Ingot Center Support Pages

There are links on this page to provide you with all you need to set up an INGOT moderation center. Please contact us by e-mail in the first instance if you have any problems.

INGOT Centre Staff Guide and Resources

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Revision: September 2011

Link to paper based booklet - print on demand via Lulu.com [1]

Link to FOSS Manual [2]

Link to center policies [3]

Link to Regulatory Criteria [4](Needs login, see main form Annexe)

Link to Generic Contract [5]

Link to training videos [6]

Link to Assessor on-line training [7]

Link to printed handbooks [8] (BG [9], CZ [10], RO [11], ES [12])

Link to site How to [13]

Link to Credit values for INGOT Units [14]

Quick Navigation

The INGOT Model | TLM | ICT qualifications | P-scales

Sustainability | Costing and cost drivers | Fixed and variable costs | Break even | Strategies

Clients | Clients and users | What is a sale | Why unhappy | What to do with unhappy clients

Structure and Communication | Internal communications within the center | Communications between the centre and TLM

Internal procedures | Advertising materials | Certificate templates | Branding | Quality

[back to top]

The Ingot Model

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TLM

The Learning Machine Ltd (TLM) is an Awarding Body regulated by Ofqual, and Qualification Wales, the regulators for qualifications in England and Wales . TLM is endorsed by eskills, the Sector Skills Council for Business and IT that ensures qualifications meet the needs of industry and employers.

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The Learning Machine (TLM) provides:

- IT User certification accredited by national governments using innovative methods;
- TLM accredited certification of teacher assessment for P-scales;
- TLM accredited certification of teacher assessment in the National Curriculum;
- Technology services to organisations that need secure and verifiable certification.

"*We have 30 feeder primary schools and 7 took part in the INGOT programme last year as part of our Specialist Schools Community Plan. There is a marked difference in the capabilities of those that took part and those that did not. We now need a strategy to enable all our incoming learners to benefit, levelling up attainment.*"

Elaine Delahunt, Assistant Headteacher, Up Holland Mathematics, Computing and Music College

The INGOT philosophy is to provide clear progression routes for learners, from the most basic levels of competence, including supporting those with special needs. This includes support for progress to being more independent learners with the capacity to exploit the massive and growing body of free software and information available freely from the internet.

This progression is recognised and rewarded through certificates at each level of achievement. The assessment details are based on the new UK Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) that is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It has the flexibility to link to nationally accredited frameworks, for example, the National Curriculum and GCSE In the UK and more generally other national frameworks especially those referenced to the EQF. The INGOT criteria are competence based, designed to enable self and peer assessment to support personalised learning and learning how to learn. Trained independent assessors accredited by TLM must verify the assessments before accredited awards can be made and the assessors have flexibility to tailor learning contexts to local and individual needs. TLM encourages the use of mobile technologies and web based applications, liberally licensed software and content.

"*The children in primary schools that have achieved their Entry Level INGOT certificates are now demanding that we offer the Level 1 in Year 7. There is a clear effect on motivation and practical support for cross phase transition*".

Mark Greenwood, Assistant Headteacher, Our Lady's Catholic High Specialist Mathematics and Computing School

Improving value and enabling more people to participate in formal qualifications are key aspects of the strategy. INGOT certification lowers costs compared to traditional qualifications and the learning

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associated with the INGOTs enables learners to lower their IT operating costs. This is because TLM can provide increasing capability in exploiting Open Systems, making maximum use of information and software applications that are freely and legally available from the internet. Having said this TLM does not force anyone to use any particular technologies, it simply highlights issues where savings can be made and generally uses free and open source resources when illustrating examples. This enables transition to better ways of working from current positions. The management systems and IT resources used by TLM are all built on Open Source software. For the assessment, matching the assessment criteria with the applications used in the local working context is all that is needed.



"*Reducing dependency and increasing technological self-sufficiency opens up very low cost learning for all with the longer term potential to reduce costs for businesses making them more competitive.*"

Ian Lynch, CEO of TLM and Chief Assessor (to the left)

INGOTs combine the best aspects of academic learning with the practical applications associated with vocational training. Staff development is built into the model through feedback to assessors

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through the moderation process that is fully supported by web based tools with the flexibility for schools to use their own systems if they want to.

