

# **ISPI EMEA Conference, June 20, 2002**

Opening Dinner Comments by Carol M. Panza

## **What Is ISPI and what makes it a truly international organization?**

Founded in 1962, the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) is the leading international association dedicated to improving productivity and performance in the workplace. ISPI represents more than 10,000 international and chapter members throughout the United States, Canada, and 40 other countries. ISPI's mission is to develop and recognize the proficiency of our members and advocate the use of Human Performance Technology. Though the Society's Annual Conference & Expo has always been held in North America, Institutes have been, and will continue to be conducted around the world, wherever there is interest in the Performance Technology. ISPI's newsletter is now electronic making communication with the membership worldwide much more timely and efficient. In addition to the P&I Journal, PIQ and the book publishing program, the Society also supports real world research and is very interested in encouraging participation in these programs by professionals around the world. ISPI is also working, through staff professionals such as Roger Addison and Elizabeth Davidov, to encourage and support the development of active chapters such as ISPI EMEA that will provide a community of professionals and a strong local network operating outside of North America.

However, what really makes ISPI international is the technology which is at the core of the organization. That is, the Performance Technology is a comprehensive set of tools and techniques beginning with performance (valued results for clients) and cause analysis, rather than beginning with a predetermined solution such as e-learning or even training in general. We believe that each company or other organization, should be addressed as they are and where they operate (their "marketplace"), to define improvement requirements that are specific and appropriate to them.

## **How does ISPI support the tenets of Global Fluency?**

ISPI is comprised of professionals with a myriad of experience and expertise. What ties these professionals together is the overarching Performance Technology into which the various tools and techniques all fit. Dr. Tosti indicated, regarding Global Fluency, that as long as an organization focused on practices, techniques, etc. there could be no agreement and little or no performance progress. However, when the focus was placed on fundamental values, agreement could be reached to support improvement while permitting the various locations to design and implement practical, successful practices for achieving common values locally. It is the same with the Performance Technology, you are likely to find disagreement on tools and techniques from place to place and even from professional to professional as each deals with their own experience and skill set. When, instead, you focus on the fundamental principles that underlie the Performance Technology as ISPI has done, you can get universal agreement on those principles. So, the Society has focused on the following principles:

- Focus on Results
- Be systematic in analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation

- Add Value
- Partner or work collaboratively with others

Further, the recently launched certification process, is based on a set of standards that were created from ISPI's four guiding principles, following a systematic process, and adhering to a Code of Ethics. The complete standards are summarized as follows:

1. Focus on results and help clients focus on results.
2. Look at situations systemically taking into consideration the larger context including competing pressures, resource constraints, and anticipated change.
3. Add value in how you do the work and through the work itself.
4. Partner or collaborate with clients and other experts as required.
5. Be systematic in all aspects of the process including:
  - a. The assessment of the need or opportunity.
  - b. The analysis of the work and workplace to identify the cause or factors that limit performance.
  - c. The design of the solution or specification of the requirements of the solution.
  - d. The development of all or some of the solution and its elements.
  - e. The implementation of the solution.
  - f. The evaluation of the solution.
6. Conduct yourself in work in ways that are in keeping with ISPI's Code of Ethics.

## **My Personal Goal on the Board**

My personal goal as a member of the Board of Directors for ISPI, continues to be the growth of international membership numbers and, more importantly, to support increasingly active roles for those members. From my perspective, the ISPI EMEA Chapter is an important step in the right direction. It provides an opportunity to participate that is relatively local to non North American members. This is particularly important for professionals working in those countries that have not yet developed a local chapter or where the chapter membership numbers are too small to support activities such as the EMEA Assembly.

In my term on the Board, I have consistently recommended that non North American members be considered for leadership roles on Committees and task forces as well as to be candidates for the Board of Directors. I will also continue to encourage all of you and the other non North American members I meet, to volunteer to participate on ISPI Committees that do not require face to face meetings. I am pleased and honored to have had the privilege of working with all of you who have contributed your skills and energy to launching the EMEA chapter and to making this Assembly successful. I hope that many of you will go on to more and more active participation on the International level so that the international perspective and global fluency of the Society will grow. Some of the folks that were part of the first EMEA meeting in Brussels were concerned that the Performance Technology would be viewed as just another American idea being exported internationally. I submit that your active participation, the research, success stories and articles you contribute from outside of the US, will ensure that ISPI will have a broad and genuine international focus centered on the Performance Technology for true global fluency.

