



How to become an Outstanding Organisation Through Discipline



INTRODUCTION

If you've got as far as downloading this ebook you have no doubt identified that you aren't 100% happy with the way your business is operating right now. Things aren't as clear as they should be. Well done for taking the first step. That's a massive step forward on your journey to becoming an outstanding organisation.

I have written a series of four ebooks to help Business Owners, Directors and Managers identify and understand where any issues within the business may be. They also show you how to resolve those issues in a way that will positively shape the future of the business.

Research by Karen Martin, a leading US change management expert, shows that outstanding organisations adopt four disciplines to keep them at the top of their game:

- 1) having **clarity** about what they are about,
- 2) being super **focused** on what they are doing and avoiding distraction,
- 3) being **disciplined** about how the work gets done and who does it,
- 4) **engaging** the whole workforce in the first three disciplines.

I totally agree with her findings and find much of what I do with clients fits with her research. I'm keen to share this research and the ebook series is one way to share it.

For each of the four disciplines I have developed four questions you can ask yourself and your colleagues. I have provided advice and actions that would help you answer yes to the questions and so put your organisation on the way to become outstanding.

This is the third ebook in the series, focused on applying discipline to how work gets done, how the business is managed and how problems get fixed.

Throughout each of the ebooks I provide lots of practical advice that has been tried and tested throughout my many years of working with organisations like yours.

**IF YOU DON'T
LIKE SOMETHING,
CHANGE IT.
IF YOU CAN'T
CHANGE IT,
CHANGE YOUR
ATTITUDE.**

Maya Angelou

Do you need to make changes in your business?

As a Business Owner, Director or Manager you will, undeniably, have the drive and determination to succeed. Along your journey, you might have come across a few obstacles, some you knew how to overcome and some you didn't. Usually some kind of change was required to overcome an obstacle. To become an outstanding organisation you will need to make more changes in your business.

DISCIPLINE THREE

DISCIPLINE

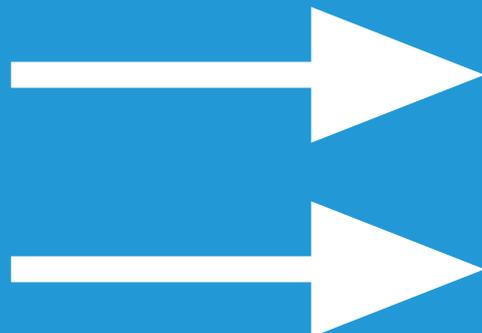
Now that you have clarity and focus you need to ensure that you have the right disciplines in place to execute your objectives.

For clarity I do not mean punishment or any other forms of controlling a workforce!

Discipline in outstanding organisations is a deliberate practice repeatedly performed. So, this means planning, having standard approaches to doing things, learning from mistakes and improving how things get done.

You could be mistaken that a disciplined approach equates to being told what to do, removing scope for innovation and creative freedom. Here is the counter-intuitive truth, by having discipline in how you do work, you create the freedom to be innovative.

Imagine a simple example – backing up data by different members of staff. One approach could be to leave the individuals to do it themselves and report back when finished. You would expect different approaches to the process and taking different times. Time and effort would have been wasted - so leaving less time for some of the individuals to work on more important and potentially creative areas of work. To create that time and focus to be creative, it would be better to have a standard approach to backing up data.



QUESTION ONE

Does your business use standard methods to make your products or deliver your service?

Three questions you should consider:

- Are those and other standards well known and shared across staff and sites?
- What areas of operation can you identify that don't have standard ways of working?
- If there are some standard ways of working, do the staff and their supervisors measure the performance of that standard and regularly look for ways to make it better or deal with problems?

A few words of warning though...

A guideline is not a standard and invites people to do things slightly differently, i.e. causing variation. And variation in process and output is a killer of both cost and quality. Also, excessive attempts at standardisation can kill innovation and staff taking responsibility. **So, use standardisation where it:**

- Increases predictability of output
- Reduces risk of failure
- Makes it easier to see when things go wrong.

To conclude on this point ask yourself these questions:

- Would you work on a job where the process doesn't work well?
- What would you think if your manager told you how to do a job but you had no say?
- Would you want to do a job that you hadn't received proper training for?

Toyota, the global star of standardisation and innovation, attributes this quote to its chairman:

"You get better results from average people managing brilliant processes than from brilliant people managing broken processes".

There's plenty of food for thought just in that statement.



QUESTION TWO

Does your business regularly look to remove wasted materials or time from how you produce your products or services?

The recession made many people go through their profit and loss account looking for cost lines to cut back on. This approach can have short term benefits but can have a less sustainable impact because:

- They don't always look at the underlying operational tasks that drive the costs. So, people cut back on tasks or cut the corners on them.
- Cutting costs on one cost line can have unforeseen consequences on other cost lines. For example, saving cost on IT spend by not upgrading systems may affect staff morale, create down time if the systems are slow or crash more often.

