

# NVQs used to nurture staff development

## Irish Fertilizer Industries



### The Business Benefits

Irish Fertilizer Industries have structured their staff development around NVQs and have seen the following positive benefits to their business:

NVQs formed the template for the packing and despatch training manual

Cost effective selection - all new employees must have the potential to complete an NVQ

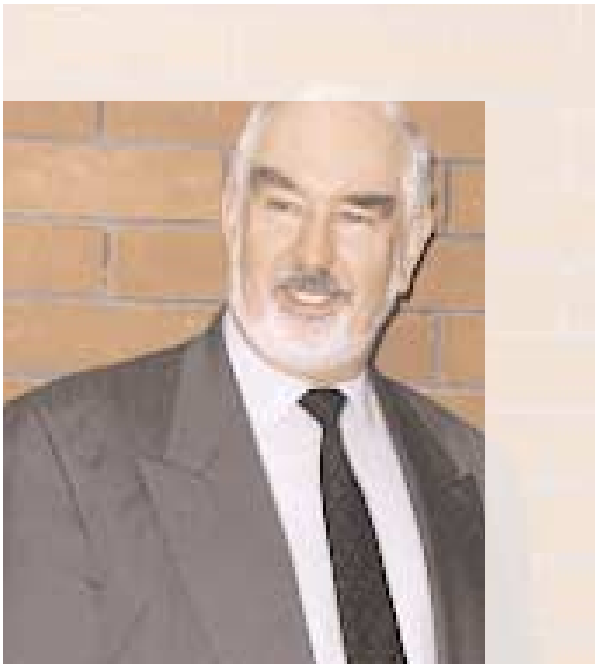
Structured assessment process identifying skill gaps

Standards used for further development and flexibility during shift work

Improved team work

Supported Investors in People

The full story inside



Frank Brennan

## Irish Fertilizer Industries Limited

Irish Fertilizer Industries Limited (IFI) was formed by a merger between the century old company Richardsons with the semi-state Nitrigin Eireann Teoranta (NET) in the Republic of Ireland. IFI manufactures agricultural fertilizers and industrial products, which support the development requirements of a wide range of customers in agriculture, food processing and other industries in Ireland and throughout Europe.

IFI has three manufacturing sites, one in Belfast, Cork and Arklow.

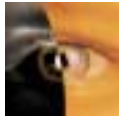
The Belfast factory is the sole manufacturer of compound fertilizer in Ireland. The factory also produces significant quantities of nitric acid for industrial use.

In 1998 over £35M was invested in the Belfast site to improve the manufacturing process. The manufacture of fertilizer is a continuous process with the plant operating 24 hours a day, 52 weeks a year.

The Northern Ireland plant also processes ammonia from Cork and other imported raw materials such as phosphoric acid to produce compound fertilizers. Building on the tradition of product quality and service excellence, IFI has established a lead position in compound fertilizers in the Irish market as well as having built up an extensive export business.

*“Managers must develop their skills, but they must have the courage to seek changes and provide for the full development of their staff.”*

## The NVQ Programme



Timothy Slavin,  
Training Manager at  
IFI, joined the

company in 1995 and was previously an external verifier. Since joining the organisation he has qualified to level 4 in Training and Development incorporating within this his assessor and internal verifier awards.



Effective NVQ  
implementation  
included it being cost

effective for the organisation and because of this IFI uses different approaches to implementation. In Engineering, Warehousing, Training and Development and Supervision, where there are relatively few employees for these NVQs, they have used an external provider and received help and support from the awarding bodies. However they have become an Approved Centre themselves through CIA for the Chemical Processing Operations (now known as VQSET), due to the fact that most of their employees are eligible for the Chemical Processing Operations NVQ.



An Implementation  
Plan was drawn up,  
this ensured that

everyone was aware of what was being introduced and why it was being introduced. The steps of IFI's implementation plan were :

- brief senior management team
- brief supervisors
- inform unions
- poster campaign (informing all staff)
- NVQs made officially available
- selection of candidates
- candidates briefed
- assessments commence
- first formal review.



Employees are en-  
couraged to complete  
full NVQs, where this

isn't possible, due to the nature of their job, they work towards units of NVQs with the possibility of completing the NVQ at a later stage if their job role expands. A training needs analysis is carried out every year and NVQs are fully incorporated within the business plan as the way to achieve competence within the working environment. All new employees must work towards a vocational qualification and an NVQ where appropriate.



IFI have streamlined their approach to assessment, they use the more holistic approach of assessing competence, not the portfolio.

The procedures and documentation are in place for all employees, which means that the portfolios contain only assessment records and supplementary evidence such as written and oral questions. This takes unnecessary pressure off the candidate and ensures that the emphasis is based on achieving occupational competence and not compiling a portfolio.

The company has a presentation ceremony for successful candidates where they are presented with their framed certificate, a watch and NVQ badge. This visibly demonstrates that the company is fully committed to staff development and the benefits which can be attributed to it.

employer  
case  
studies

*“IFI are convinced of the real business benefits that can be attributed to NVQs and are committed to their continued use within the company.”*

## Employee Benefits

Employees feel responsible for their own job

Increased confidence

Pride in their work

Recognition from the organisation

Committed to company objectives

## The Future

IFI realises the benefits of staff trained to occupational competence and are now extending the NVQ programmes offered to include the NVQ level 3 Management programme for their supervisors. IFI's managers can not be on site at all times as the manufacture of fertilizers is a continuous process with the plant operating 24 hours a day, 52 weeks a year. The 13 supervisors, therefore, play a very important role overseeing the production at nighttime and during weekends. The NVQ will ensure that the supervisors have a deeper insight into their job role and realise the importance senior managers place on their position.

IFI are aware that supervisors are the front line managers, who ensure that policy coming down from above is implemented and that teams under them work efficiently and effectively.

IFI have shown great insight into the implementation of their NVQ programmes by ensuring that the programmes are an integral part of the organisation and that the different approaches used are right for their employees.

For further information on NVQ implementation and general NVQ information please contact:

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