

The Unreasonable Learners

There is inordinate waste within our organisations
especially in the public sector

In particular we waste the potential of our people
- we cannot afford this waste

A massive opportunity is open to us

But only if

We are prepared to **THINK** differently

The Unreasonable Learners

There are many forward thinking individuals and groups in Scotland (and across the world). In our own way we are all striving to improve society and how we, individually and collectively, are valued. But as we work disparately our influence can be limited. Our aim is to work together; recognising our differences and then building on the areas of agreement. By working together we aim to create an informed alliance that has a significant impact on all our futures.

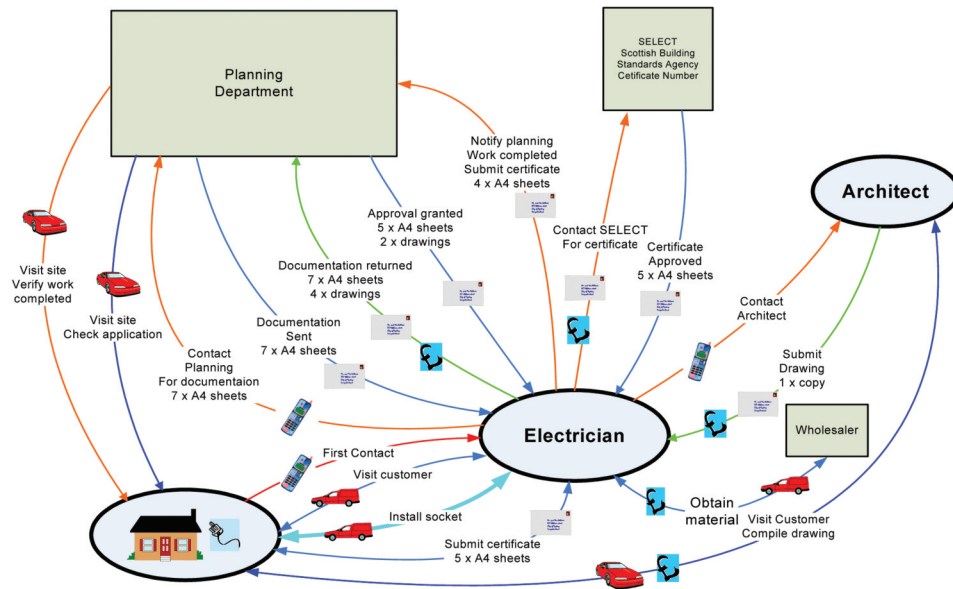
Our website is www.unreasonable-learners.com

The name 'Unreasonable Learners' comes from this quote from George Bernard Shaw,
"The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in trying to get the world to adapt to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."



Waste

There is inordinate waste in our public sector. Let us start with a simple example.



The above diagram represents the system for repairing a three pin socket (cost £4.50) in a local authority council house. All this extra work is created because we believe it is essential to oversee the work of the electrician.

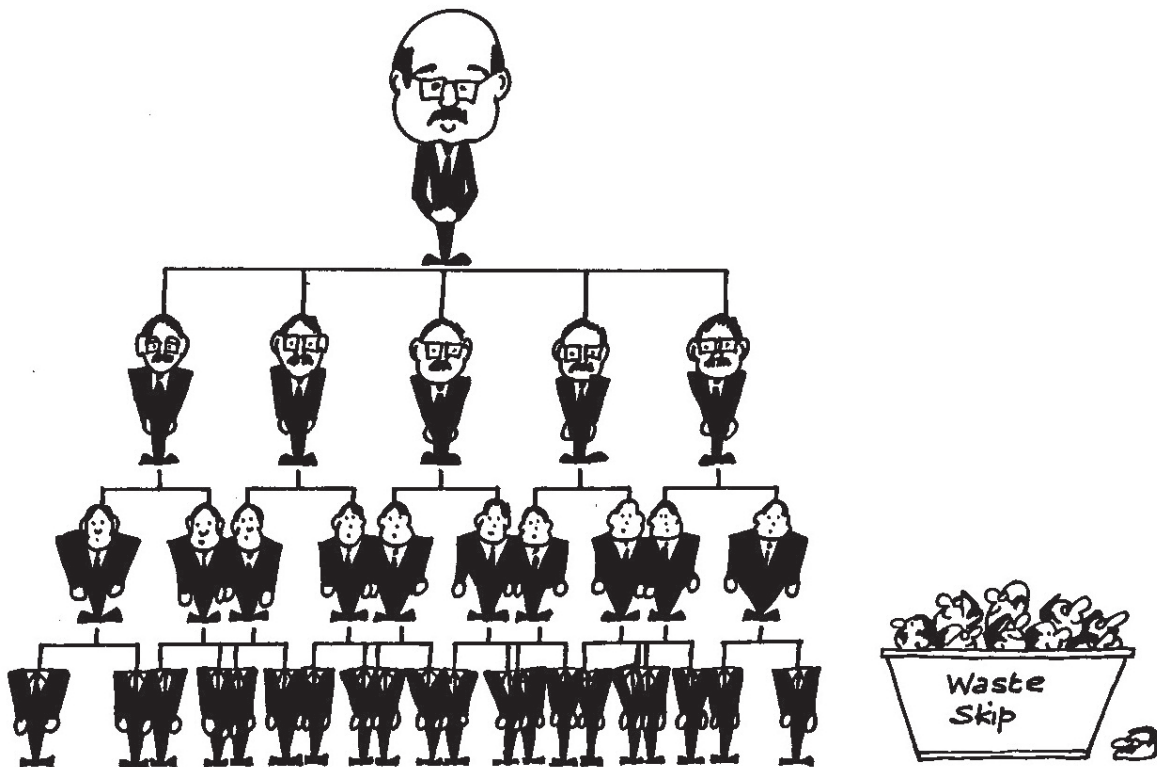
Some Other Sources of Waste - This list reflects both factual and anecdotal evidence. It should also be recognised that it is only the tip of the iceberg. It is recommended that a full research project should be initiated to identify just how much waste there is in the system. We, ourselves, would not be surprised if it exceeded 60% of the total budget.