TLM is a qualifications provider and where possible it provides free supporting resources for learning funded by it's qualifications model. TLM wants to make learners and their teachers ready for change and free them from dependency on specific commercial interests so they can make better quality decisions about the technologies they use in the future. This means providing opportunities for higher level learning as well as basic operating skills. TLM philosophy includes empowering learners to make choices that can improve the quality of their lives and the competitiveness of their employers. The long term strategy is to enable economically disenfranchised people to get internet access and eventually provide a full and free on-line curriculum for schools (and adults who missed out on school) sustained financially by the quality assurance service of certification and community participation.

The key aspects of TLM's philosophy and the INGOT model are:

- clear progression routes for learners, from the most basic levels of competence, including supporting those with special needs;
- multi level system and freedom to use personalised combination of modules;
- the assessors have flexibility to tailor learning contexts to local and individual needs;
- Improving value, lowering costs, and enabling more people to participate in formal qualifications;
- making maximum use of information and software applications that are freely and legally available from the internet;
- feedback to assessors through the moderation process that is fully supported by web based tools with the flexibility for schools to use their own systems if they want to;
- make learners and their teachers ready for change and free them from dependency on specific commercial interests so they can make better quality decisions about the technologies they use in the future.

INGOT centres

National INGOT centres have a very important function and role in the global INGOT business model. This is why it is very important that all staff members clearly understand (1) the global INGOT model and (2) the focus and areas of activity of their own INGOT center.

An INGOT center may have different focus, such as:

- reference point for INGOT information and intermediation between TLM and prospective candidates for certification;
- representation specialising in assessor training and assessor support;
- sales office oriented at organisations interested in achieving INGOT Academy status;
- moderation centre for checking assessors' work and confirming requests for certification;
- centre for design of online content, such as case studies, structured tests, model projects and tasks for candidates.

A center can be structured along one of the above roles, or a combination of roles. This largely depends on the primary business objectives agreed between the local representation and TLM.

ICT qualifications

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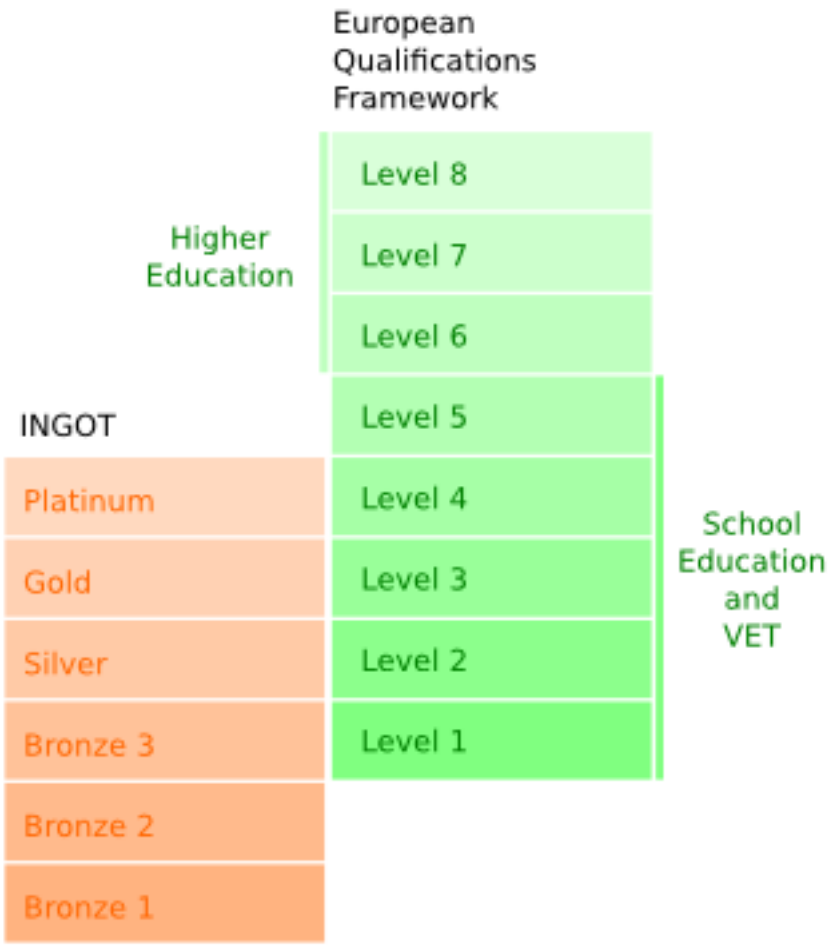

ICT qualifications are the flagship of the INGOT model. They are offered in several levels:

INGOT Bronze 1

INGOT Bronze 2

INGOT Bronze 3 is referenced to Level 1 of the European Qualifications Framework [15]

INGOT Silver is referenced to Level 2 of the European Qualifications Framework

INGOT Gold is referenced to Level 3 of the European Qualifications Framework

INGOT Platinum is referenced to Level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework

At each level there are diverse modules or units. For example, there is a Spreadsheet Module at Levels Silver, Gold and Platinum, and there is a module on improving productivity by using ICT, which is mandatory module for all levels.

