UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

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Work Process Knowledge

in

Scottish Visitor Attractions

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all critical and other sources (literary and electronic) have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of the text.

Signed:

Date:

Abstract

Work process knowledge (WPK) is a concept for systems-level knowledge of the workplace and has been shown to be most important in organisations requiring multi-functional working. Most of the previous body of knowledge on WPK has focussed mainly on manufacturing industries; there has been less investigation of WPK in the service sector and none in the visitor attraction (VA) industry, an important employer in Scotland. The VA industry is extremely dynamic and many businesses are rapidly moving towards multi-functional team working, driven by an urgent need to develop quality, customer-focussed strategies to survive in an over-supplied and very competitive market. This study identifies the nature of WPK in Scottish VAs, what relationship WPK has to customer service, how WPK in this service sector differs from selected published studies in manufacturing and other service sector contexts and what factors affect the development of WPK in VAs.

Following recruitment of a number of VAs using an online questionnaire and subsequent site visits, six sites were selected for case study, on the basis that they demonstrated most evidence of multi-functional working and staff with developed WPK. The research design was comparative case studies of the work processes and knowledge within these six VAs, based on a social constructivist framework, using the methods of key informant interviews and shadowing.

Although these six sites represent a cross-spread of attractions in terms of types, location and size, they nonetheless show strong similarities in their basic business structure. The data show that WPK is an essential element of workers' roles and a vital requirement in providing good customer service. Although VA managers do not use the term 'work process knowledge', they nonetheless recognise the importance of having staff with a wider view of their business and are actively encouraging its rapid development. Multi-functionality and job rotation are main ways of developing WPK but sites also use key workers with job roles that help develop high levels of WPK, who are then used as a staff resource.

The main factor contributing to the development of WPK is communication, especially of systems-level information. Cultural information-sharing is an essential pre-condition for the development of WPK in this context. Other determining factors are flexibility, employee biographies, seasonality issues, how weddings and functions are handled on-site and the size and complexity of the site. WPK is the foundation on which good customer service is based and elements of it deliver customer service. It is the closely integrated nature of the employee-customer relationship that has such a profound effect on WPK development in this service sector industry and is essentially what differentiates it from previously published studies. The identification of the customer as a hitherto unrecognised key driver of WPK is the most important contribution to knowledge made by this work.

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This thesis would not have been completed without the help and support of many people, whom I would like to thank. I must begin with my supervisor Professor Nick Boreham who, even since before I began on this journey, has been an inspiration to me and has never wavered in his unstinting and calm support at every step along the way. Nick, I thank you for your faith in me and for every time you boosted my confidence and cheered me on. To my second supervisor, Roy Canning, I thank you for giving me the benefit of your objectivity, strategic thought and helping me to see the light on more than one occasion. I would like to thank my external examiner, Martin Fischer, and my internal examiner Mike Osborne for their kind words and constructive criticism. I would also like to thank both the University of Stirling for providing the studentship that enable me to give up my full-time job, and Jenny Worthington, my friend and former boss, for pushing me out the door to embark on this journey of growth and enlightenment.

Gaining access to organisations for study is often a worry for many researchers but for me this was made so much easier by the assistance of Kate Tetley of People 1st, who opened doors for me and smoothed my way. Kate, I thank you also for the huge amount of support, encouragement and practical help you have given me in so many other ways during the past three years.

To maintain promised anonymity, I am restricted in individually naming all the people in the visitor attractions who gave me, often repeatedly, their willing and candid support for my study. However, I am extreme grateful to you all for your time and forbearance in being interviewed and allowing me to follow you around while you did your job. Without you, this work would not exist.

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Abbreviations and Terms Used

Abbreviations and acronyms are frequently used in this field. They have generally been avoided in this work but those terms that have been used are defined or clarified below:

Abbreviation	Meaning
ASVA	Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions
BEM	Banqueting and Events Manager
cf.	Compare (i.e. cross refer to the page number shown for an expanded explanation of the phenomenon being described)
CRM	Customer Relationship Management (A CRM system is a computerised tool that can electronically manage the relationship an organisation has with its customers)
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NOS	National occupational standards
PEST	Political, Economic, Sociological and Technological (Factors that exert pressure on an industry)
SE	Scottish Enterprise; the main economic development agency for Scotland.
SME	Small or Medium Sized Enterprise
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority; the national body responsible for accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications
SSC	Sector Skills Council (The SSC for the Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism industries is People 1st)
USP	Unique Selling Point
VAs	Visitor Attractions
WPK	Work Process Knowledge

1 Introduction and Background

Over the past few decades, there has been a radical change in the environment in which most businesses in the developed world operate. In an age where businesses face a huge expansion in globalisation and international competition, and a decrease in traditional industries and skills, the primary factors of production that were used to create wealth before the 1970s, those of land and labour, have much less relevance. The factors of production that have now come to the fore include intellectual property, work force skills, knowledge and collaboration. These are all essentially abstract concepts, which have led the current economic age to be referred to as the 'Intangible Economy' (Eustace, 2000). The subsequent changes in employment, labour practices and organisational structure that have emerged in this intangible economy have moved towards less hierarchical, more organic structures and team working that is dedicated to continuous improvement and can react more responsively to dynamic market conditions and customer requirements (Boreham, 2005). As a result, this has had an affect on the type of knowledge that workers need to have, to be able to work in these new environments.

Knowledge has become a key driver of economic activity and understanding the implications of this is an important issue for the academic world, as well as one of work force development. Over the past two decades, the academic community, with support from European Commission funding, has been searching into the knowledge base of jobs within the contemporary economy. One conceptual framework that has emerged to describe this type of knowledge is called 'work process knowledge' (WPK). Work process knowledge is a concept for describing a systems-level knowledge of the workplace and has been shown to be most important in organisations utilising multi-functional working.

The study of WPK is a fast evolving and relatively recent field of investigation. However, research in this field to date has centred primarily on manufacturing and heavier industries. There has been little attention given to the service sector and what little there has been, has tended to focus on how the workforce interacts with innovative technology. Therefore, the service industry in general, and the relationship between WPK and customer service in particular, is still under-researched and poorly understood.

