

CASE IN POINT

by Laura Franz-Kamissoko



Be **Effective**
or be **At Risk**

In these recessionary times, organisations have no choice but to be better at what they do than ever before, says Suzanne Ravenall, Executive Chairperson of The Effectiveness Company. "Today, excellence and efficiency are not only the watchwords of business success, but of business survival," she warns.

Suzanne Ravenall, Executive Chairperson, The Effectiveness Company

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As a personal assistant to the sales manager of a large telecommunications company in the United Kingdom, Ravenall observed that, in an environment full of highly educated people, some had the ability to execute while most did not. "Many people had the knowledge and know-how, but they lacked the key component that would have enabled them to put their plans into action: They lacked the ability to execute.

I realised with time that this is a disadvantage that many businesses face with their staff," she explains. Ravenall took an interest in understanding human nature and why it was that human resources in organisations performed the way they did, which led to her obtaining a degree in metaphysics along the way.

After having made a name for herself in the IT-outsourcing market, Ravenall established The Effectiveness Company in the late 1990s to help organisations to be more effective by providing their executives and managers with a step-by-step guide to putting their great ideas and strategies into action. She developed a generic tool, known as The Execution Box, to do this.

"Our product is unique. Search the Internet for answers to business problems and the results you will get are best practices, theory and a lot of intelligent ideas about how not to solve your problem. However, there are no websites or tools that will give you a step-by-step solution on how to fix your problem. In other words, they do not provide you with a process that, if followed to the letter, would give you the desired results. Hence the success of The Execution Box," explains Ravenall. The Execution Box is essentially a valuable mine of information, toolkits and technology provided through a single interface in the form of a social website – The eBox Community.

Over the last 12 years her company has studied global markets, business performance indicators, best practice guidelines, a myriad of articles, White Papers and knowledge bases, thereby continually learning and improving its own toolkits to meet its objective of empowering clients and transforming their businesses. "Our clients span all the economic sectors and, for me, the barometer of our success is the constant stream of letters of thanks that we receive for helping them to become more effective," says Ravenall.

"We offer a fairly unique service, and we obsess about delivery of world-class operational implementation using total quality management processes to deliver predictable outcomes. Our mission is to provide dynamic and innovative outsourcing and insourcing services that enable our clients to excel in their operational effectiveness. At the same time, we aim to enrich lives and have fun," she remarks.

Given the current global economic recession, organisations are in greater need of the services of The Effectiveness Company than ever before, according to

Ravenall. "Everyone is feeling the pinch, and I believe things are going to get worse before they get better. Companies are still tightening their belts, making the most of the resources they have, while expecting greater performance and efficiency from their staff," she observes.

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Organisations are also increasingly relying on Generation Y employees to deliver on their strategy. "At a time when there are fewer and fewer jobs available, I have observed younger people who lack some basic life skills coming through the ranks. I refer to them as the 'Throwaway Generation', not just because they consider everything disposable, but because they often lack the ability to see things through.

"As a member of Generation X, I believe we learned these basic life skills and the ability to stand on our own two feet from the school of hard knocks. It is crucial that youngsters entering the job market today understand the concept of accountability – being responsible for a task or a project from start to finish. And by 'finish' I don't just mean the point where you hand a project over to someone else because your part is done. By 'finish' I mean when the task or project is completely done," Ravenall goes on to explain.

Bright ideas are a dime a dozen; in this day and age CEOs get fired for not getting the job done. "The only way we can succeed and make a change for the better is by getting things done – delivery is key. We have to have tenacity and see a project through to the very end and overcome all obstacles to see it through. While there are many components to successful execution, such as paying attention to detail and being innovative and creative, I would say that tenacity is what sets the doers apart from everyone else. No matter how many times they get knocked down, they just get up again and find a different way to overcome an obstacle," says Ravenall.

Although plans and strategies that have been laid out well are fantastic, they are meaningless without execution. "This is where we come in. We have developed generic and scalable operational tools that assist companies, from small, medium-sized and micro enterprises to large corporates, in achieving sustainable operational performance improvement. Effective, efficient and sustainable execution is what every CEO and board focuses on today. We have found the gap and have successfully built our service offering within it," she notes. □