BOOK REVIEWS


There is no doubt in my mind that an important future trend in organizations will be the creation of ‘healthy’ workforces. As the cost of investing in information technology decreases in relative terms, the competitive advantage provided by such investments will be neutralized. The postmillennial age will be people dominated, and competitive advantage will be achieved through the efforts of individuals.

There are plenty of instances of organizations reinventing themselves through human endeavour, not mechanization. The best example is the Sears retail business in the USA. They have been able to show that largely through staff programmes, a 5% improvement in employee attitude produced a 1% improvement in customer attitude, and a 0.5% increase in profitability. It is a nice example, invest in people: increase your profits. So where do we come in?

Many of us working in established organizations have known for years that what we do is valued by many of the other people who work in the organization, especially so when they have had direct dealing with us. However, we have struggled to make the business case. Indeed some services have perished because they have been unable to convince management of the value of making the investment. If I am honest even the most commercial of us has difficulty.

In my view never was a book more welcome. Williams and Cooper articulate in accessible commercial language precisely what we need. The book builds a compelling strategy for a modern occupational health approach. There are sections on the global business background that every manager will be aware of; you need to be, too. The true cost of ill health is mapped out from a business perspective, and includes a far wider perspective than just our own. The remainder of the book is a practical guide to creating an approach. There are examples from organizations that Steve and Lesley have worked with. It is easy to imagine how their approach would work in a wide variety of settings. It does not matter in which sector you work – there is something in this book for you. I urge you to get a copy of this book and to use it to build the compelling case for investing in occupational health.

Noel McElearney


This book contains reports of the discussions and conclusions of a 2-day symposium that was held in New Jersey in December 1996. Participants included a cross-section of researchers and practitioners actively involved in science-based public communications from government, academia and industry. The symposium promoted the exchange of information, ideas, and opinions about communication of risk to diverse audiences in a changing world. The results of the discussions were used to propose practical recommendations about educational and other strategies to improve the effectiveness of science-based communications to the public in the changing environment. The book focuses on change as it affects risk communication in six broad areas: environmental justice, comparative risk assessment, stakeholder broadening, the media, educational strategies, and right to know. This book will appeal to those who are active in risk communication research and those who teach risk communication skills.

Paul J Nicholson
Honorary Assistant Editor