# Some Personal Thoughts on Global Fluency

## The Goal of Global Fluency

Why do we care about global, or any other kind of, fluency for our organizations? The answer is simple. We live in a global economy, where business is done certainly with customers, but also with employees and partners across borders for most companies of any size, and, definitely for those planning to grow and prosper in the future. An objective of successful operations across borders and other cultural demarcations is not limited to business enterprises. Large charitable organizations, for example, continue to look for ways to achieve their established goals in the context of multiple countries and cultures worldwide. That is, it's a small world and growing smaller!



## Prerequisites to TRUE Global Fluency

I personally believe that global fluency depends on global respect as one critical prerequisite. That is, we must respect the skills, knowledge and traditions of our clients, colleagues and, yes, even competitors. There are actually three important prerequisites for building global fluency.

***Accomplishments - Focus on results or accomplishments rather than activities, techniques or behaviors.*** That is, what processes and people are in place to get done, will let you build agreement and common understanding, whereas the activities, techniques and/or behaviors employed, will almost invariably trigger controversy and disagreement across locations, companies and cultures/countries.

***Analysis - Ask questions and determine the “unbiased” reality of operations.*** That is, complete a thorough analysis and document what is, without the blinders or filters that may result from previous experience with a particular, job type, function/process or industry.

***Visual - Using visual/nonverbal communication tools is effective for both data gathering and also documenting/confirming a common understanding of what is and what could be.*** Nonverbal communication methods are far more efficient than verbal methods. A

picture truly is worth a thousand words! Visual/nonverbal communication tools also help to overcome language and cultural barriers.

## **Results/Accomplishment Focus**

Arriving at a common understanding across employees, functions, companies, industries and countries becomes much easier (even for those who are not naturally empathetic!) when you accept the following fundamental concept. From person to person, from company to company and, of course, from country to country there can be a great deal of disagreement on the techniques and, even, the tools for operating work processes and performing job tasks. However, when we focus, instead, on valued outcomes, results or accomplishments, there is suddenly a great deal of agreement. So, if we build agreement on critical and valued results - ***what we are trying to get done*** - for our organizations, we begin to create a positive and practical framework for working together, while at the same time accepting and even learning from differences in how those results are achieved - ***what we do***. A focus on results or accomplishments allows us 1) to build agreement, 2) keeps our fundamental processes stable, even in the face of technological and other changes and, at the same time, 3) keeps these processes open to continuous improvement. The moral of the story is that we don't need to force people in Africa to function in exactly the same way as people in Israel in order to achieve the desired results or to contribute to common goals. We must recognize that it is the results that should get counted and managed and using one person's, company's or country's tools and techniques is not necessarily the only way to achieve those valued results.

## **Comprehensive Top Down and Open-minded Analysis**

Professionals in our field typically indicate that they have, or plan to, complete front-end analysis (FEA) prior to the design or customization and, then, implementation of a "solution." Even when analysis is done, it is often done in the context of a predetermined solution that has worked somewhere else or where there are preconceptions of "the" correct way (activities/tasks) to operate a process, function or company. When analysis is done (what is and/or what could be specified) with a top down, macro to micro approach and results focus, cultural differences do not become issues, unless . . . the analysis is done bounded by preconceptions (wearing our own culturally defined "glasses") or limited in focus to customization of established solutions.

## **Visual/Nonverbal Communication Tools**

It is quite true that a picture is worth a thousand words - and maybe more! When two people are unable to communicate verbally because they speak different languages, they can still communicate a great deal with body language and other visual/nonverbal means. Furthermore, crossing national boundaries prompts the need for translation of verbal communication and, thereby, the introduction of "error" and misinterpretation. Even within the same language, there are issues of interpretation. There are colloquialisms in the US that are not understood in the UK and vice versa though there is a common language spoken!

## **International, Cross-Cultural Examples**

### **Example 1**

The first example concerns the international tanker fleet for a large global oil company headquartered in the USA. The company had an appraisal document that was the core element of

an annual “event” aimed at rating and then ranking all officer level fleet employees. The document had been created in the US based on US values. For example, one of the 12 questions on the appraisal document was, “He gets excited about his work.” In the context of the American culture, this question - I believe - was attempting to identify employees who were “committed” and “motivated.” Even within the American culture, however, it would have been ineffective to appraise an employee’s performance based on personality traits. In the context of the international tanker fleet, it was . . . well . . . bizarre. Think about it. There were four nationalities in the fleet, Spanish, Filipino, Italian and Korean. Whereas, the Americans intended and interpreted a high score on the “gets excited” item, the Koreans marked their best performers down on this item because to stay calm and rational at all times was their expectation. Then, there was the Italian fleet, they were excited all of the time and couldn’t imagine the point of this question! So, you see, the data produced through administering this document was not just useless, it was disinformation.