At levels Silver, Gold, and Platinum, candidates can select a combination of modules which add up their credit value and lead to full level qualification. Some candidates may choose to work on different modules, but not necessarily work towards level qualification.

Level qualification are subject of a complex rules of combination (ROC) system, where credit can be given not just for modules at one particular level, but also for modules passed at lower and/or higher levels. The system reflects the fact that people are different, have different level of competence in the different domains (e.g. Word processing, Spreadsheets, Database software, IT security, etc.) and seek different goals.

The system currently with more than 20 units [14] from different domains and more are being added on a regular basis. The general guidance for interpreting levels in the INGOT QCF is here [16].

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P-scales (In process of transfer development)

The following overview of P-scales is taken from a paper by submitted to the European Agency for Development and Special Needs Education by Nick Peacey and John Brown, last reviewed by the authors in September 2009.

The paper responds to the substantial international interest in the English development of the P-scales performance descriptions.

The English national curriculum (NC) is broken into 8 level attainment targets for each subject.

The P-scales were introduced in 1998 to allow assessment of the progress over time of pupils not attaining the levels of the ‘mainstream’ NC. They cover all subjects of the curriculum and are designed for pupils between the ages of 5 and 16.

It is now mandatory for all English maintained schools to use the scales to track the progress of pupils for whom the scales are appropriate report the progress of such pupils against the P-scales in all subjects of the national curriculum at ages 7, 11 and 14 (key stages 1, 2 and 3).

There are eight P-scale levels and eight NC levels. So the full English National Curriculum has 16 levels:
P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6 P7 P8 NC1 NC2 NC3 NC4 NC5 NC6 NC7 NC8.

The P level descriptions are used for ‘best fit’ judgments. Staff consider them against observations and assessments of the pupil’s performance over time. They are then in a position to choose the level which overall best describes the pupil’s attainment.



"*The performance descriptions have been written for use with pupils of all ages and with a range of special educational needs. The descriptions are not a full description of all that pupils might achieve. They are intended to provide a framework on to which the progress of pupils, measured using the school's own assessment scheme, can be mapped. The descriptions do not replace the more finely tuned assessment schemes used for detailed individual assessments and curriculum planning by many schools. Rather, they complement those schemes by providing a common basis for comparing performance between pupils and schools.*" *(DfES, 2001)*

TLM's P-scales series is linked to the master INGOT model and uses the same interface, although there are many functions which are not available in the typical INGOT work and assessment interface. Some of these functions include increased control of the assessor over the SEN pupil, a tool for graphical progress visualisation, integration of the compulsory individual development plans with the assessment criteria, quick generation of progress reports and extended notes and comments section.

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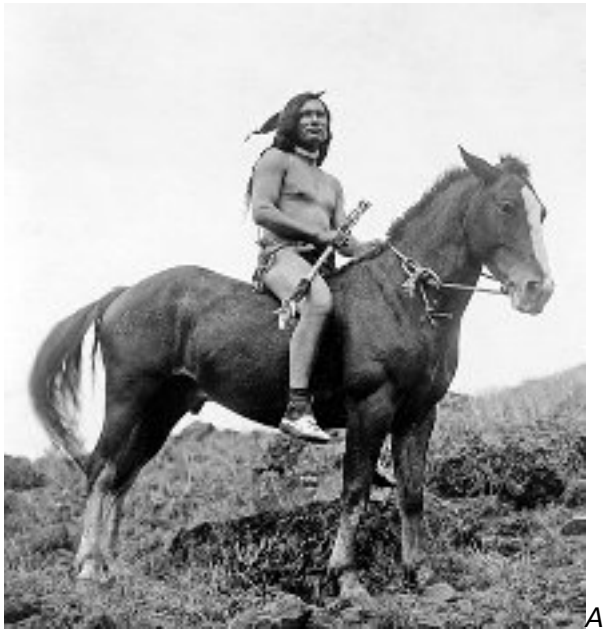
P-scales are delivered free of charge to INGOT academies. In different countries P-scales are either completely free, or offered as a payed system in order to cover related expenses.