- 40% negative spend on interventions that could have been avoided (Christie Report)
- Lack of Innovation – a general recognition that there is a risk averse culture throughout the public sector
- The regulation becomes the customer rather than the service user (Russel Griggs Chairman of Regulation Review Commission)
- 80% of call centre work is ‘failure demand’ (Christie report)
- “Demoralisation may be the most pernicious and insidious cost” (John Seddon)
- Drugs and gang policies are simply not working and have not been working for the last 35 years”. (UN Global Commission on Drug policy and Mike McCarron of Keeping Doors Open.)
- Auditing against standards rather than customer needs.
- Failure to manage the whole by focusing on only those things that can be measured – which amounts, at best, to 5% of the whole. Our failure to manage the unmeasurable
- Manipulation of data to meet targets – the tick box mentality – very widespread.
- Students attend University for qualifications not for knowledge and the opportunity to learn. The Universities blame the schools for destroying a student’s love of learning. The schools blame the University entrance criteria.
- 27% of graduates are not in full time employment 3 years after graduating (Higher Education Statistics Agency)
- Bonuses demotivate - Research has shown that bonuses demotivate and negatively influence performance. (Alfie Kohn, Daniel Pink, and the High Pay Commission) The public sector continues to ape the private sector in the mistaken belief that bonuses motivate.
- Audit Scotland has found that delays and late decisions to drop cases in Scottish courts are costing the Scottish Justice System up to £40million a year.
- Reoffending: An £81m rehabilitation programme by the Scottish Government has reportedly caused reoffending rates to fall by just 1% over the last three years, leaving the recidivism (within two years) rate at 44%.
- Planning: A major overhaul of Scotland’s planning system has failed to cut delays and has left a £20million black hole in council finances, (Audit Scotland)
- NHS: “plummeting” morale of nurses (The Royal College of Nursing)
- Education: 20% of children reject our education system. (Billy O’Neill)

We cannot afford this waste

The Fundamental Cause

Our Hierarchical Thinking



Our culture believes that we require to be directed and controlled. Our Society believes we need leaders to provide direction and they should then be supported by scrutiny methods to ensure we comply. The perceptions that evolve from this basic belief are hard wired into us all. It goes under the common name of "Command and Control"

The early proponents of this style of management were Daniel McCallum, Henry Ford and Fredrick Taylor; three Americans who were all born before the American Civil War. It was appropriate to their time where people were coming off the land and were not imbued with the 9-5 discipline of the modern working world. It was nice and simple and most certainly addressed the needs of their day.