In order to create a performance appraisal “system” that would produce real and useful management information and, in fact, was also aimed at supporting performance improvement, we began by learning the performance context of tanker operations and key results and, ultimately, documenting the supporting key accomplishments for each officer rank. At the core of the system was a job model organized around the key and valued accomplishments (results) for each officer rank. The system that was developed was uniformly accepted - in concept - by the fleet and also executive management in the US. Even then, however, we insisted that the client underwrite a reality check and refinement effort, prior to implementing the newly designed system. The input received during the initial data gathering and the reality check efforts, permitted a maximum number and range of officers to feel some ownership for the final system. From the standpoint of the fleet, in fact, it was the first useful thing that had ever come out of HQ in the US. From the standpoint of HQ, the only real concerns were that it made too much sense and it was better than the system used in the States.

## Example 2

The second example involves a nuclear power plant under construction in the former Czechoslovakia. The team that went over from the USA had one member who had a great deal of experience in the development of training for nuclear power plant operators. The client (Plant Management for the Nuclear Power Plant) had operated for their entire tenure within the Russian system and Government own/operated.

- So, the first challenge was to get all team members to accept the strategic direction for the project as establishing the actual context for performance, the reality of the “is” and “could be” process and related expectations (accomplishments) of focus performers. We were **NOT going** to do just enough analysis to customize or organize existing training materials and other performance aids.
- The next challenge was to get client management to begin to ask questions rather than accepting that the way it’s always been as the way is always has to continue to be in the future.

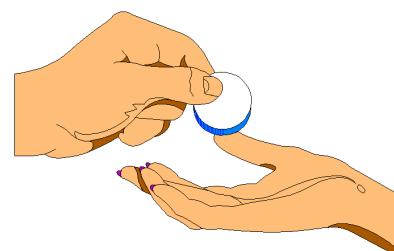
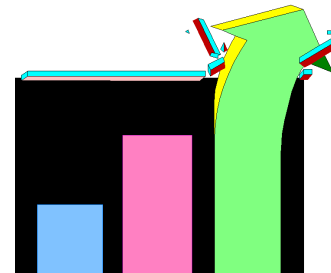
Both the consulting team and the client, in this case, had to let go of the models that came from their own experience in a different operating context and culture than the one that would

characterize the client organization we were all trying to support for the future. Both sides had to open their minds to asking questions and listening to the answers with an open mind and without preconceived cultural filters. In the end result, a learning system (versus a training program) was designed that specifically supported plant operations the way that they planned to go forward and organize/operate, not the way it was always done before either in Czechoslovakia or in the USA! Significantly, our translator told us that before we arrived there was a perception (and a bit of related anxiety) that we, as Americans were going to tell them they were stupid and not doing anything the right way, the American way. Instead, we demonstrated that we had enormous respect for them and what they knew and accomplished. We asked a lot of questions. Showed that we were learning from the answers and worked with all important functions and positions of the plant through a process of opportunity identification. At the end of our stay, the management and staff of the plant had accepted us as true colleagues and partners. They were actually sorry to see us leave!

## Conclusion

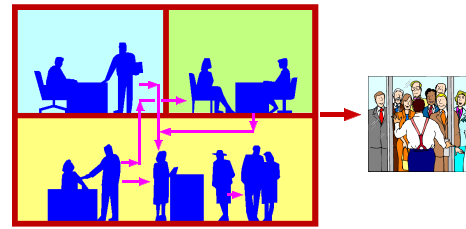
With all of the global diversity we face, where can we find agreement? In this regard, I would like to propose some fundamental premises.

- **Any organization, no matter where it is based or where it operates, can be viewed as operating in order to create one or more product or service for some customer(s).**
- **Most organizations are interested in surviving into the future.**
- **You cannot manage something or control its success, if you can't measure it.**
- **The only practical source for developing measurement standards or criteria is the customer marketplace.**



And, finally . . . .

- **There is significant opportunity to improve organization performance by clarifying and managing the customer-supplier relationships that join the component parts (internal functions) of any company.**



But remember, as important as it is to complete a systematic and accomplishment focused analysis, you have to begin with Global Respect. You must open your mind to really learning from your analysis.