However, understanding the WPK of workers in the service sector, particularly in relation to how WPK relates to customer service is of growing importance. Like most Western 'post industrial societies', the transition from a manufacturing to a service-based economy has been occurring for some time in Scotland. There has been a long-term shift towards the service sector driving output and employment growth. Between 1995 and 2002, service sector employment increased by 15 per cent, whereas manufacturing employment declined by more than 10 per cent (Future Skills Scotland, 2004). The share of the Scottish GDP attributable to the service sector rose from 50 percent in 1963, to 63 per cent in 1996 and is forecast to reach 70 per cent by 2020 (Future Skills Scotland, 2004). Public and private sector service industries are predicted to dominate employment for at least the next decade (Future Skills Scotland, 2006a). This makes the service sector essential to Scotland's foreseeable economic future and consequently an important sector to study.

Service industries have little or no physical capital, but depend on the knowledge and skills of the people within it, known as 'human capital' and the interpersonal or cultural trust that is involved in the structure of relationships sharing it, known as 'social capital'. It is the 'collective competence' of the team, the individual and combined effectiveness, which gives the service-based company its true value. While this is also true of manufacturing and other industries using modern ways of

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working, the key importance of human and social capital becomes especially significant when the organisation is providing a service that is an experience, rather than a physical product, because *how* customers are served becomes a vital aspect of that experience. As good customer service is delivered through a combination of what workers know *and* their attitude towards customer service, the knowledge and attitudes of front-line employees who deliver service becomes of great interest. As knowledge, skills and cultural attitude are all recognised to be important aspects of WPK, understanding the relationship between WPK and customer service is of fundamental concern.

Consequently, this is a study of 'work process knowledge' in visitor attractions in Scotland. Like many areas of business, today's dynamic and competitive work conditions make WPK increasingly necessary in service sector organisations. The Scottish visitor attraction sector is facing pressures that are pushing it strongly and rapidly into such an environment. Providing an excellent customer experience is essential in this industry and hence customer service skills are a key priority (People 1st, 2005). However, it has been noted that two thirds of employers in the tourism sector are concerned about skills gaps that lead to difficulties in meeting customer service objectives and quality standards (Future Skills Scotland, 2006b). Understanding the WPK needs in this industry might provide a key to improving customer service.

The specific service industry of 'visitor attractions' (VAs) was selected for investigation for several reasons. A major consideration was my previous travel and tourism experience, which not only made this a familiar field of expertise in which to study, but also provided existing working relationships and professional practice on which to build. A second consideration was the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy. Tourism is the world's largest industry, growing at around 4 per cent globally per annum (Jones and Haven-Tang, 2005), contributing about 5 per

cent of Scotland's GDP (Snowdon and Thomson, 1998), and providing employment for around 186,500 people or 8 per cent of the Scottish workforce (Future Skills Scotland, 2006a). Thus, tourism is an important employer in Scotland. However, it is also an industry in which face-to-face contact with customers is of primary importance. The tourism sector has a different pattern of jobs from the rest of the economy; only one per cent of tourism workers are process plant and machine operatives, whereas the total proportion of all employees in tourism who have face-to-face contact with customers, is 77 per cent (Future Skills Scotland, 2006b).

Within the tourism industry, VAs are not the largest employer, as the largest majority of tourism people work in ancillary services such as hotels and transport. However, VAs are considered to play a highly significant role in stimulating destination development, revenue and employment (Fyall *et al.*, 2001). Visitor attractions have been described in Gunn's (1972, p. 43) seminal work as "the real energiser of tourism in a region…without attractions there would be no need for other tourism services". Consequently, the role of visitor attractions within tourism is very important, as without them to draw visitors to an area and provide a focus, many other elements of the tourism industry would be significantly weakened. Visitor attractions are also amongst those service industries where a very close customer-employee relationship is continuously required. These reasons make VAs a significant customer service industry to study.

The VA sector is thus an important service sector employer in Scotland, where high levels of customer service are required. There is also evidence that the sector is moving towards the type of multi-functional operation that most requires WPK. However, evidently a shortfall in skills is compromising customer service in a majority of Scottish tourism businesses. As this thesis will demonstrate, the concept of WPK clearly has an important role to play in the service industry, particularly where there is a prominent need for customer service. Consequently,

this was the right time to bring together these strands: a service industry like the visitor attraction sector where customer service is important and the evolution of WPK as a way of studying peoples' jobs in those circumstances. Since it appears likely that this type of job will become increasingly important over the next few decades, now is a crucial time to contribute such a study.

Personal Biography

In considering my own contribution to this doctorate, I have reflected on the numerous strands of my own experience, which have drawn together to influence and shape this work. At the age of 32, I abandoned my post-school career in retail travel to embark on a degree in *Consumer and Management Studies with Home Economics*. After graduating from Glasgow Caledonian University in 1996, my path briefly passed through a food-manufacturing factory, in the role of technical manager. However, within a couple of years I moved to Motherwell College. My first post was as *Workplace Training and Assessment Co-ordinator in Food and Hospitality*, but before long I moved to the position of *Lecturer in Travel and Tourism*, where, amongst other things, I taught customer service and co-ordinated market research projects undertaken by HND students, for three major visitor attractions.