The flawed assumptions that underpinned their thinking were:

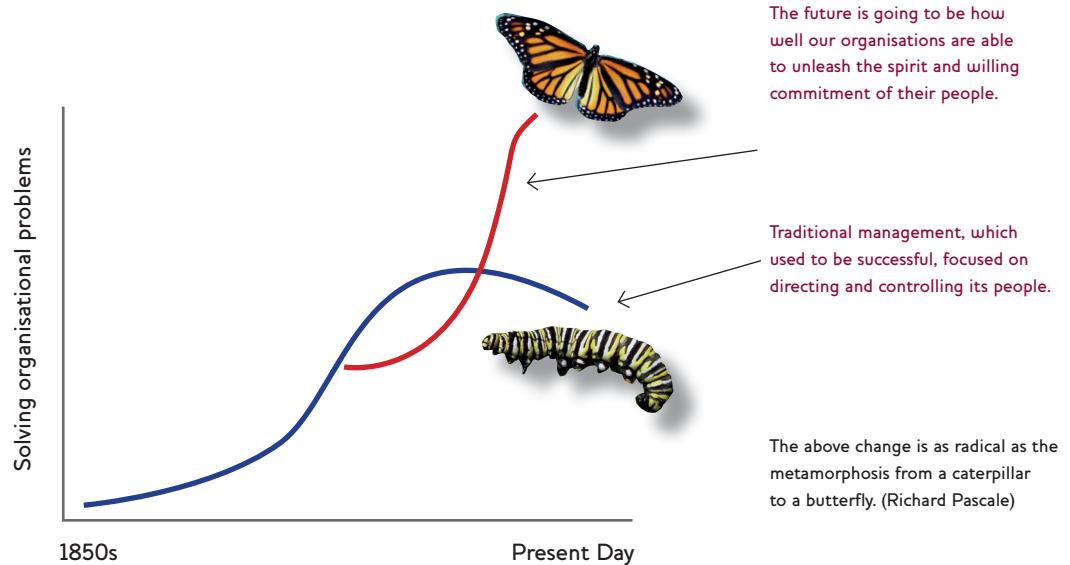
- That people are naturally lazy and need to be directed and controlled.
- That we can and need to motivate people through bonus systems, targets, etc.
- That we can manage complex wholes by breaking them down into manageable parts. The whole is the sum of the parts.
- "If you cannot measure it you cannot manage it" – management by measurable figures alone.

***These flawed assumptions are the root causes
of the massive waste in our organisations***

The Opportunity - to think differently

*"We cannot solve our problems from the same level of thinking that created them."
- Albert Einstein.*

The life cycles of styles of management



The extensive research over the past decades has displaced the original simplistic Command and Control assumptions with the recognition that:

- Work and responsibility are basic needs. The vast majority of us are committed to doing a good job. We love to learn. We are intrinsically motivated.
- The whole is the sum of the parts plus the connections between the parts. The need to manage the connections as well as the parts. The discipline of systems thinking. The major factor in determining outcomes is the design of these systems, rather than the diligence and competence of people working in the systems..
- We live in complex and interdependent systems. No one person or central body has the knowledge to control and develop these systems. They are a function of society's values and how it thinks.

The above requires a major paradigm shift in the thinking and hence structures of our society. To quote the American Richard Pascale – the change *"is as radical as the metamorphosis from a caterpillar to a butterfly"*.

Existing researched knowledge is pushing us toward structures that are based on:

- a belief in people
- The need to understand and redesign the complex systems that characterise our society.
- A recognition that the driving force for progress will not come from central direction but from innovative people at the workplace.

The aim is to make progress by unleashing the spirit and willing commitment of the Scottish people.

Adam Smith had a vision of a society that was continually learning without individuals having to know all that much.

The Nature of the Change

There is a relationship between our underpinning assumptions and the methods that evolve from these assumptions.

Underpinning Assumptions lead to the **Methods Used** – which provide the **Results**

When we change the assumptions, the methods and the language used in the organisation changes. If we change just the method nothing basically changes, gains secured are soon eroded and the practice is steadily subsumed back into the status quo.

Our present flawed assumptions

That people are naturally lazy and require to be directed and controlled. We manage the whole by managing the parts. We abhor risk.

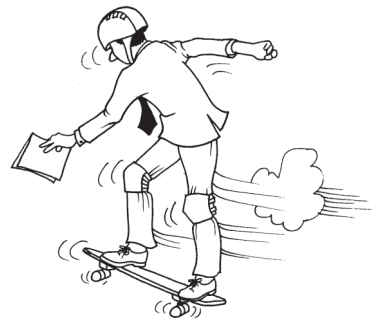


Methods and Language Used:

- Vision statements
- Compliance with directions
- Budgets
- Regulations and Standards
- Targets – Outcomes
- Job Specifications
- Accountability
- Performance monitoring of the individual
- Tick Boxes
- "If you cannot measure you cannot control it" – management by measurable figures
- Data passed up – to enable control
- Incentives, Bonuses
- Post Code lottery
- Distortion of Data
- Auditing against Standards
- Training of individuals - qualifications
- Competences
- We learn through experience
- Advancement through promotion
- Etc.

