

Book review

Excellent - A guide for the implementation of the EFQM-Excellence Model

For anyone still doubting the real business benefits of the EFQM's excellence model, there is now a neat single volume answer. The aptly named, *Excellent – A Guide for Implementation of the EFQM-Excellence Model* is the work of a group of European assessors, and fortunately our office received a review copy. Reviewing this book now is partly motivated by a sense of guilt, as *Excellent* has proved to be a constant desk reference over the last eight months.

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While EFQM material highlights criteria and their measurement, *Excellent*, the book puts the model's application into context, drawing on

the extensive experience of seven credited authors (three of who are EFQM lead Assessors for Siemens, Alcatel, Air Products, Schmalbach-Lubeca and Akzo-Nobel). Somehow the pitfalls of multiple authorship and multi-language publishing are avoided, and what emerges is a compelling reference book that translates the aspirations of the business excellence standards to real working environments and into tangible business benefits and improvement. In effect the book draws on the best practices the authors' have observed, and shows how such practices fit into the business excellence framework. In doing so, the book manages to successfully convey the sense of the EFQM model being a dynamic, evolving tool for business improvement, so highlighting the often neglected fact that the model is regularly adapted to reflect changes in the business environment and practice. Rather than being a static standard or award, Business Excellence is shown as being an evolving management tool that strives to empower firms to come up to the best standards in play. This book

manages to give a sense of that ongoing process and wide-sense of ownership of the model.

The experience of the books' authors however underpin the Excellence model and the book's greatest strength – the inseparability of a business' activities. While each chapter deals with another element of the model, constant reference is made to the impact and dependence on other elements. So customer satisfaction, for instance, is shown to be reliant on leadership, appropriate strategy and rational functioning processes; while processes, in turn rely on the guidance from leadership, which ensures that they are focused on real customer needs, and so rely on inputs from people suppliers, and environment etc.

It might all appear obvious after you've read it, but it is testimony to the experience and skills of the book's authors that such an interdependence is shown as clearly as it is here. In addition to providing the bigger picture, the book also acts as an invaluable tool for anyone embarking on self-assessment and wishing to improve their scores. Neither the book nor the excellence approach are short term undertakings, and only the joyless and friendless would consider taking this book on holiday. But for anyone still involved in business improvement after the summer holidays, *Excellent* will prove a valuable investment, probably more for its ability to provoke considered and realistic ideas for business improvement and their implementation, than for providing quick fix business solutions.

An invaluable tool for anyone embarking on self-assessment

Brian O'Grady
Excellence Ireland, Dublin
E-mail: b.ogradey@excellence-ireland.ie

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