A series of consultancy contracts for the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) provided opportunities to undertake larger research projects in education and to write unit descriptors, assessments, exemplars and teaching material for many travel and tourism related subjects, even earning me a brief trip to China as SQA's 'Travel and Tourism expert' in 2004. Concurrently, between 2002 to 2004, I attended the University of Stirling on day-release from college to complete a *Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Qualification in Further Education TQ(FE)*. It was during this course that I first heard of 'work process knowledge' in a lecture by

Nick Boreham. When, towards the end of the TQ(FE), I applied for and won a studentship, work process knowledge was to be the focus of my PhD. Soon after starting, I was given the opportunity to 'sit in on' a study of production line engineers in a shampoo manufacturing company, which gave me greater insight into what WPK involved. Shortly afterwards, through a combination of networking and serendipity, I met Kate Tetley of People 1st, the Sector Skills Council for Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism, just at the moment they began to develop National Occupational Standards (NOS) for visitor attractions. It became mutually beneficial to work together. The focus of this work thus became *Work Process Knowledge in Scottish Visitor Attractions.*

It is evident that my experience spans a broad range of subjects and disciplines, which in the study of WPK is undoubtedly a major strength; seeing links and understanding consequences of individual actions within a wider framework is what WPK is all about. In my working life, I have accumulated specialist travel knowledge, manufacturing and service experience and extensive educational and research experience. Such an eclectic mix of expertise has undoubtedly helped me towards a broader and liberal perspective and enlarged my understanding of the wider picture. This doctorate has thus provided the opportunity to unite the accumulation of disparate but interwoven strands of my former travel, work, education and research experience and helped me to make this study more meaningful.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis has five chapters. **Chapter 1** considers the background to the study, setting the research in a wider context, explaining its purpose and contribution to knowledge, and clarifying the researcher's position in relation to the study. **Chapter 2** presents the findings of a review of the literature in two fields of study. The first section examines previously published WPK literature, while the second examines literature about the VA domain. The research questions that arose, both from this review of literature and from interaction with VA managers, were: to identify the nature of WPK in Scottish visitor attractions; discover what relationship WPK has to customer service; how WPK in this service sector context differs from selected published studies in manufacturing and other service sector contexts; and what factors affect the development of WPK in Scottish VAs.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in this study. Following recruitment of a number of VAs using an online questionnaire and subsequent site visits, six sites were selected for case study, on the basis that they demonstrated most evidence of multi-functional working and staff with developed WPK. The research design was comparative case studies of the work processes and knowledge within these six visitor attractions, based on a social constructivist framework, using the methods of key informant interviews and shadowing.

The findings drawn from data gathered during this research are presented in **Chapter 4**, which explains the main factors that are found to affect WPK. The key factor contributing to the development of work process knowledge is communication with staff, especially of systems-level information. Cultural information sharing is an essential pre-condition for the development of work process knowledge in this context. Other determining factors are multi-functional

team working, employee biographies, seasonality issues, how weddings and functions are handled on-site and the size and complexity of the site.

A discussion of these findings is presented in **Chapter 5**. By addressing the research objectives, this study significantly contributes to understanding the nature of the WPK workers in this industry require, what factors affect its development and how WPK in the VA sector differs from selected previous studies in manufacturing and other service sectors.

The chapter concludes that WPK is the discipline underpinning the smooth running of visitor attractions, and elements of it deliver customer service. Work process knowledge is vitally important in this industry because the end customer requires and even demands it. The increasingly sophisticated demands customers make over time lead inevitably to improved WPK amongst staff if they are going to satisfy those demands. As work in this sector relies so heavily on WPK to satisfy customer demands, if workers fail to develop it, and quickly, then they will fail to satisfy the demands of the customer and ultimately lose business. It is thus the closely integrated nature of the employee-customer relationship that has such a profound effect on WPK development in this service sector industry, and is essentially what differentiates it from previously published studies. The identification of the customer as a hitherto unrecognised key driver of WPK, and the way in which the customer drives WPK to extend beyond the boundaries of the organisation, is the most important contribution to knowledge made by this work.

2 Literature Review

The primary focus of this thesis is WPK, which sits broadly within the field of work, learning and knowledge. It is a conceptual framework to explain one of the many kinds of work-related knowledge and concentrates on what is learned. For those interested in how learning takes place, there are vast related literatures that depict various models of learning, for example, 'experiential learning' (e.g. Argyris, 2005; Baker *et al.*, 2002; Eraut, 2000; Kolb, 2001), 'organisational mediation of learning' (e.g. Salomon and Perkins, 1998; Tippins and Sohi, 2003), 'learning and identity formation' (e.g. Billett and Somerville, 2004; Brown and Starkey, 2000; Edwards and Clarke, 2002) and 'work-based learning' (e.g. Raelin, 2000; Rainbird *et al.*, 2004; Sangster *et al.*, 2000). How WPK is learned may be viewed through the lens of any or all of the above learning models. However, it is the knowledge of the work process itself that is of interest here and is the focus of this research. Consequently, the literature published in the WPK field forms the first and most important section of this review.

However, it became apparent, when reading this body of work, that there were additional areas of literature that should be reviewed in order to provide a more complete picture of the background to this study. These areas include the microenvironment of the visitor attraction industry, recent management trends and drivers and an understanding of the general culture and the people working within visitor attractions. Consequently, there is a second section to this chapter, in which these topics are explored.

A comprehensive literature search was undertaken to source relevant literature for both these sections, using a wide variety of resources. Table 1 identifies the databases and other resources searched during this literature review, with the names of the resource and its description being shown in the first two columns.

The third column in the table gives the keyword search terms used. However, often the number of 'hits' from keywords produced unmanageable numbers and so the fourth column shows the terms used to refine the search to produce more specifically relevant results. The final column shows the number of relevant sources yielded from these searches.

Each database tends to have its own quirks in relation to possible search terms and abbreviations. For example, in many databases it is possible to use truncated words followed by a symbol such as * or $: for example, touris* will deliver hits from both 'tourism' and 'tourist', so where these truncations were available, these were used. Other search shortcuts include using * or ? within the middle of a word – for example lab*r will return results from labour or labor, so getting round the problems caused by US versus UK English. Inverted commas around a phrase limit a search to words appearing in that order. For example, the three words, 'word process knowledge' written without inverted commas, will usually find publications with any or all of those words in the keywords or title, whereas "work process knowledge" will return works only containing that specific phrase. Where such abbreviations were used, these are shown within the search terms. In column four, the key word is shown followed by /, which indicates that this keyword was used in a number of searches, with each alternative refinement shown in turn. For example, 'service/ and attitude/ and customer', would show that the keyword search was 'service' refined by two further searches of 'service AND attitude' and 'service AND customer'.