Going back to the previous question, having a standard approach to waste reduction would be helpful. **That approach would:**

- 1) Look at the complete process
- 2) Measure the results of the change to check that it's effective and long term.

QUESTION THREE

Does your business use a consistent method for solving manufacturing or service problems?

One of the core characteristics of an outstanding organisation is its ability to solve problems. **Having methods to solve problems means:**

- 1) They can be fixed faster
- 2) Everyone can be trained to fix problems

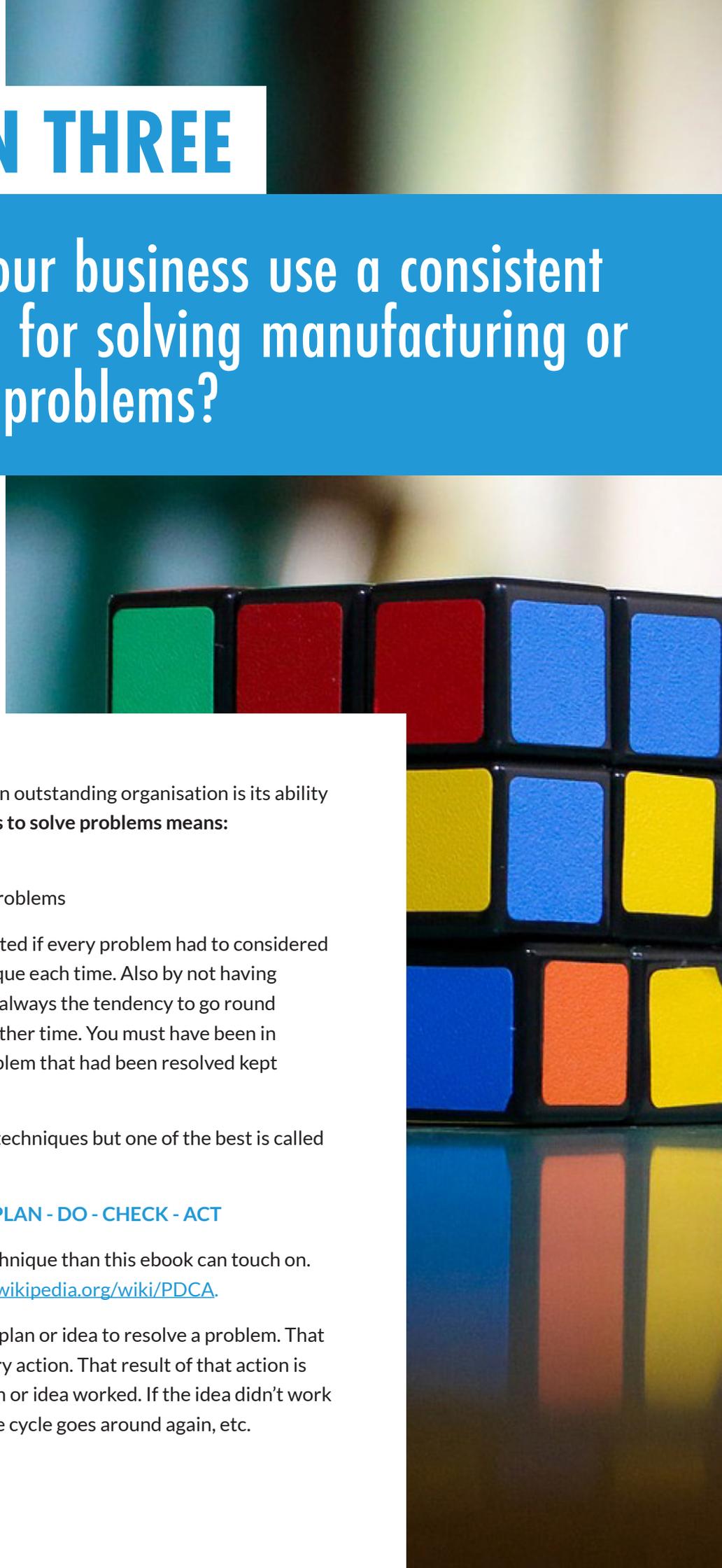
Think of the time that could be wasted if every problem had to be considered and solved using a different technique each time. Also by not having a standard solving method there is always the tendency to go round a problem, leaving it to crop up another time. You must have been in meetings where you thought a problem that had been resolved kept coming back again and again.