You should refer to TLM and ask what is the arrangement for your country and centre.

Sustinability

Sustainability is one of the primary objectives of each economic activity. In our case, the national INGOT centers are a business venture and as such they obey the basic rules of management and economics. Sustainability means that the revenue generated by the centers, such as accreditation fees and other charges, is sufficient to cover, on a continuous basis, all costs which are borne by the center. In general terms, we will have reached sustainability when revenue exceeds costs as a stable trend, not just one occasion or erratically.

Due to the varied origin and structure of national INGOT centers, it is not possible to draw a detailed financial model. Still, there are a few principles which help in managing a business organisation.

*A young Indian and his mother lived together and were very poor. They would follow the migrating Indian tribes and live on what was left behind by them. One day, as they moved to an abandoned Indian camp, they saw a horse. The horse was in very dire condition and seemed very weak, but the young man was very excited, and turning to his mother said: "Look mother, now that we have a horse, we are not so poor anymore! For how could we be poor when we have such an important belonging!"*

The woman smiled with an appearance on her face that only wise people can have, and answered: "No, we are not so poor now, we are poorer than before".

The young Indian was astonished. He found out, in the course of the following weeks, that having a possession triggers additional expenses. In this case - extra food which had to be provided for the horse no matter what.

An Indian story, untraceable origin
[*Photo by* Edward Sheriff Curtis *[17] is taken from the public domain and its use is not restricted by copyright. Source:* Wikimedia Commons *[18]. See* this link *[19] for detailed copyright information.*]

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Costing and cost drivers

The first and foremost thing to do is knowing what your expenses are and what triggers them. We need to know not only the total amount of the expenses, but also distinguish between various items, or cost drivers. For example, a cost driver is the assessor training activity. Other cost drivers may include advertising, travel, administration, accounting and book keeping, etc. Cost drivers are activities, not amounts, but they do trigger costs which are measured by their amount. Make sure you have a clear picture of what are the center's activities and what costs are attached to these activities.

Fixed and variable costs

In finance, we distinguish between fixed and variable costs. Fixed costs are those which are not related to the amount of products or services. Examples of fixed costs in our case are rents, office supplies, labor/salaries, communication costs. Fixed costs are an unchangeable amount (in the short term) and their relative share is reduced when sales volumes increase.

Variable costs, on the contrary, are borne by each unit produced. They are variable, because their total amount varies, but they are fixed on per unit basis. For example, assessor training is a cost which is directly related to the units sold, i.e. one training per school per year. If we have a value for this, say 500 euro, then we can calculate that with 15 schools accredited as INGOT academies the total cost will be 500 x 15 = 7500 euro per annum. So, variable costs increase in total amount with each additional unit produced.

Total cost (TC) includes both fixed (FC) and variable costs (VC). In math terms, TC = FC + VC x units sold.

Break-even

Break-even is the point where total revenue equals total expenses. Operating below break-even point means that the center is losing money. Operating above break-even point means that the center is making profit. However, operating below break-even does make sense, although not for prolonged periods, because with each additional unit sold the generated revenue covers the variable costs and also portion of the fixed costs.

This means that as long as the sales price is greater than the variable cost, each sale makes a further contribution to covering the fixed costs.

Strategies

We know from history -- and we see it in present -- that there is no such thing as a formula for successful business. If there was one, then everyone would follow it and all businesses would be successful, which contradicts to one of the basic principles of economics - companies compete with each other for both resources and customers. It is this competition which leads to reduced prices, as many companies compete for larger market shares.

Business strategies emerged as many began to look at the world of business as a battlefield where managers lead, and the staff and all company resources follow in order to reach common goals and, eventually, expand business.

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Vom Kriege.

Hinterlassenes Werk

des

Generals Carl von Clausewitz.



Erster Theil.

Berlin,
bei Ferdinand Dümmler.

1832.