These searches, however, were not the only resources used for accumulating relevant material. The Stirling University Library (SUL) catalogue and other online resources were used to track down sources referred to in bibliographies or texts, while several reports, statistics or general references were located through the internet and Google search engine's standard or advanced search facilities. I also

drew upon books from my own library and I am deeply indebted to colleagues both within the Institute of Education and elsewhere, for supplying me with the actual articles or citations of their own work, which pointed me in the direction of some the most important sources for this literature review.

Table 1: Databases, Sources and Search Terms Used

Resources Searched	Description	Keyword(s) used	Keyword(s) is/are given first, followed by the various terms used to refine the keyword search:	Number of relevant literature sources yielded from these searches
SUL Theses	Paper-based theses in Stirling University Library (SUL) catalogue	Tourism; tourist; visitor; service; functional; flexible; flexibility; multi; work	Service/ and customer/ and attitude/ and culture/ and industry/ and quality Work/ and process/ and Scotland/ after 1995/ and service	No relevant sources yielded
SUL digital research repository	Most recently published SUL theses, online	Tourism; tourist; visitor; attraction; Scotland; service; work; flexibility; employee; culture	Work/and process Culture /and attitude/ and quality	No relevant sources yielded
Index to Theses	Database of British and Irish theses abstracts, access original through Document Delivery Service (DDS)	Tourism; tourist; attitude; functional; work; "work process"; "work process knowledge"; visitor	Tourism/ and Scotland; Tourist/ and attraction; Attitude/ and culture and UK/ and culture and service/ and culture and quality Functional/ and multi Visitor/ and attraction/ and service; Service/ and industry	One thesis on tourism in Scotland

Table 1: Databases, sources and search terms used to find relevant literature (continued.../)

Resources Searched	Description	Keyword(s) used	Keyword(s) is/are given first, followed by the various terms used to refine the keyword search:	Number of relevant literature sources yielded from these searches
IRI Scotland	Pilot cross-repository service of theses from 6 Scottish Universities	Touris*; visitor; attraction; Scotland; service; work process knowledge; culture	Service/ and customer/ and attitude/ and culture/ and industry Culture/ and organi?ational/ and quality	No relevant sources yielded
Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD)	Database of electronic theses from around the world	Touris*; visitor; "customer service"; functional*; "multi functional"; "service industry"; flexibl*; employee; "work process"; "work process knowledge"	Tourist/ and attraction Visitor/ and attraction "Customer service"/ and attitude/ and culture/ and quality "Service industry"/ and customer orientation/ and empowerment/ and touris*/ and quality Flexibl*/ and workflow Employee/ and attitude/ and empowerment/ and job satisfaction	One dissertation on Australian tourist attractions

Table 1: Databases, sources and search terms used to find relevant literature (continued.../)

Resources Searched	Description	Keyword(s) used	Terms used to refine the keyword search	Number of relevant literature sources yielded from these searches
Live Search Academic Beta (Academic.live.com)	Index of online library-subscribed content: Searches for scholarly journal articles, conference proceedings, dissertations and academic books	Tourism; work process knowledge; flexibil*; touris* attraction*; multi-functional*;	Tourism and Scotland/ and visitor and attraction/ and quality/ and service/ and customer service Flexibil*/ and work/ and service Multi-functional and service and industry	This search produced either non-relevant results or sources that had already been found through other resources
Google Scholar	Specialised online database searching across papers, theses, books, abstracts and articles, from academic publishers, professional societies, pre-print repositories, universities and other scholarly organisations	"work process knowledge" Visitor and attraction and Scotland Customer service	Only in Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Exact phrase: "visitor attraction*" Plus at least one of the words: attitude/ culture/ service/ customer/ quality And touris* or visitor attraction* between 2000 – 2007, only in Social Science, Arts, Humanities	One relevant article on work process knowledge It was through this resource that the Leisure Tourism Database was identified as a key resource and all relevant articles were subsequently accessed through this via the SUL online resources 2 articles on customer service accessed through Emerald via SUL

Table 1: Databases, sources and search terms used to find relevant literature (continued…/)

Resources Searched	Description	Keyword(s) used	Terms used to refine the keyword search	Number of relevant literature sources yielded from these searches
Leisure Tourism Database (formerly CABI Leisure, Recreation and Tourism Abstracts)	Database of global information literature from over 6000 serial publications of leisure, recreation, tourism and hospitality research	"tourist attractions"; visitor "work process"; service; attitude; function*; flexib*; functionality; lab*r; cultur*; touris*; work; qualitative;	Touris*/ and qualit*/ and service; Service/ and customer/ and touris*/ and UK; Work/ and knowledge/ and touris* Attitude/ and work/ and touris*/ and attraction/ since 1990 and UK/ and quality and UK Function*/ and attraction/ and multi; Flexib* and touris* and UK; Lab*r/ and touris*/ and quality/ and UK; Cultur*/ and work/ and touris*/ and qualit*	Thirty one relevant articles or books/ book chapters in the areas of visitor attractions, tourism management, flexible working practices and customer service quality/ culture
Web of Knowledge	A service offering several databases including Web of Science (for access to the Citation Indexes), ISI Proceedings and Journal Citation Reports.	Touris*; visitor and attraction; work and process and knowledge; employee; multi and functional	Touris* and attraction/ and service; and culture; and customer; and quality Employee and empowerment/ and service Multi-functional and touris*/ and flexibil*	One relevant article on work process knowledge

Table 1: Databases, sources and search terms used to find relevant literature (concluded)

