

## Report From Poland Translation Management – Europe 2009 International Conference

“All work is a process” Is a mantra you often hear Adrian Hughes, director of performance solutions at liE, chant on our programmes, Six Sigma, Lean and Continuous Improvement alike.

The challenge presented by the delegates of the Translation Management Europe Conference in Warsaw was “Translation is an art form! Language is Beautiful!”. And there his sympathies went out to the 150 or so owners, heads of and quality professionals from Europe’s leading translation organisations.

Adrian’s Master Black Belt, Six Sigma head went into overdrive considering the amount of variation that could occur between one human writing something down; and then another human converting those words into a different language; and then a third human reading and getting the same meaning and context as was the original intention.

But, “All work is a process, and all process can be measured, and all processes should be continuously improved”. Through his presentation and the panel session, he made the case that all organisations need from time to time, to sit back and think about their performance, their actions and the direction they are headed in, and potentially to make changes and improvements. The systems thinkers know that to consider items in isolation can be dangerous and so he presented the benefits of a process of systematic and holistic organisational review using the Investors in Excellence Standard.

Another question posed was “What makes a Quality translation?”. As you may imagine there were almost as many different answers to this as there were people in the room. Adrian went back to first principles, the Quality Gurus, and reminded conference of Philip Crosby’s First Absolute: “The definition of Quality is conformance to customer requirements” and the principle of Lean “Understand what value is to the customer”.

Both these statements imply systematic approaches to collecting feedback and data from customers and prospective customers; converting that data into knowledge that then drives improvement of processes, product and service design. Those that have benefited from its application know that the Investors in Excellence Standard examines and challenges organisations with exactly this type of Quality thinking.

The TM Europe quality debate served as a real reminder that the teachings of Messrs. Deming , Juran and Crosby still have the answers to many of the challenges our organisations face.