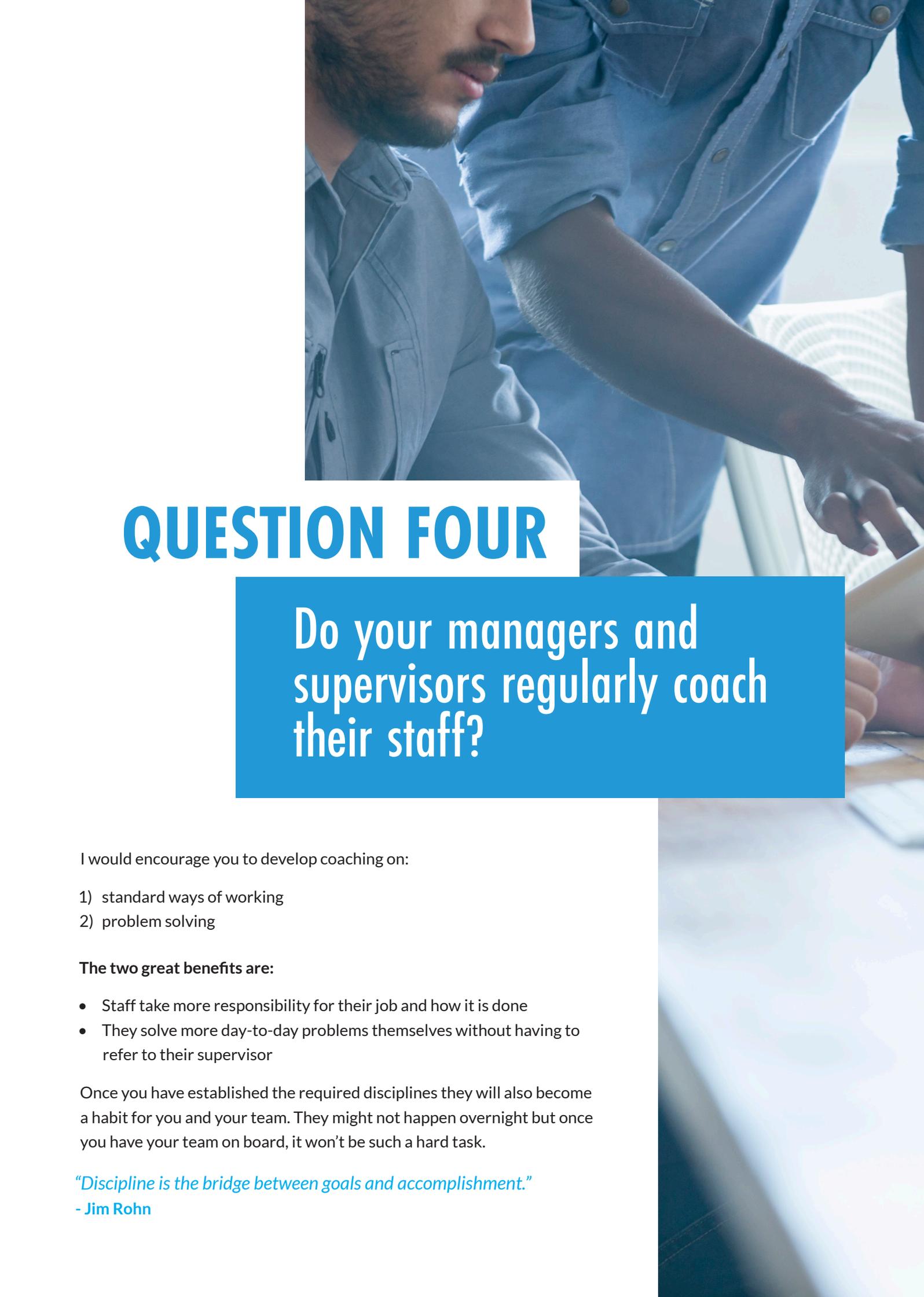
There are several problem solving techniques but one of the best is called PDSA or PDCA, standing for:

PLAN - DO - STUDY - ADJUST or PLAN - DO - CHECK - ACT

It is worth reading more on this technique than this ebook can touch on. Try Wikipedia as a start - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PDCA>.

The PDSA cycle assumes there is a plan or idea to resolve a problem. That idea is tested by doing the necessary action. That result of that action is studied or checked to see if the plan or idea worked. If the idea didn't work out as planned it is adjusted and the cycle goes around again, etc.





QUESTION FOUR

Do your managers and supervisors regularly coach their staff?

I would encourage you to develop coaching on:

- 1) standard ways of working
- 2) problem solving

The two great benefits are:

- Staff take more responsibility for their job and how it is done
- They solve more day-to-day problems themselves without having to refer to their supervisor

Once you have established the required disciplines they will also become a habit for you and your team. They might not happen overnight but once you have your team on board, it won't be such a hard task.

"Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment."

- Jim Rohn

CONCLUSION

As a Business Owner, Director or Manager I hope you have found value in this ebook and have learnt some useful techniques that you can apply to help your business to become an outstanding organisation -specifically around making the business operate in a disciplined way.

I see the same issues crop up in the businesses I work with and I've used these tried and tested

methods for many years. They just require a desire to change. Rome wasn't built in a day so be patient, but once you start to put the things you've learnt into practice you will start to see the results.

About me

I specialise in business improvement programmes for SMEs in Yorkshire.

I make businesses work better by:

- focusing on a sustainable business strategy and growth plan
- applying a creative approach to improvement

but most importantly:

- appreciating the power of the workforce to make it happen



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