Resources Searched	Description	Keyword(s) used	Terms used to refine the keyword search	Number of relevant literature sources yielded from these searches
Business Source Elite	Database provides full text coverage from nearly 1,100 scholarly business, management and economics journals and offers indexing and abstracts for over 1,800 journals	Touris*; work process knowledge; visitor attraction	Touris* and visitor attraction Touris* and Scotland and service/ and service quality/ and customer service Touris* and service industry and culture/ and attitude	Three relevant articles on Scottish visitor attractions
British Educational Index. Also gives access to ERIC and Australian Education Index ERIC through CSA	An index to articles and reports on research, policy and practice in education and training in the UK.	Touris$; service; customer service; work process knowledge	Touris$ and visitor attractions/ and Scotland; and service/ and customer service Service and quality Customer service and quality/ and culture	No relevant sources yielded

Section 1: Work Process Knowledge (WPK)

Although there has been growing discussion of 'work process knowledge' in recent years, there remains a relative paucity of literature in relation to WPK in general and for the service sector in particular. At the time of this review, the sum total of published literature specifically about WPK extended to a couple of EU reports, two books of collected works and a few dozen journal articles; no theses directly relating to WPK were found. There are two surmised reasons for this. The first is that this area of study is relatively recent and there has been insufficient time to build up a vast body of work. Secondly, although there has been substantial funding by the European Union (EU) for this subject over the past decade or so, WPK has not yet attracted wider mainstream funding and consequently a wider following of researchers. There is a small body of literature on WPK in other European languages, e.g. German; however, the main concepts and ideas of these have been expressed elsewhere within the English language literature.

To examine the amassed published literature, a broadly historical approach has been adopted, beginning with the background to the development of WPK and how it has been defined. Thereafter, some specific case studies are examined, followed by a summary, with comments, of the more important issues of WPK, concentrating on those with most relevance to this work.

The growing interest in WPK is part of a wider, global context, in response to the macro industrial changes of recent times. A very full account of the economic and political drivers behind the development of interest in WPK can be found in Boreham (Boreham, 2002b). However, he gives a more succinct summary of the reasons in Boreham (2002c, p.232):

> In reaction to the series of economic crises since the 1980s, there has been a trend to replace the bureaucratic system of work organisation associated with

the names of Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford by more flexible systems of continuous improvement inspired by the Japanese industry. The essence of Taylor-Fordism is the decomposition of work into narrow tasks, and its performance by relatively unqualified employees under the supervision of a hierarchy of managers and foremen. Developed in the USA for mass production with a largely illiterate workforce, this system is today widely regarded as inappropriate for meeting the challenges of global competition.

He then mentions that although it is true that some companies continue to maintain competitive advantage using Taylorist methods:

> … it is nevertheless the policy of both the UK government and the European Commission to encourage the 'new forms of the organisation of work' in which management hierarchies and a strict division of labour are replaced by flatter organisational structures and teams of multi skilled employees.

The concept of WPK emerged within the vocational education community. The impact of globalisation and changing work practices has challenged researchers across Europe to understand how vocational education and training (VET) can support and prepare apprentices and existing workforce in meeting these challenges. The crucial difference in these modern working conditions for workers is that:

> Workers in these organisations are expected to operate across traditional demarcations and engage in continuous improvement of the means of production and delivery. This of course, has implications about what they need to know. Whilst the employees of Taylorist organisations need little more than a bare minimum of underpinning knowledge to perform their narrow, closely prescribed tasks, the flexible work systems advocated in the UK's new industrial policy demand that employees at all levels understand the work process in the organisation as a whole.

Knowledge, therefore, has become a valuable commodity in modern business, as Boreham concludes, when he states that these new organisational structures are organised:

> … based on the assumption that knowledge is one of the firm's most important resources, that all levels of employee should be involved in generating it and that to achieve the desired flexibility and innovativeness, they should share it freely with their colleagues.

Thus, we see that the study of 'work process knowledge' is set within a context of complex factors, including amongst others: flexible working practices, teamwork, non-hierarchical organisational structures and information-sharing cultures. Boreham (2002b, p.6) warns, however, against considering 'work process knowledge' as just a label, suggesting instead that it should be treated as:

> …a family of concepts which are closely connected to each other by a number of dyadic resemblances, as well as by a common element or defining characteristic that runs through the whole family.

The concept of WPK is characterised by Mariani (2002, p.15) as a "key construct for explaining success in the highly competitive marketplace of today", while Norros and Nuutinen (2002, p.25) portray it as "a way of representing the kind of expertise needed under modern working conditions".

Defining WPK

Before proceeding to discuss the main points arising from the literature, it is important to clarify what is meant, for the purposes of this work, by the term 'work process knowledge'. The literature shows this to have been an evolving definition, and although a comprehensive and detailed description of the origins of WPK can

be found in Fischer & Boreham (2004), a brief summary of the main historical developments is offered here, in order to clarify this.

Although isolated references to 'process knowledge' can be found in the vocational education literature as far back as the 1920s and 1930s (Boreham, 2002b; Fischer and Boreham, 2004), the coining of the term 'work process knowledge' is generally accredited to Wilfried Kruse in 1986. However, there has been some discussion about the translation of the German phrase he used. Fischer (2005) points out that Kruse's own translation of the phrase *'Arbeitsprozeßwissen'* was as 'labour process knowledge', and there seems to be some distinction between the two terms. Interestingly, Kruse's study was in a service sector and tourism related industry. As part of a series of projects for the *Fundació Centre d'Iniciatives i Recerques Europees a la Mediterrània* (CIREM) in Barcelona, funded by the European Commission to promote economic development in the Mediterranean, Kruse was involved in a project to improve the performance of a small group of hotels in Mallorca (Boreham, 2002b). In an attempt to improve the quality of in-house service, a Japanese 'quality circle' approach was adopted. This quickly uncovered that many of the problems arising within one department frequently arose from actions or inactions of colleagues in other departments, which highlighted the interdependency of the different departments and the interconnectedness of workers' roles. Kruse (1986, pp.188-193) defined the term in that context as 'labour process knowledge', to mean:

- An expanded understanding of work roles in parts of the organisation other than the employee's own;

- An awareness of the interdependency of the activities in different departments, including characteristics of the system as a whole, such as the flow of work through the organisation, both upstream and downstream of the worker's own station; and

- Participation in a workplace culture that provides a service to colleagues in support of a *high quality of service to the actual customer* (my emphasis).

