job as well as they should be. What it indicates is the public thinks their complaints will be taken seriously and that it is worth complaining when things go wrong. In the past people did not have such confidence.

'Twenty years ago if you had turned up at a police station to make a complaint you would probably have been sent away with a flea in your ear or even worse arrested for wasting police time. Today the system is much more

open and accountable and the police have changed their attitude hugely. Our oversight and guardianship have helped change the atmosphere.'

Formed as a result of the Police Reform Act 2002, the IPCC was established to respond to the lack of public confidence in the police investigating the police, particularly in matters of brutality. 'That is not such a reality for us today,' said Furniss. 'Police officers are much better trained, there are better legal safeguards and the use of technology like CCTV in



investigators look at incidents and see what learning can come out of them. We have come up with new guidelines for police officers in pursuit of a vehicle that include the fitting of black boxes (data recorders) to police vehicles and ensuring only suitably trained officers undertake pursuit.

'Our work with the Home Office and ACPO to improve the care and procedures given to those in custody has seen a reduction in the number of people who die in custody. For example we have issued new guidelines that recommend custody staff regularly wake up people in custody who fall asleep because of consuming alcohol or drugs and who may be in danger of dying, for example as a result of choking on their own vomit.'

The rise in demand and the current set up of the system presents its own problems for Furniss. The police complaints system is designed to deal with the serious cases, rather than respond to the vast majority of complaints which are about things such as rudeness and lateness.

'We have had to develop new approaches to make the system more customer orientated within the existing

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# Please complain!

legislation as well as pushing for new legislation', she said. 'We are currently consulting to create a simpler and more efficient system to deal with all complaints, but this will take time.'

While legislation can be changed, it is the issues posed by increased demand that are taxing Furniss the most. 'As a chief executive five or ten years ago faced with these demands on our statutory requirements, I would have simply put a business case together to ask the Home Office for more money. That's not going to happen in the current financial situation. In fact it could be we face cuts, therefore we've had to look at how we can do more with what we've got.'

So far the organisation has saved £2million pounds through a new IT provision contract, sub letting part of its High Holborn offices and reducing the number of directorates. Furniss said: 'The changes are about improving the service the public get from the complaints system. The savings, approximately £12million over the next four years, are being redirected to the front line so we can employ more investigators and case workers.'

'There is an almost endless list of tasks the police are expected to deal with. When you look at the many millions of interactions the

police have with the public, the number of complaints is actually a very small proportion of this figure.

'But despite what police officers often say, it is not only criminals that complain about them. Most complaints are made by white middle class, middle age professionals - the



people with the highest expectations and the people who know how to complain. The people we don't hear from are those with low expectations, like the young black males who might have been stopped by the police many times. Why would a young black man from Brixton complain about the police when he thinks all it will do will make him even more of a target?'

In a bid to overcome this the IPCC is working with the black minority ethnic communities to change attitudes. 'It is a slow

process', she said. But a rise in complaints from black minority ethnic communities will be good news for Furniss because it will be further evidence that the IPCC is improving public confidence in the police complaints system.

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# From system to service

Producing a genuine public service ethos has taken significant investment in staff engagement and leadership development, says Peter Lewis

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has come of age. The organisation has moved away from a system-based mode of operation to a service-based one in which what drives its work is the endeavour to achieve the best possible outcomes for the men, women and children behind its case files.

Our people in court have long realised this. They have always been the ones who have met the victims and witnesses. But we needed everyone in the organisation, including the backroom staff, to realise how we really help people.

The effectiveness of our work must be measured by what the public expect from us. Targets will still be important but we are now seeking to define what kind of experience the CPS should be for anyone in contact with us.

Moving from being a *system* which has targets and processes to a *service* that delivers outcomes for citizens has required us to ensure every member of staff is on board with our vision for a modern public prosecution service. To turn our strategies into operational delivery we recognised the importance of investing in staff engagement. We acknowledged this was central to a strong, efficient, delivery

organisation.

Keir Starmer QC, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and I spent six months this year visiting staff on the front line in the 42 CPS Areas across England and Wales and in CPS HQ, plus staff from Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office in London and Manchester, with whom we are merging.

We needed everyone in the organisation, including the backroom staff, to realise how we really help people

Over the period, we had talks with 2,290 staff during 287 hours of meetings and travelled 6,529 miles. Our inboxes were full with around 570 emails from staff members giving feedback on the direction in which the service is moving.

In July, following the visits, we published the vision for our emerging public service-based organisation in *The Public Prosecution*

*Service – Setting the Standard* which was distributed to all staff. We intend to visit all our areas again to ensure the principles of the *Setting the Standard* document are embedded within the organisation.

We believe this continued engagement is key to transforming our organisation. In parallel we are developing a wider programme of work to engage our people in delivering for the future, what this means for them and how we will work together to build a service that the public has a right to expect.

We have invested in leadership as we recognised this was an essential element in creating a top delivery-based organisation. We have implemented programmes for line managers and have been working with the senior management team. Our recruitment and promotion processes for senior managers are now far stronger. We are identifying people who are great with staff and stakeholders as well as strong in their professional skills and this has made a real difference.

