

THE TOC Times

Avraham Y. Goldratt Institute

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Bringing TOC to the Celtic Countries

*by Mike Dinham,
Contributing Writer*

Some of you may know that most of my efforts at present are focused on the dissemination of TOC in the Celtic countries of Wales and Ireland.

In 1996/97 I started, with the help of my good friend Bryan Logan, by arranging a series of three-hour sessions on production and project management. These seeding events created interest but no real movement, although I quickly learned not to talk of that disruptive influence, 'Murphy', in derogatory terms. I remember on one occasion saying; "and of course when that sod Murphy strikes", and then you realise that there are four huge Murphy's in the class, all with hands as big as a bunch of Bananas. Now I use 'Jones' when in Ireland and 'Murphy' when in Wales.

A breakthrough came when Bryan, who works with the Management Institute at the University of Ulster, introduced me to Kevin Helferty, a client executive with the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland (IDB). This is an influential Government body responsible for encouraging and supporting indigenous industry, whilst at the same time attracting

investment.

I don't know what your experience has been of Government Agencies, but to date mine has not been particularly productive. Kevin, however, is not your typical civil servant and showed an immediate interest in TOC, although with a mild degree of healthy scepticism. He agreed to arrange and fund a pilot project with two SMEs, (Small-medium Enterprise) both local manufacturing companies.

To cut a long story short the results were impressive, and the upshot is that the IDB has now formally commissioned from AGI a 'TOC Business Improvement Programme' which is offered as part of their Business Excellence Service. This service provides a range of best practice initiatives aimed at improving competitiveness.

The 'TOC Business Improvement Programme' started officially in February this year and to date we have some twelve companies at differing stages of interest and implementation, with a target of around twenty. The programme is funded by the IDB, with the participating company contribut-

ing a lump sum payment on the achievement of agreed results.

Contact with participating companies comprises four stages; recommendation, education workshop, implementation workshop and ongoing implementation support. It's too early to publish results but things are progressing nicely, thanks to help from Clive Merrick from the Maidenhead office. However this doesn't mean it's easy. If the participating companies demonstrate the results that are clearly possible, then TOC is likely to be

adopted as a major initiative by the IDB in Northern Ireland.

The nature of the funding dictates the way the programme is offered, and necessitates a functional rather than an enterprise wide approach. It would be my objective to gain the support necessary to move to an enterprise wide approach as soon as possible. We encouraged two IDB executives, Kevin Helferty and Niall Casey, to attend TOC WorldSM 2000 in July, which exposed them to the breadth and depth of TOC and the results that can be achieved. The IDB are now assessing potential candidates for the



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4x4.

To maintain and foster interest in TOC we arrange quarterly TOC networking meetings, again supported and sponsored by IDB. Speakers who have applied TOC in their organisations are invited to share their experiences with a growing number of TOC devotees. So far we have had presentations from Jeff Grubb of Orman Grubb and Rudi Burkhard from DuPont, (so watch out as you might get an unrefusable offer), as well as local executives who participated in the pilot project.

Future plans include:

1. An EDM to provide entry level TP skills, due to start in November,
2. The first Jonah Programme in Ireland, hopefully in early 2001,
3. Further invites to TOC experts including academics to speak at future networking sessions.
4. Hopefully a JEMBA at the University of Ulster (Bryan's prime objective).

As I said the contact with the IDB has been a breakthrough, thanks to Bryan. Secondly, to have found someone like Kevin was doubly fortunate. It is not all sweetness and light, however, as having an organisation grant aid initiatives for companies does not always mean that they are fully committed.

Our vision is to help create a growing band of practitioners and organisations capable of applying and sustaining TOC as a means of achieving ongoing improvement. We are definitely on track but still have a long way to go.

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