'Labour process knowledge', therefore, is taken to mean a knowledge of the labour process in the organisation as a whole. It is "knowledge about how to solve concrete tasks as well as knowledge about a social relationship that the solving of concrete tasks is embedded in" (Fischer, 2005, p.372).

However, from these service industry beginnings, Boreham (2002b) tells us that other German researchers extended the concept of *Arbeitsprozeßwissen* to other fields of employment, especially into manufacturing, which then widened the above rather narrow definition, to also include knowledge of the overall production process. From this point on, the term 'work process knowledge', which incorporated this wider perspective, has become more used in contemporary debates (see Fischer, 2000, in Fischer and Boreham, 2004).

However, Boreham (2004c, pp.211-215) further defined WPK in terms of the following four main attributes. Work process knowledge:

- Implies understanding the work process in the organisation as a whole;

- Is 'active' knowledge that is used directly in the performance of work;

- Is constructed by employees while they are engaged in work, particularly when they are solving problems; and

- Is a synthesis of theoretical and experiential knowledge.

A main notable point of difference in this definition is that the 'work process' now not only includes the labour process of Kruse's original definition and the production process but also knowledge of the business process of the organisation.

Having 'work process knowledge', therefore, implies that "one has a systems-level understanding of the work process in the organisation as a whole" (Boreham, 2004c, p.211). Boreham also defines WPK as being 'active', as opposed to 'inert' knowledge (Perkins, 1992), essential for the work being performed, and that it is constructed during work.

Fischer (in Fischer, 2005, pp.374; and Fischer and Rauner, 2002, p.161), however, has since described WPK as:

- Immediately useful for the work to be done (e.g. the knowledge that actively informs the work of the skilled worker);

- Primarily (although not exclusively) constructed in the workplace through experience and work itself, especially through interactions among individuals and the complex tools they use;

- An understanding of the whole work process including preparation, action, control and evaluation.

There are subtle differences between Boreham and Fischer's definitions. For one, Fischer asserts that unlike Boreham's definition, WPK is not constructed exclusively in the workplace. An understanding of the whole work process has also been expanded to include preparation, action, control and evaluation and he mentions interaction with complex tools as being important. Fischer's definition has arisen from research studies from different sectors, such as industrial maintenance, testing of production islands and chemical laboratories, which have drawn him to conclude (in Fischer, 2001, p.152; also Fischer, 2005, p.374; and Fischer and Rauner, 2002, pp.162-163) that vital aspects of WPK within the context of the industrial sector include:

- How the company works; this includes work processes within the framework of a company's work organisation;

- The specific peculiarities of material and equipment;

- The mechanics, energy and chemistry of the industrial processes; and

- The concrete consequences that can be derived from specific actions.

These evolving definitions, however, seem to have moved right away from Kruse's first characterisation. The concept of providing 'high quality service to the customer', first identified as being a vital aspect of the labour process, seems to have been lost, or just incorporated into being part of 'the work to be done'. The loss of this focus is possibly due to the range of businesses that have been studied and the vagaries of the agendas of research funders.

Previous Areas of Study in the WPK Field

Like many things, research follows trends, often within the frameworks of available funding. During 1995 to 2003, as part of the 4th and 5th EU Framework Programmes, the Director General of the European Commission (see: European Commission, 2003) supported a significant number of research programmes (around 420 research teams) that directly addressed issues of education and training on a wide range of issues. These projects included, amongst others, research into the challenges for education and training policies in Europe; the dynamics of education and employment; and issues of competence development and learning in organisations. There were a number of foci for this research including 'Education, Inequalities and Social Exclusion' and 'School to Work Transition'. However, the area within which most WPK studies would fall was 'Researching the Use of Information and Computer Technology (ICT) in Learning'.

Hence, when between 1998 and 2002, the concept of WPK was further developed by a 10-country research network within its Framework IV Targeted Socio-economic Research programme, in a project known as the WHOLE project (Boreham, 2004c), ICT became a strong focus. The WHOLE project (Work Process Knowledge in Technological and Organisational Development) covered 22 industries, spanning all the manufacturing and service sectors of the European economy. The findings from this project were published in the appositely named book 'Work Process Knowledge' (Boreham *et al.*, 2002). This book discusses the nature of WPK, its role in the modern workplace, how it is constructed in the course of work and how formal training can support it. The main points within this book that are relevant to this work are explored shortly.

However, let me draw attention to the type of industries studied in this project. What is significant to note is that many of the service sector industries studied in this project, although ostensibly providing a 'service to customers' could not really be categorised as 'customer service' industries. The distinction between them is that for 'customer service' industries such as retail or tourism organisations, 'customer service' lies at the very heart of the business and is the main factor in influencing customers (i.e. the general public who choose to patronise them) in their choice between one company and another. Table 2 gives a list of these industries (see Boreham 2004c, p.211)[1]:

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[1] Table 2 on the next page was published in 'Orienting the work-based curriculum towards work process knowledge: a rationale and a German Case Study, Boreham N., in Studies in Continuing Education 26:2, page 211. Copyright Routledge (2004). Reproduced with kind permission.

Table 2: Industries Studied by the WHOLE Network

Manufacturing

Continuous process manufacturing: paper making, steel manufacture, chemicals, power generation

Assembly: mineral water bottling, car manufacturing

Small batch manufacturing: mechanical engineering, clothing, machine tools, medical equipment

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Services

Material services: air traffic control, marine navigation, military flying, hotel industry, electrical maintenance, telecommunications sales, car service and repairs

Human services: fire service, health service, education

Information services: industrial design, financial services, industrial laboratory work

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Many of the 'service industries' mentioned above, such as air traffic control, military flying, electrical maintenance or laboratory work have employees who will never have direct interaction with the public. In other services, such as the fire service, health service or education where employees do come directly in contact with the end user, while an aim of the business might to give satisfaction, it is not the primary focus of the business and the opportunities for real customer choice are limited. This may explain why later definitions of WPK have moved away from its customer service focus roots. Indeed, Boreham (2002b, p.14) draws attention to the previous lack of academic focus on this aspect of WPK:

> Emphasis is increasingly being placed on developing the ability to work effectively in teams, to communicate with others both inside and outside the company, to willingly assume responsibility, to be quality conscious and to provide good customer care. In these debates, however, little attention has been given to the knowledge needed to underpin such traits.