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The word *strategy* (στρατηγός) comes from Greek, and it means *army leader*. Many modern management theories and models still use the paralell between military and business worlds, and military strategy and tactics are often taught in business schools. Examples include *Sun Tzu's* military treatise *The Art of War*, written circa 4th century BC, the much earlier *Six Secret Teachings* by *Jiāng Zǐyá (11th century BC), and more recent (early 19th century) Vom Kriege (On War) by General Carl Philipp Gottfried von Clausewitz.*

[*Photo:* Wikimedia Commons *[18]*].

Yet another fundament of modern business strategies is a book published in 1532 - *Il Principe (The Prince)* by the Italian historian, diplomat and political theorist *Niccolò Machiavelli.*

We strongly encourage the reader, who is interested in business management, but also on political management and social science, to find the aforementioned texts.

To establish the meaning of strategy and tactics, we reverted to Merriam-Webster Dictionary. According to this source and apart from its military meaning, strategy is defined as *the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war.* Similarly, tactics is defined as *the art or skill of employing available means to accomplish an end.*

Now we are equipped with what we need to attempt understanding business activities from their strategic and tactical aspect.

You should know that formulation of a strategy requires a great deal of data gathering, processing and analysis. Additionally, it is something done by business owners and people in top management.

We shall avoid a debate on which strategic school has developes a particular set of strategies and given them distinct names. Instead, we present a list of the options which are typically faced by businesses and organisations.

- **Extensive growth.** Act swiftly to stay ahead of competitors.
- **Steady growth.** Develop your business with the speed of the competitors and/or sector.
- **Maintain and guard your position**. Defending existing status presumes that you have some sort of advantage and you keep and protect that advantage.
- **Catch up.** This is an option in situations where you are lagging behind the leaders in the sector.
- **Turn around.** Turning a badly performing organisation into an efficient profit-making business. Requires a vast set of managerial competences.
- **Let it go.** Assumes that the sector as a whole or your product/service are in decline. Collect profit while it lasts, but do not invest further, unless small investments have the potential to prolong profit taking.
- **Harvest.** Profit taking with no further investment. In most cases this means exiting your current market.
- **Divestment.** Closing down the operation of whole business or parts. Typically includes selling of assets (equipment, trade marks, inventory), laying off staff, exiting the sector.

[back to top]

Clients

In Economics and Marketing, we differentiate between clients (or customers) and users (or beneficiaries). The differentiation is based on who pays for a product or service and who actually

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uses them. For example, if the parents go to a local dealership to see the cars there available for purchase or lease for their eldest son Jasper, the salesman has to cater for both Mom and Dad (clients who pay) and Jasper (who will drive the car). While the clients will certainly be very interested in the price and financial terms, Jasper will look at things like color and functionality, e.g. A/C, ABS, sensor windshield, on-board GPS navigation, etc.

With INGOT we have one extra category in addition to the two already mentioned. This is entirely a result of how the model works, but it is extremely important for any staff member of a National INGOT Centre to understand the different approach to each category.

Clients and users

Because the model is mainly used by and through schools or other training institutions, the accreditation fee has to be paid by the schools. It means that the direct client is the individual school, and as schools tend to be non-living things, they will be represented by the Principal, Director, CEO or Manager, depending on the country you are in and the traditions of the education system. Further, there may be a Supervisory (or other) Board or a Parents-Teachers Association which have to approve the school joining the model.

Usually, however, the managers of the school and the people sitting on the board will rarely be involved with using the INGOT model themselves. This means, in turn, that in order to make a decision on joining or extending the accreditation, the management will ask for opinions the teachers in the school (trained assessors) who work with the model on a routine basis.

Teachers then become a very important group in sales efforts. Assessor training should not only target achieving certain level of understanding and learning outcomes, but must include and provide for ways of convincing teachers in the benefits of the INGOT model for them and for their students.

The third group are the students, or learners (we refer to them as candidates in the INGOT model 'slang'), who directly benefit from their school being an accredited INGOT Academy. They do use the model, as do teachers, but are considered the end-users. Some schools may carry routine surveys and polls to determine students' attitude towards various school issues. This implies that you should also make efforts and provisions for keeping the model interesting and motivating for students to actually want to be part of it.

To make things even more complicated (but only on paper - or screen, in our case - in reality it is a fairly intuitive operating interface and model), in some age groups decisions are made by the parents, and not by students, meaning that information campaigns should be extended to parents as an extra target group in some contexts.

What is a sale?

