



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE  
Scotland

**Name:** Facilitators International LLP  
**Profile:** Corporate performance improvement organisation  
**Size:** six partners, 25 associates and two part-time staff  
**Location:** Main headquarters in Aberdeen with offices in Perth and Glasgow  
**Website:** [www.facilitators.co.uk](http://www.facilitators.co.uk)

“We have built a culture of high standards and pride at Facilitators in a relatively short time and are delighted to have maintained the Investors in People Standard for a fourth term. This achievement benefits both Facilitators and our clients, allowing our associates to continue to fulfil their potential. The process of gaining the Investors in People standard is rigorous and thanks to the effort, commitment and quality of our partners and associates we have again been successful.”



Allan Dick, managing partner, Facilitators International LLP, speaking in March 2006, after having secured Investor in People status.

Kate Findlay, a senior consultant with Facilitators International LLP, and a specialist in helping companies achieve Investors in People recognition talks us through the company's experience.

### Background

Facilitators first achieved Investors in People recognition in 1997 as a limited company. We have maintained the standard in 2000, 2003 and now 2006, despite becoming a partnership in 2002.



At Facilitators we help solve business issues and help companies achieve improved bottom-line results. We do this using our proven facilitative techniques and expertise for improving performance resulting in effective strategy, operations and people. We have a very strong track record of results in applying our expertise in the areas of Project Control (planning, management and cost), Lean Sigma, Business Strategy, Facilitation of Meetings and Workshops.

We have experience across many industries and both private and public sectors, however, much of our business stems from the oil and gas industry. Our aim is to deliver services which focus directly at improving performance while maintaining an independence to allow us to see the bigger picture and select the best solution for client's needs.

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## **Why Investors in People?**

“We feel that maintaining the Investors in People Standard is good practice and provides us with a means of ensuring the quality of our associates, whilst at the same time providing clients with an added assurance that they receive a high-quality service,” said Kate.

“Perhaps the main reason that we continually commit to meeting the Investors in People Standard concerns the fact that our self-employed consultants (associates) undertake individual performance reviews. It is very unusual for self-employed consultants to undergo such a process, however our team has found it of great value, and indeed each member agrees that their skill-set has improved and their focus is much more aligned with company objectives. It's a classic win win situation.”

## **What differences has achieving the Standard made to your organisation and the way it works?**

“There are numerous instances of differences, however, I think there are two key positive examples,” explained Kate. “Firstly, we now boast a higher quality of associates. Part of the standard requires continuous professional development (CPD) plans for associates. In my experience, implementing and adhering to a CPD plan can be a real differentiator between competitors and a key tool in staying ahead of the field. Lawyers and accountants, for example, are obliged to retain a CPD plan, however, it is quite rare to find project managers or IT specialists that have even heard of such a thing! To that end, Facilitators is quite unique in that regardless of an associate's speciality, he/she will have a CPD plan and thus a responsibility to look after their own development.

She continued, “Secondly, we are constantly striving to improve our service offering. Indeed, it is now very much part of our culture to pinpoint ways in which we can add value to clients. Undertaking the Investors in People Standard has helped in this regard, identifying our strengths and weaknesses and helping us understand and identify improvement areas.”

## **Has it changed what you do day to day?**

“Yes - there is little doubt that our overall service delivery has improved on a day-to-day basis. Throughout our service offering, clients are reassured that if their key contact is unavailable; they will nevertheless speak to an expert. Investors in People helps provide this re-assurance.

“Additionally, having a robust quality procedure enhances Facilitators' reputation in the market place,” added Kate.

## **Have there been any specific benefits eg cost savings, staff retention as a result?**

“I think one of the most striking advantages is the performance review that we implement as a result of Investors in People”, commented Kate. “As an example, our managing partner recently visited one of our oil and gas clients to discuss the performance of an associate, as part of that associate's performance review. The feedback was very positive, and indeed the client remarked that he was unaware of any other consultancy employing such a review. We actually secured a new contract from the particular client, thanks partly, to our commitment to rigorous reviews.

Kate added, “I think everyone at Facilitators would agree that Investor in People status and the process of gaining the recognition is a positive one. Our associates gain a lot from it, and it undoubtedly helps with retention, while it has also assisted in developing new business.

### **How do you think being reviewed has helped?**

“As a corporate performance improvement organisation, we have always been committed to ensuring that “our own house is in order” if you like,” outlined Kate. “However, I think Investors in People helps us focus and ensures that our standards do not slip. There is no doubt that being ‘reviewed’ has certainly helped Facilitators fine tune our processes and raise our standards.”

### **Do you see a continuous benefit from recognition?**

“Investors in People accreditation certainly helps Facilitators in the tendering process. As a widely recognised rigorous accreditation clients and indeed potential clients are very much aware that Investors in People recognised organisations meet certain standards. In that respect, the Investors in People accreditation strengthens the Facilitators UK brand.

She continued, “From the point of view of associates, as I have already mentioned, their CPD plans and performance reviews are of continuous benefit both to the individuals and the organisation.”

### **What would you say to anyone considering Investors in People?**

“Personally, I like the revised standard – it is harder to achieve and I think it gives Investors in People more credibility. It has a robust structure and is very logical in its approach. It helps commitment within an organisation, lets people measure their performance, and helps people focus on what the business as a whole is trying to achieve.

“Facilitators is different from almost every organisation that has achieved Investor in People status in that other than two part-time staff, we don’t actually have any employees. We operate as a partnership and have affiliated associates, which presented an extra challenge in achieving the standard. However, our experience with Investors in People has been entirely positive and I would have no hesitation in recommending other organisations to consider seriously undertaking the challenge!

“I would also add that the local Investors in People network, operated by Scottish Enterprise Grampian, is very supportive and an excellent means of sharing best practice,” concluded Kate.

### **Additional questions regarding elements of the new standard that small companies might be particularly challenged by:**

#### **Management training**

**This might frequently be a low priority in a small organisation, for sound operational issues, so how did you demonstrate that this had taken place?**

“I am qualified to use a profiling tool, called Insights Learning and Development, which is a very effective means of providing a comprehensive management training programme.

#### **Equal opportunities**

**If there are no part-time staff, no staff with disabilities and no minorities it can be difficult for an organisation to demonstrate its commitment to equal opps. How did you tackle this?**

“Our only employees at Facilitators are a part time accountant and a part time business support manager. However, with regard to our associates, Facilitators UK is extremely flexible and try to meet the needs of the individual,” Kate explained.

### **Evaluation training**

#### **This tends to be more unstructured in small organisations – how did you tackle this?**

“Our twice-yearly ‘Community of Consultants’ days provide an opportunity to take stock and evaluate collectively where we are as an organisation, and where we want to go - these events are invariably extremely successful. We also facilitate monthly ‘munch n learn’ sessions at which best practice in specific areas is shared amongst the partners and associates. Finally, we also have monthly business planning meetings at which evaluation is a permanent agenda item,” Kate concluded.