This point is elaborated upon later in this review, however, in the meantime, this section of the review turns to examining specific published studies relevant to this work, focussing particularly on those that relate to service industries. Within the first published book on WPK (Boreham *et al.*, 2002) , there were four notable case studies.

Selected WPK Studies

The first and probably the most relevant of these to this work is Lammont and Boreham's (2002c) study of an organisation where direct contact with the customer was seen as an essential element of the WPK necessary in that organisation. Their study examined a workplace where new technology (in this case a sophisticated computerised telephone call system) had brought about an organisational restructuring and consequent changes in skill requirements. The organisation was a debt collection agency where, before this restructuring and installation of a new CRM system, individual agents had been responsible for handling portfolios of customers. However, with the new automated system, although their job was the same in that debtors were phoned and collectors negotiated repayment agreements, the difference in the new system was that the computer allocated cases to the next available telephone operator who may have had no previous experience of the case. The new expertise of these workers lay in being able to quickly assess and understand the case from the on-screen notes left by previous operators.

This was one of the very few published studies that examined the interaction employees had with their 'customers', however, there were several key points within this publication that reveal that the ethos of this service organisation did not really have 'customer service' at its heart. The first point concerns the reasons behind why the new CRM was introduced, which was to increase worker speed and productivity, supported with a bonus scheme that rewarded collectors for

successful repayments by debtors. The time allocated to each call was targeted at three minutes. Longer conversations were regarded as 'lost income' and management actively discouraged any help that a debt collector may previously have been able to offer for multiple debts. During the call, the collectors knew "that it is essential to control the interaction with the debtor firmly and assertively from the start. The crucial interpersonal dynamic is to be proactive rather than reactive" (Lammont and Boreham, 2002, p.98).

In this organisation, the customer-employee relationship is obviously essential to the WPK of the debt collectors. However, it would be difficult to categorise this relationship as being 'customer service' oriented. The whole ethos seems diametrically opposed. In this organisation, the reaction to the "competitive pressure of modern debt collecting" (Lammont and Boreham, 2002, p.99) has been to restructure the system for its own commercial benefit, remove the personal touch of interacting with a single person by having multiple and anonymous contacts, and reducing the service and time the collectors were previously able to offer. The main focus of this study is in how the workforce interacted with the new technology and how it became "the means by which the work culture reproduces itself and transmits knowledge" (Lammont and Boreham, 2002, p.97). It does not address the question of how 'customer service' in a customer-oriented business relates to WPK and thus leaves this question yet to be answered.

The second case study of note was in Krüger, Kruse and Caprile's (2002) study of 'Work process knowledge and industrial and labour relations', which examined the implications of workers acquiring WPK in relation to the social organisation of enterprises and labour politics. Most of this discussion is not directly relevant to this work, but a small part of their study was interesting because it concerned a Spanish travel agent, which is not only in the customer service sector, but also

within the travel and tourism arena. Krüger *et al* (2002, p.206) described a project about a failed attempt to develop WPK and change working practices:

> The aim of the project was to create a system of continuous training in travel agencies for the development of transversal competencies based on the whole work process and quality management systems. In collaboration with a training school in the sector, a team of specialists drew up a project to introduce quality systems based on work process knowledge in a service sector and undertook a pilot project in a micro-company incorporated in the training school.

They tell us that the attempt failed because, in Spain, there is a strong hierarchical tradition and the manager in the agency did not wish to undermine her authority by sharing information with the staff. They explain that the "idea of basing everybody's performance on a common understanding of the work process was fundamental", however, "when the manager perceived the scope of the change, which would have redefined her position and affected her organisational capital within the company, she refused to continue to participate." The employees, "who clearly perceived that the project could contribute to increasing their cultural and organisational capital, were at first willing to collaborate…[but] changed their attitude when they saw the negative stance of the management" (Krüger *et al.*, 2002, pp.207-208).

Although this study concerned a service sector organisation, it is a study primarily about power relations rather than customer service. However, these findings, nonetheless, highlight an important point about the development of WPK in an organisation. The delayering of hierarchical management systems and the attitude of management towards open sharing of information with staff are of vital importance for the successful development of WPK. There has to be a willingness on the sides of both management and employees to share information and work collaboratively.

A similar point is also stressed within the third case study drawn from the 'Work Process Knowledge' book, which is Boreham's (2002a) 'Professionalisation and work process knowledge in the UK's National Health Service'. This study highlights the problems caused where communication is vital to the work process (in this case between doctors and nurses within the NHS), but because of long-established lines of demarcation in the division of labour, information is sometimes not shared. As Boreham (2002a, p.171) comments on the attitude between these divergent professions:

> If they maintain their traditional closure, then it becomes difficult to encourage everybody in the organisation to share their knowledge of work processes in the interests of collaboration and flexibility.

Boreham (2002a, p.182) goes on to comment:

> Although the original definition of work process knowledge was non-political, sharing knowledge of the work process throughout an organisation will affect status group relationships.

Thus, we see that not only vertical communication between management and employees but also horizontal communication and information sharing between colleagues, plus an attitude of willingness to collaborate, are all important aspects for the development of WPK.

The final case study to be highlighted from this book is that of Mariani's (2002) study of 'Work process knowledge in a chemical company'. Although this is obviously not a service sector organisation, it did offer a comprehensive study of the WPK required by workers in an Italian chemical company that had undergone an organisational restructuring and had successfully adopted flexible working practices. Its previous proportional emphasis of 80 per cent manufacturing plastics

to 20 per cent research and development (R&D) was reversed, making researching new types of plastic and selling this knowledge its new core business. The new flexible way of working that this different regime imposed brought about a need to understand the entire work process, as an employee responsible for planning and control within the company had stated during an interview (in Mariani, 2002, p.24):

> [It is essential for] everybody [to have] knowledge of the overall work process. It should never be allowed to happen that an individual cannot interpret a certain output because he or she does not know what happened at a previous stage in the process.