Being able to sell things, and being good at that, requires many skills. They range from financial and economic understanding, to detailed knowledge of the product or service, to marketing techniques and psychology. This is not a place to train people in these subjects, but there is one important thing which we want to stress and which has to be well understood by all INGOT Centres' staff. We want to present in a very brief form the steps (or stages) of the selling process. Please bear in mind that this model may differ from others, with which you are familiar already or may encounter in the future. The emphasis is on the principles, not on the details and wording.

A sale will typically start with **establishing a relationship with the client**. It goes on as the seller and the client exchange information to **establish and reach understanding on the client's needs**. Then the seller formulates **a solution to match the needs**, and provides all kinds of information for this particular solution so that client understands what is being offered and how it will take care of his needs and wants. A sale is typically considered closed when **money and goods are exchanged**. Attention, however! This is not the last step in the sale process, and many people and companies make a costly mistake in neglecting the fact that the client should be happy after the

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technical sale is concluded. The satisfaction must come through use of product or service and the perception of how well it matches the stated (or implied) needs and wants. This step is usually referred to as **post-sale service, product warranting, product use and client satisfaction follow-up**.

"*70 to 90% of decisions not to repeat a purchase of anything are not about the product or price, They are about some dimension or service.*" Barry Gibbons, CEO, Burger King

According to the INGOT model rules and policies, it is imperative that schools are visited at least once each 12 months, and that there is a regular communication between the INGOT Centre and the school. In practice, the rule should be interpreted as "*make as many visits (or calls, e-mails, Skype sessions...) to the school as needed to make sure all outstanding issues are taken care of*". As accreditation covers a 12-month period, it is critically important that the centres turn most of their first-time customers into satisfied clients and repeated business.

Why unhappy?



It is inevitable, just like taxes. No matter what business or organisation you run, there will always be clients who are not happy with the product or service you provide. There are two main reasons for this: unrealistic expectations and product/service fault. The former lies in the domain of social science, the latter - in quality management.

A study carried by the Forum Corporation, US, of customers who defected from 14 major service and manufacturing businesses, discovered some interesting facts. The findings were cited by marketing guru Tom Peters (see left) in one of his books, The Circle of Innovation:

- *15% left because of quality problems which can be described in technical terms*
- *15% left because they found a less expensive alternative*
- *20% left because they perceived there was "too little contact and individual attention" compared to another product or service provider*
- *49% left because they felt the personnel they were dealing with was "poor in quality".*

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As the third and fourth items bear similar semantics, Peters restated the numbers, reduced the categories to three, and rewrote the reasons for leaving in a simplified manner:

- *15% left for technical reasons*
- *15% left for better price*
- *70% left due to the "look/feel/smell/taste of doing business with a company*"

[*Photo:* www.tompeters.com *[20]*]

What to do with unhappy clients?

"*If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell 6 friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends.*" Jeff Bezos, CEO Amazon.com

As INGOT model is technology driven, it has high dependency on ICT. We tend to assume that other people have same or similar level of IT competencies, which is rarely the case. Indeed, many people feel comfortably in using just a very narrow set of hardware and software tools and instruments. In most cases this refers to common software packages, such as OpenOffice or Microsoft® Office. So what happens when such people come in contact with new (to them) technology. Reactions range from diving into a new piece of software in order to start learning and mastering something new, to irrational fear and refusal to use unfamiliar hardware and software.

For a model such as INGOT to malfunction, there has to be a very serious technical reason (and technicians from TLM start working on these as soon as it happens). In the same time, people may perceive some characteristics or function as not working or working in a wrong manner simply because they have not made an effort to understand how things work or because they make mistakes in operating the technology for lack of skills. An example would be failing to login because the user has forgotten his password and blaming the system for this, rather than accept that such things happen and that there is a perfectly viable solution - using the forgotten password tool which will generate a new password and mail it to the user's e-mail address.

"*Customers don't expect you to be perfect. They do expect you to fix things when they go wrong.*" Donald Porter, V.P. British Airways

Remember, clients expect to be treated well. In fact, evidence shows that a proactive organisation is more likely to keep its clients even in times of serious technical problems or outright failures, compared to companies denying there is an issue or dealing with it in a disrespectful manner. System administrators, for one, often forget that most other users have skills inferior to their own, and they make inappropriate jokes and comments about "broken" computers or work files mysteriously "disappearing".

