

## Up-skilling improves efficiency at ICI

Worldwide paints and adhesives business ICI recently underwent a major restructure within their manufacturing departments and The Outsourced Training Company (TOTC) was appointed to advise on and deliver the change.

To improve the efficiency of ICI production and allow the company to compete at world class level, it was recognised that changes to ICI's competency framework were required to support the growth of the business and ensure that the right people were recruited for the right roles; part of the change of direction involved employees needing to be more proactive in taking responsibility for production maintenance issues.

Mark Ferries, TOTC said: "TOTC's unique approach means we work closely with managers to assess a company's needs and design a bespoke solution. With ICI, we identified that the company could benefit from up-skilling of operative staff in order to improve efficiency. Subsequently, new roles were created and some existing roles were changed.

“For example, the role of mix and fill operators was inefficient; if an operator encountered a technical problem with the machinery both were left idle until an engineer arrived to fix even the smallest malfunction. These delays were costly so we decided to encourage a proactive culture where operators would become ‘operator maintainers’. These new roles encompassed more responsibility meaning staff would perform basic preventive tasks, stop the lines as needed and resolve minor problems. The outcome was an improved morale within the workforce and a decrease in downtime for ICI production.”



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The new roles required updated job descriptions. Using a combination of description review and management interviews, TOTC identified both the technical and behavioural competencies required. Assessment centres were then developed by TOTC’s technical and occupational psychological teams who developed exercises to assess both technical (i.e. mechanical and electrical) and behavioural (i.e. leadership, quality-orientation) skills.

A series of 18 assessment centres were held at three different ICI locations across the UK, for approximately 300 candidates. TOTC worked closely with ICI management by training them as interviewers and including them in wash-up sessions to discuss candidate results.



Ian Wyatt, training manager at ICI said: “We were really impressed with TOTC’s ability to suggest positive solutions to the problems they

identified and then manage the whole assessment process – from carrying out task and needs analyses, designing and facilitating assessment centres through to implementing detailed skills training for the new posts. TOTC’s unique offering of technical expertise incorporated with psychological theory proved essential for facilitating the change.

“Whilst we had focused on the structural change, TOTC pointed out that we had overlooked the cultural factors and how change on such a large scale would affect our workforce. Recommendations were made to help smooth the transition and include staff in the vision for change.

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Not all successful candidates possessed all of the necessary competencies required for all the roles identified. TOTC therefore provided a consultant to work alongside the plant HR team and operational management to develop a training package to meet the requirements of the operator maintainer role. A training programme was developed with clear aims and objectives that embraced the new way of working at ICI. Training interventions were identified for each individual using real examples on ICI’s shop floor to make the experience ‘real’. This benefited ICI as all maintenance tasks carried out had a productive outcome as well as a learning outcome. The course was successfully delivered both on site at ICI’s works and as well as at TOTC’s premises, CEME.



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The programme is still ongoing and indications are that due to its success, it will be extended to cover more operator maintainers.

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