

# 10 *DO's* and *DON'Ts* of Suggestion Schemes

By **Graham Holt**

## *Do:*

- Agree and maintain an adequate budget for *all* aspects of the Scheme - measure and focus on the return on investment.
- Make sure the Scheme continually aligns with other initiatives within the Organisation.
- Include the Scheme in the Organisation's Business Planning Process and Annual Reports & Accounts.
- Produce a set of simple, brief, accessible and clear Rules for the Scheme - and review them regularly.
- Formally recognise the role of Evaluators, give them good training and adequate time to properly consider suggestions.
- Always give detailed, tactful and speedy responses to *every* suggestion.
- Visibly Recognise/Reward, ideally at Executive level, *all* suggestions - even those that do not have a financial benefit.
- Continually market and promote the Scheme, both internally and externally.
- As the Organisation matures over time, regularly review the Scheme to make sure it fits the evolving culture.
- Be creative and have fun when it comes to deciding on types of non-financial awards.

## **Don't:**

- Simply copy a Scheme from another Organisation. Network/ seek expert help and develop a Scheme that fits your own individual Organisational structure and culture.
- Expect a Suggestion Scheme alone to solve your Organisation's managerial problems. In isolation, it could actually make them worse.
- House the Scheme in the wrong part of the Organisation. Where it sits says a great deal about what you want it to achieve.
- Forget to get the views of all levels of staff when designing the Scheme - particularly in deciding whether or not to pay cash awards for implemented suggestions.
- Be afraid to let local Schemes evolve, as long as they mirror and are managed by the main Scheme itself.
- Try and run the Scheme with a "part-time" Administration Team.
- Let your Evaluators sit on suggestions for too long, without keeping the submitter up to date with the status of their idea.
- Attempt to run the Scheme manually - it will soon get out of control if not automated to some degree.
- Let problems roll along without making regular small step improvements to the Scheme.
- Expect all parts of the Organisation to offer similar numbers of suggestions. Operational/ Front-End staff often has more potential for ideas than areas such as Financial Control.

**Graham Holt** ran the successful suggestion scheme for the Cooperative Bank in Manchester, UK. In a varied career Graham worked in the Bank's Central Quality Unit, delivering Total Quality Management, Business Process Re-engineering and Statistical Process Control courses - both Bank-wide and for external organizations. He also spent 3 years as an External Consultant to major Bank/non-Bank customers on Business Management issues. His last assignment at the Bank, before taking early retirement, was in P.R. as Editor of the Bank Magazine, producing staff videos and managing the Bank's presence at major Conferences. He is a past Chairman and a Fellow of Ideas.UK. He recently created the well-received member Toolkit for Ideas.UK and has a deep understanding of idea systems. Graham is also on the TQS Software Board of Advisors. Lastly, Graham is very fond of playing the guitar and in years past performed in a Manchester duo.

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