



Pictured (l-r): John Power, Director General, Engineers Ireland; Oliver Farrell, CEO, Vilicom; and Lionel Alexander Chartered Engineer FIEI, president of the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland, vice president and managing director, Hewlett Packard (Manufacturing) Limited

Category winners drive profitability through CPD

The category winners in the CPD Company of the Year Awards 2010 were: Vilicom in the small-sized company category; O'Connor Sutton Cronin in the medium-sized category; ESB International in the large-sized company category; and Clare County Council in the public sector category

Spurring expansion

Vilicom was established in Ireland in 1999 and specialises in design, testing, optimisation, analysis and strategy for RF and cellular networks. Vilicom has built up comprehensive experience and an excellent track-record over the past ten years delivering projects globally and providing leading-edge wireless engineering solutions for all types of networks.

Expansion into foreign markets is central to Vilicom's strategy. To successfully deliver projects for clients abroad, Vilicom needed to put in place a structure to allow the delivery of services to be managed locally in each market. Having obtained significant benefits from its existing CPD programme, implemented four years ago, Vilicom knew that expansion of this programme would allow it to add new engineering and leadership capabilities enabling it to handle an increased volume of work spread across different countries and time zones. As a result, Vilicom has been successful in establishing new operations in the UK and Australasia.

Delivering corporate strategy

O'Connor Sutton Cronin & Associates identified the CPD process as a key method for delivering on a corporate strategic initiative. The initiative was to convert a 'local' civil and structural engineering consultancy into an international multidisciplinary practice so as to ensure the continuity of the company in the current changing markets. The strategy was developed by the board of directors of the company and the development process identified that regulatory, competence and language issues needed to be addressed. Concurrently with the development of this major initiative, the

company was embarking on the Engineers Ireland CPD accreditation process. It soon became evident that the internal CPD process could be adopted and expanded to deliver, in a measured fashion, the requirements of the strategic initiative. In-house lectures were expanded to include multi-disciplinary topics to ensure that all staff were aware of group competencies. Skill deficiencies were identified and corrected by attendance at external courses.

The importance of the Chartered Engineer title was evident and assistance was given to those, identified in staff performance reviews as being suitable for advancement to the Professional Title. To become multidisciplinary a new mechanical and electrical section was grown from scratch rather than by acquisition – this was to ensure that growth reflected the ethos of OCSC. The result is that, today, the company successfully operates an integrated multidisciplinary practice in Poland, Russia, Romania, Abu Dhabi, Costa Rica, Libya, Scotland and England.

Long-term business benefits

To support the achievement of key strategic objectives in a rapidly changing energy sector, ESB International (ESBI) embarked on a company-wide initiative to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of large-scale capital projects within ESB.

The initiative drew on a range of CPD methodologies to instil a sustainable and consistent approach to project management across the company. A single project delivery methodology (PDM) was developed, supported by a structured knowledge management framework, a comprehensive training programme, strategic resource planning and a permanent project management office (PMO).

A key feature of the PDM is a project governance framework that looks beyond the duration of the initial project to ensure that expected business benefits are realised over the life of the capital asset.

The result is a completely new framework for creating, managing, sharing and embedding technical and professional knowledge and leveraging best practice processes and behaviours. This has considerably reduced the risk involved in executing high value, complex projects and has delivered clear business benefits including improved safety performance and financial savings.

Emergency management

In November 2009, Clare County Council engineers faced flooding incidents which presented real threats to life and property never before experienced in Clare. Local authorities there led a coordinated inter-agency response to the flooding to prevent loss of life and reduce the impact on householders, businesses and the general public. The authorities' early commitment to CPD prepared them to deal with such a challenge and through a combination of planning, training and exercises, they faced the challenge head-on.

Clare County Council was the first local authority to be accredited by Engineers Ireland in 2003. This year, their winning submission dealt with the knowledge sharing and interagency/interdirectorate co-operation involved in implementing the major emergency management framework. The flooding crisis of November 2009 provided an opportunity to put the major emergency plan into operation and to test the effectiveness, under real conditions, of the CPD-based training which had gone into it.

Key to the success of the management of the problem was Clare County Council's investment in, and commitment to, CPD in the context of major emergency planning.

The experience gained by Clare County Council personnel in responding to the November 2009 flooding crisis was of immense benefit in preparing it to respond to the freezing weather of January and February 2010, which followed so quickly afterwards. Although invocation of the major emergency plan was not warranted, many of the features were the same – including 24/7 working, mutual assistance between different sections, and the need to have lines available to the public to receive problem reports and convey information and confidence.

The major emergency plan and its related CPD training records are also invaluable inputs in the preparation of Clare County Council's drinking water incident response plan, which is currently in progress.



The ESBI project management office team (l-r): Mary Kavanagh, Jacinta Ryan, Deirdre Newell and John Quinn.



O'Connor Sutton Cronin & Associates' mechanical & electrical division.



The Tánaiste Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Education and Skills (left) and John Power (right) with Seán Lenihan Chartered Engineer, senior executive engineer, Clare County Council, winners of the 2010 Engineers Ireland CPD Public Sector award.




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