Future fully researched assumptions

People like work and we manage the whole by designing systems to enable people's spirit. We welcome experiment, learning and variety.



Methods and Language Used:

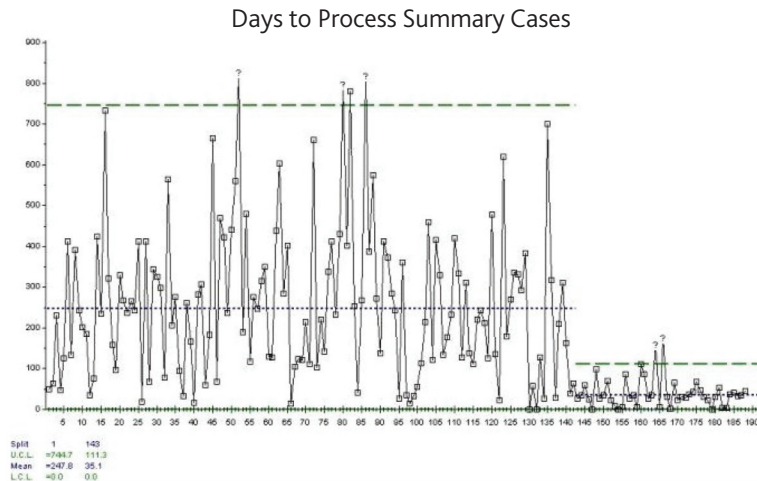
- Clear articulation of aim and purpose
- Intrinsic motivation – we are all different
- Systems design
- Customers
- Integrating staff with aim of the organisation
- Employees as customers of system's design
- Deployment flow maps – rich diagrams
- Detail complexity and Dynamic Complexity
- Performance monitoring of the system
- Auditing against customer needs
- Statistical Process Control
- Data passed down to enable improvement
- Improvement Teams
- Managing the Unmeasurable
- Experiments
- Organisational learning
- Scientifically developed knowledge
- Learning based on theory
- Advancement through greater knowledge.
- Etc.

This change of thinking does have to be secured across the whole of society.

It Works

Below is a cross section of examples of projects and organisations that are highly successful because they are underpinned by a belief in people and then go on to design systems to enable inherent spirit and willing commitment.

The Public Sector – The Grampian Justice System



The above graph shows the improvement secured, 247 days to 35 days, in the time taken from when a person is charged (Summary Cases) to the conclusion of the court case. Vanguard were the consultants. The crux of the project was that the participants - the police, court services, solicitors, the accused, the procurator fiscal's office and social work - were enabled to talk directly with each other without going through hierarchal channels. The time taken to conclude a case was the measurable improvement, but of greater significance was the unmeasurable lift in morale of the people involved. They felt they were, at last, enabled to do a useful the job.

Education – The Feuerstein Projects

The Feuerstein methodology, from an understanding how the brain works, teaches it "How to Learn." This is in contrast to traditional education that simple pours out of date information into the child. Developing our learning ability enables the brain to meet the wide variety of challenges we face in both our social and working lives. It transforms the capability and more especially the wellbeing of the individual. (See <http://www.feuersteintraining.co.uk>) There are successful on-going projects throughout Scotland.

A Community Initiative

Some 25 years ago, when the extra mural teaching of sport in schools declined, parents in the small town in the North East (Ellon) started a mini-rugby club. Within a year they had 150+ kids involved from under 8 to 12 and within 10 years the club covered all age groups up to under 18. They were, however, playing on an overused public park, so with £300 in the bank they purchased a field in the North of the town. (worth £30,000) The next stage was to secure the cooperation of the other sports in the town, the two football clubs, the Ladies hockey and the senior

rugby club; plus the MD of a local construction firm.

And then onto the local council who responded to the cooperation evident in the town and sourced funding to develop a state of the art sporting facility. It is today the envy of many small towns. From a small seed of cooperation a vibrant sports facility was created. This type of initiative is far from unique, it is happening in a wide range of communities and in a wide range of applications. The mini rugby club is as strong as ever.

A Community - Here We Are - Cairndow

The community on Loch Fyne have come together to move from a declining dependency culture to one that is focused on determining its own future through providing resources to interface all aspects that impinge on the community's future. These interfaces include a visitor centre (75,000 visitors to date) close liaison with an educational establishment (Argyll College), Working with the local council (Argyll & Bute) and the development of a wide range of projects including the building of a biomass energy plant. The fundamental ethos is a belief in people and then developing the means to enable their creativity.