We are working to ensure this ethos permeates the organisation. Our people feel better about their work and their positive

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outlooks are reflected in our significantly improved staff survey. The positive outlook of our staff means that when the organisation sets its mind to do something – whether it be putting into place performance targets or operational changes – we are far better at actually making sure that happens to time and to budget.

We must be a service which is happy to be judged by its results and one in which each member of our workforce knows the part they are playing and are accountable for delivering.

At the heart of our vision lies a set of core quality standards which will be underpinned by Minimum Service Delivery Requirements designed to ensure every member of staff knows what they are trying to achieve and the criteria on which they will be assessed.

We have begun to apply lean principles in developing our optimum business model and will continue this drive as we move forward. As the CPS comes of age, we are no longer content to be merely partners in changing the criminal justice system but want

to provide real impetus in pushing for a change in the culture across the whole criminal justice system to transform it from a system to a *service*.

Our inboxes were full with around 570 emails from staff members giving feedback

The next stage is to improve our strategic capability. To make changes to our operations that make a difference to the public we need the active co-operation and support of our partners in other criminal justice agencies. We have to step forward and be seen to lead the dialogue rather than just be a good partner.

We must set the standard and lead by example to help transform the criminal justice system from a simple target-focused approach to one that is quality-based for the benefit of the citizens for whom we seek to deliver justice.

- Peter Lewis is Chief Executive Crown Prosecution Service



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# Judging the judges

The Judicial Appointments Commission is proving the sceptics wrong, says Clare Pelham

For most, recruitment in the public and private sector is the result of a fair, open and competitive recruitment process. Judges used to be an exception. Although the UK already had one of the most respected judiciaries in the world and the time honoured system of the tap on the shoulder had begun to evolve to the point where most posts were at least advertised and interviews held, there was still an air of mystery about the process and myths persisted. Nonetheless, not everybody was convinced we needed an independent body to select judges.

The independent Judicial Appointments Commission came into being in April 2006. Parliament gave us the statutory duty in the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 to *have regard to the need to encourage diversity in the range of persons available for selection for appointments* recognising that the Judiciary was far from reflecting society – or even the legal profession. Strong applications from women, solicitors and candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds, could only improve the pool of potential judges.

Despite our name, we do not *appoint* judges. We select one name for each vacancy to recommend to the Lord Chancellor. He may accept or reject the name. I am pleased to say

he has accepted all but one of the 900 names we have put forward.

When we started, the new Commissioners wanted to make fair and open processes into a practical reality. This meant defining merit itself. What is it that makes a good judge? We consulted widely, and came up with five core qualities and abilities, replacing a complex matrix of 50 competencies and behaviours. We simplified the form and got rid of the box where applicants were asked to list their *decorations*.

It became clear candidates from less traditional backgrounds often felt that shortlisting based on self-assessment and references left them at a disadvantage. We introduced written tests as a fairer and more objective means of shortlisting.

We had to manage expectations of how much would be achieved and how quickly. The legal profession is more diverse at the entry level than at the senior level. The rate of change in the diversity of the Judiciary is therefore affected by the number and type of vacancies available each year and their minimum entry requirements – often set in statute.

We set up a forum with representatives from all branches of the legal profession, the

Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary and other groups concerned with diversity. We meet regularly. We have hosted dozens of seminars from Newcastle to Southampton. We must be doing something right. In our first three years we received almost 7,000 applications for judicial appointment. Last year five of the 22 High Court judges we selected were women, which will take the total to 17, the highest number ever.



I believe we are proving the sceptics wrong. The Lord Chief Justice Lord Judge said earlier this year that the debate over whether there should be a JAC is over. The JAC is here to stay, he insisted.

■ Clare Pelham is chief executive Judicial Appointments Commission. Find out more at: [www.judicialappointments.gov.uk](http://www.judicialappointments.gov.uk)

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# More about ACE

ACE is the UK ACE Association and is an inclusive organisation open to chief executives and senior managers who report to chief executives, working in central government Executive Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Non-Ministerial Departments and Trading Funds. Other chief executives of public sector organisations are able to apply for membership, but approval of membership will be subject to the agreement of the Board.

ACE promotes effective government and provides networking and learning opportunities for its members. ACE was formed in 2004 and exists to promote excellent working relationships throughout all aspects of government. It will seek, on an annual basis, to:

- Generate the opportunity for networking on the basis of an up-to-date database of contact details and specialisms
- Produce regular newsletters for the purpose of promoting and sharing good practice, experience and knowledge
- Organise an annual conference
- Organise two events which:
  - Highlight priority areas of action for government

- Offer specific opportunities for networking across the public and private sector
- Provide a point of contact between the Civil Service Steering Board (CSSB) and the Association and its members

In undertaking the above, ACE will neither seek to involve itself in policy development nor representative lobbying. Neither will ACE have the power to make decisions that would bind one, any or all, of the members. ACE is funded from member subscriptions.

The ACE London headquarters is located in the heart of Westminster and provides a range of facilities for members. This quiet and private location is ideal for relaxing, reading the current journals, meeting a colleague or simply having a cuppa. You can use the dedicated computer terminal to access the internet and read your emails.

- For a location map [click here](#)

## About ACE Reporter

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## Feedback

Read something that interests you? Concerns you? Annoys you? Want a chance to put across your view? Want to find out more? Whatever your view please share it with us.

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