"*A typical business only hears from 4% of its dissatisfied customers. The other 96% quietly go away. Of this 96%, 68% never reveal their dissatisfaction because they perceive an attitude of indifference in the owner, manager or employee.*

A typical dissatisfied customer will tell eight to ten people about their problem. One in five will tell 20. Seven out of ten complaining customers will do business with you again if you resolve the complaint in their favor. If you resolve it on the spot, 95 percent will do business with you again.

The average business spends six times more to attract new customers than it does to keep old ones. Yet customer loyalty is in most cases worth 10 times the price of a single purchase." Art Waller, Regional Department Head, Utah State University

Because of the nature of INGOT model, where academies, moderation centres and national centres all use a centrally run-platform, physically managed from TLM in UK, occasionally you may find yourself in a situation where a client has an issue or complaint, which you are not in position to resolve or address. Remember, for people in your own country or area you are the face of INGOT. So

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the option of referring the client to contact TLM directly is an option to avoid at all costs.

So what's to be done in such cases?

Things to do

- Show empathy and understanding. Let the client speak and act as if you were in his shoes.
- Collect as much information as possible from the client and make sure you write it down.
- Make sure the client understands and is happy with the suggested solution.
- In some cases, it may be good to explain to the client what exactly the problem was. This is particularly important when the client has above-average understanding of the matter, sends the signal that you are partners and any issue can find a solution when there is good will from both sides.
- Remember that an existing client is equally important (from an HR point of vue) or even more important (from a financial point of vue) than a prospective client.
- Communicate the problem and the solution to the other people at your INGOT centre, especially if the problem is likely to persist or appear for other clients.

Things not to do

- Do not refer the client to another person. You may assign the task of resolving the issue to someone, but people contacting you should hear the solution from you, no matter how your organisation runs from the inside.
- Do not put the client in a position where he must repeat over and over his problem, this is very irritating and shows disrespect.
- Don't blame the client even if it turns out that it was his mistake, and not yours - you are there to help and by finding out what was wrong, you actually do what the client needs - a solution.
- Never allow to find yourself in position where you sit on a backlog of unresolved issues.
- Never allow a phone call or an email from a client with a complaing or a problem to remain unanswered. If you need more than a few hours to find a solution, call/write back and tell the client you are on it. The speed of response is one of the key factors which clients consider when deciding on repeat purchases and there should not be a delay in response by more that one working day.

[back to top]

Structure and communication

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Internal communication within the center

[*Photo:* Wikimedia Commons *[18]*]

As in any commercial operation and organizational structure, communication is of crucial importance. Regardless whether the INGOT Centre will be an independent structure or a unit within a larger organisation, it should be treated as a separate activity. In management and planning, we refer to such cases as *business units*. Considering the scope of activities, it is likely that the Centre to have small number of staff. As you move towards sustainability, you will most likely add staff for the following roles: salesperson, account manager, assessor trainer, administration and coordination. It is very important that the people in the center meet regularly and discuss any open issues.

As it is likely that schools will contact more than just one person from the center on various occasions, you should make sure that the knowledge related to the INGOT model is shared and understood by all on the team. Further, you should try to use the same wording when addressing an issue to avoid ambiguity. This can be achieved through regular team meetings and discussions or, alternatively, through creation of a standard Q&A tool where common questions and answers are described. A good example for such an approach are the call centers for large companies where the operators give standardized answers.

Another option is to determine areas of competence for each team member and avoid giving information or opinion if the issue is not in a given team member's area of competence.

In all cases, you should ensure that there is at least one person on the team who has the "complete picture" and is able to describe in detail the INGOT model in its whole and parts. If the center has high turnover rate (staff changes often), continuity has to be ensured by having a backup or contingency plan in case this very knowledgeable person leaves the organisation.

Communication between the center and TLM

This is a very important issue and it should not be underestimated. Remember that the operations of your national INGOT center are completely dependent on TLM. This means that in case of ambiguity

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TLM's instructions and procedures will have priority over your own. In order to avoid such situations, it is important that you establish and maintain contacts with the appropriate TLM's staff in an operating manner. Make sure you know who these people are, what are their areas of responsibility and competence. Try to channel questions and comments directly to the person who is able to provide answer or solution.

A national center should be constructed in such a way from a structural perspective that information from TLM flows freely and is available to the key staff of your center. It is malpractice to keep information to yourself and have people ask the same question over and over.