Abermed Ltd

Some 10 years ago Abermed was an established company providing medical services to the North Sea Offshore industry. Its turnover was £900,000pa. The doctors who owned the company agreed to a management buy-out and the new Managing Director radically changed the basic management approach. He moved the thinking in the company from the traditional command and control style to one that enabled the taking of responsibility and encouraging initiative and innovative thinking. The company now operates all over the UK as well as in Kazakhstan, and other locations worldwide providing Occupational Health Solutions and training to a broad range of organisations, as well as being the market leader in the Energy sector in the UK. Its turnover now exceeds £21 million. An interesting facet of the company is that few of the original managers are still with the company, they found that the switch from controlling to enabling people a difficult transition.

Employee Owned Companies

- John Lewis Partnership – the most successful retail outlet in the UK
- W L Gore – the most innovative company and one that is regularly voted the best company to work for
- International Employee owned companies – Mondragon (Spain) Semco (Brazil)
- Scottish Employee Owned Companies - Tullis Russel (Fife), Loch Fyne Oysters(Argyll) Woollard & Henry (Aberdeen) etc etc

The book "Beyond the Corporation" by David Erdal provides extensive evidence that employee owned organisations are more successful and longer lasting than traditional shareholding enterprises. To quote – "It would be hard to imagine better informed, more involved or more enthusiastic sets of employees."

We are amazingly bad at learning from these examples

Available Resources

We Are Flooded with Resources

People

- 5+ Million Scots, the vast majority of which are committed to the future well-being of our society (plus the Scottish diaspora)
- 1.5 million graduates
- The many forward thinking individuals

Case Studies

- There are innumerable case studies where real progress has been achieved through enabling front line staff. There is great scope for learning from these projects.

Consultancies and Learning Groups

- There are many high quality consulting practices and learning groups –to mention a few - Hunter Business Consultants, Resolis Associates Ltd., Vanguard, The Centre for Confidence and Wellbeing, RSA, DLN, CQI, AMED plus many many more.

Communities

- There are community groups right across our society who are capable of making significant contributions to our future wellbeing. One of the organisations working in this area is Assist Social Capital.

Exemplar Organisation

- The organisations that stand out are employee owned such as John Lewis Partnership, W L Gore, Tullis Russel and Loch Fyne Oysters. See also the work of Cooperative Development Scotland.

Documented Knowledge

- There has been extensive research into motivation, systems, variation, relationships, how we learn, etc. over the past decades. All that knowledge is extensively documented. A bibliography of some of the books available is on the Unreasonable Learners web site.

The Unreasonable Learners

- The Unreasonable Learners is a connected group of forward thinkers each bringing their own expertise to the common aim of contributing to the future of Scotland. There is great variety and depth to the knowledge available from this group. Their web site is www.unreasonable-learners.com

The Way Forward

Thinking Differently

- We all have to think differently – the whole of society. We require to move away from the deadening effects of “Command and Control” and open out a culture of experiment, learning and variety that fully utilises the spirit of all our citizens.

Engaging Society

- With modern electronic communication we can create connections between all those who are committed to moving Scotland forward
- We can also connect to those across the world who are at the forefront of modern thinking.
- We can organise a series of “Thought Leading” presentations by International thought leaders. They can then be beamed electronically across the whole of Scotland.
- We can arrange for groups across Scotland to receive these presentations and then open out discussions and actions in response to the perceptions presented.
- We can facilitate broad based conversations in context of our culture and future
- Through the above activities we can build a critical mass of citizens who are willing to invest the thinking to drive us forward.

Removal of Waste and Barriers

- We should initiate research into the waste caused by our existing organisational culture
- We should also research the barriers that inhibit progress.
- The consistent removal of this waste and these barriers

A Belief in Knowledge

- We have a culture in medicine and engineering that recognises the importance of science in determining past and future progress. The need to develop a similar culture in context of management.
- The general recognition that “management” is a practical discipline that uses knowledge that has been developed scientifically. It is not an art based on gut feel.

Organisational/Societal Learning

- The recognition that Organisational/Societal learning is quite different from individual learning. It is not the sum of individual learning.
- The identification of and appreciation of the complex systems that characterise our society.
- Enabling the continual improvement of society’s systems by engaging our people
- Encouraging a culture of experimentation and learning

Engaging Resources

- Engaging the extensive resources in Scotland and abroad, from individuals to consultants. Learning from the success of their projects.

Fundamental aim:

- To make progress by unleashing the spirit and willing commitment of the Scottish people.
- In so doing to create a learning society that is continually improving the systems that characterise our society.