Try not to ask questions if you could find an answer yourself, e.g. by searching the INGOT site or internet. Remember, that TLM is quickly expanding and they have to deal not only with a large number of schools in UK, but also with support to several national INGOT centers and management of different projects for improving the model. It is a good practice to build a pattern of confidence between yourself and TLM people. If every question you have to them is marked urgent, it will work the first few times, but later the urgency will be disregarded if it does not rest on sold ground. So, you risk that a question or issue go in the low priority tray even if it might be really important. This has much to do with the concept of managing expectations - you will generally be treated in a manner which, to a large extent, you will have constructed yourself.

In the past, many battles and military campaigns have been lost because of overstretched supply lines and long communications chain. This was the case with the extremely long supply chain in the African campaign of World War II for the German and Italian troops, led by Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel. On some occasions, ammunition supplies would be shipped and unloaded ashore to as far as 480 km away from Romell's armies.

[back to top]

Internal procedures

Advertising materials

Make sure that you have a stock of advertising materials, information leaflets, etc. You should try to anticipate demand and make sure you reorder in time. You should also make sure that the information in such materials is up-to-date.

The same applies to maintenance of the relevant language version of the INGOT web site, or your local INGOT website, if you have one. You should keep in mind that technologies changed people behavior regarding information. We all used to get information on the product or service we are interested in from a salesperson, a technician, a consultant. This required that we be physically present at a particular location (a store or an office), so that we can meet these people and see the product in question. Buyers now demonstrate a different pattern, as they move almost entirely into collecting information online. More importantly, potential buyers feel discouraged when they can't find the information they need quickly and in an intuitive manner.

Because of this, we should make sure that all printed materials we have developed are properly placed at locations where potential clients and candidates can see them, and that the websites we operate have an intuitive structure, friendly interface and sufficient information. Note that there is a risk in providing too much information - going at extreme lengths with presentations of technical details, etc. may put prospective clients and users off!

Certificate templates

Once you have anticipated the demand for certificate templates, you should consult with TLM the

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options and costs for certificate delivery. Remember that one of the charges that TLM has (variable cost) is per certificate. In case in the course of time, when volumes go up, it turns out to be overall cheaper to produce the template paper in your country, this should be discussed with TLM and the relevant charges should be accounted for in another cost item.

Branding

Branding is a term from modern marketing, denoting "*name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers*", according to the American Marketing Association.

Interestingly, the term evolved from livestock branding, where farmers would put hot brands on cattle and horses for easier identification of owner. As seen just few lines before, the term may have evolved somewhat in technical aspects, but the concept remains intact.

With a global business model such as INGOT, it makes sense for all INGOT centres to use strong branding. In this way, marketing activities in different countries complement each other, which leads to improved efficiency and effectiveness.



Maintaining a brand is also a responsibility. Just as INGOT offices in different countries may help each other in marketing, an office with bad public image in a particular territory may damage the image of the whole group and community. To avoid this, use of INGOT brand must be coordinated and agreed with TLM.

There may be many ways of brand promotion and management. To name but a few, examples may range from stationery (business cards, printed pens or USB sticks, mugs, t-shirts, mouse pads, etc.) to posters and vinyl banners displayed at accredited academies, to use of approved logo derivatives - such as the one pictured on the left - on schools' web sites and information brochures.

Quality

Quality procedures are critical for the INGOT model. Not only it is a good practice from a business point of view, but maintaining a robust quality management system in the centre (and passing this practices to the INGOT academies) is one of the key requirements by Ofqual, the qualifications regulator. This means that there are compulsory practices and procedures which need to be abided by all the way down the chain, starting at TLM and extending to the individual academies and assessors.

Quality is one of the topics on which TLM can request, at any time, information from your center and/or amendments to be made to the relevant procedures. As quality is a horizontal issue in its nature, there should be a shared understanding by the entire centre's staff about the quality mechanisms in the INGOT model. This must be ensured regardless of the levels of autonomy and specialisation around which you decide to structure your INGOT centre.

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[back to top]

Source URL: https://theingots.org/community/Center_support

Links
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[2] http://bit.ly/uXryQq
[3] https://theingots.org/community/policies_index
[4] https://theingots.org/community/ofqual_policies
[5] https://theingots.org/community/sites/default/files/uploads/user4/My%20files/other%20files%28PDF%29/Basic%20contract%20%28generic%29.pdf
[6] https://theingots.org/community/videotraining
[7] https://theingots.org/community/assessor_training1
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