This case study was of interest because of the way that the new structure had organised its team working, which required much more multi-skilling than before:

> The objective of running as many experiments as possible and rapidly modifying the R&D plans and the plants themselves has created the need for flexible employees with broader competencies that integrate a wider range of skills (Mariani, 2002, p.18).

However, increasing the skills base of individuals was not the only way to improve flexibility, as Mariani (2002, p.18) went on to explain:

> At the individual level, of course, there is a limit to how far multi-skilling can be taken. But if work is organised in teams then it becomes possible to bring a far wider range of skills into the same operational unit. Within teams, individual knowledge and competencies fuse to create an integrated and polyvalent human resource.

There were two main teams in the plant, one operating at a technical level and one on an operational level. However, there was evidently job rotation within and between the teams, which broadened employees understanding because they were familiar with both the technical and operational needs of the plant. This 'cross

boundary working' had obviously expanded the WPK of employees within this plant as Mariani (2002, p.20) explains:

> Within both teams, therefore, everybody comes to know everybody else's job and to compensate each other's lack of experience. '[Within teams] information circulates among people: everybody needs to know everything; there should be no "grey areas" where only a few know how to operate'…In this way, the different phases of the work process become well known to all members of the team, making it possible to develop a common language that allows a tight coupling of activities.

Working in teams had also given an additional benefit to this organisation as since 1996 an increasing number of employees had been taken on with one-year short-term contracts, which by 2002 had reached about 10 per cent of the workforce. The problem was that (Mariani, 2002, p.20):

> Becoming an effective chemical plant operator requires 2 to 3 years' experience, and it is impossible for employees on one-year contracts to develop sufficient skill to become useful employees. This difficulty is overcome by giving temporary workers specially designed, less responsible work roles within programmes run by teams of experienced employees.

In having multi-skilled teams, they were able to absorb less skilled workers into their team, using a structured course of learning where expert workers shared their knowledge with the novices, to help the transition. It is also interesting to note that another increasing trend in the intake of temporary workers was drawing them from university graduates rather than people with middle school certificates, which is their minimum entry qualification. It raised the question as to whether workers with this level of qualification could learn more quickly, however, this point was not elaborated upon.

Mariani's study highlights several important aspects of WPK: team working, job rotation and cross boundary working all help employees to develop skills and broaden workers' knowledge of the work process. Work process knowledge is not only limited to individuals but is shared collectively within the team. This helps to support less skilled new workers and integrate them more quickly into the team.

Additional Aspects of WPK

The remaining chapters within the book 'Work Process Knowledge' (2002) did not include any further case studies of direct relevance to this work. Nor, apart from a second appearance of the Mariani case study, were there any in the succeeding book on WPK, which published the results of the follow up to the WHOLE project. This was the CEDEFOP-funded CEDRA network project, 'Production of Research Resource Materials in Work Process Knowledge/Work Related Learning' (WOPROKNOW). The results were published by CEDEFOP in '*European perspectives on learning at work: the acquisition of work process knowledge*' (Eds M. Fischer, N. Boreham and B. Nyhan, 2004). This was again a collected works, although the focus of this was slightly different in that it was informing policy debates on vocational education and training in Europe. Consequently, much of the latter part of the book concentrates on teaching and learning, curricula and education policy, which are beyond the scope of this work. However, in both books, and further articles, some arising from the work undertaken for them, there were nonetheless a number of findings and conclusions that do bear relevance. These are summarised here.

Boreham (2002b, p.12) indicates that "work process knowledge in an organic organisation exists on several levels, the individual, the work group and the organisation". The main points have therefore been organised largely in those groupings, although they are examined in reverse order, beginning with WPK at an organisational level.

Oliveira *et al* (2002) address the question of how WPK grows and develops, and from this come two observations relevant for this work. The first relates to the relationship between flexibility, organisational structure and WPK, where they argue that the need for organisational flexibility drives the necessity for WPK:

> Flexibility brings organisational structure and human factors to the centre of the picture, and to achieve it company structure becomes simpler (with fewer levels of hierarchy, decentralisation, of decision making), and responsibility and increased participation by individuals in decision-making. Functional co-operation is improved and more effective information and communication channels are established. The work force is given additional autonomy and a wider range of skills, individual and collective learning are recognised as factors of paramount importance for organisational development and training performs a fundamental role. As argued elsewhere in this volume, these trends require employees to acquire work process knowledge (Oliveira et al, 2002, p.107).

The second point relates to the environment within an organisation that is most conducive to learning in work contexts (Rolo, 1996, in Oliveira et al, 2002, p.110), identifying that the necessary conditions are:

- That an organisation is open to its surroundings and provides rich learning experiences that increase job satisfaction;

- That work tasks are engaging, so that employees feel a need to participate fully;

- That team work is adopted as a way of developing a participatory culture in which collaboration and problem solving are positively valued;

- That there are opportunities for the learning process to develop autonomously and take advantage of informal space for learning; and

- That the development of positive relationships among the actors is encouraged, as well as the stability of the work force, mutual knowledge, personal affinities, local knowledge, an active role within management and informality of relationships.

A related argument is found in Ashton's (2004) paper, which examines how organisational structures and their culture impact on workplace learning. To acquire high levels of skills, the worker needs to acquire knowledge of the overall production system. However, Ashton argues that how the organisation 'structures the worker's attention', will determine what is learnt, as the learning process is embedded in the workplace and shaped by organisational decisions and practices. The main ways the organisational structure can impact on, and shape the process, of learning and skill formation in the work place are shown in the model in Figure 1 (Ashton, 2004, p.45)[2]:

Figure 1: Areas Where Organisational Structure and Culture Impact On the Learning Process
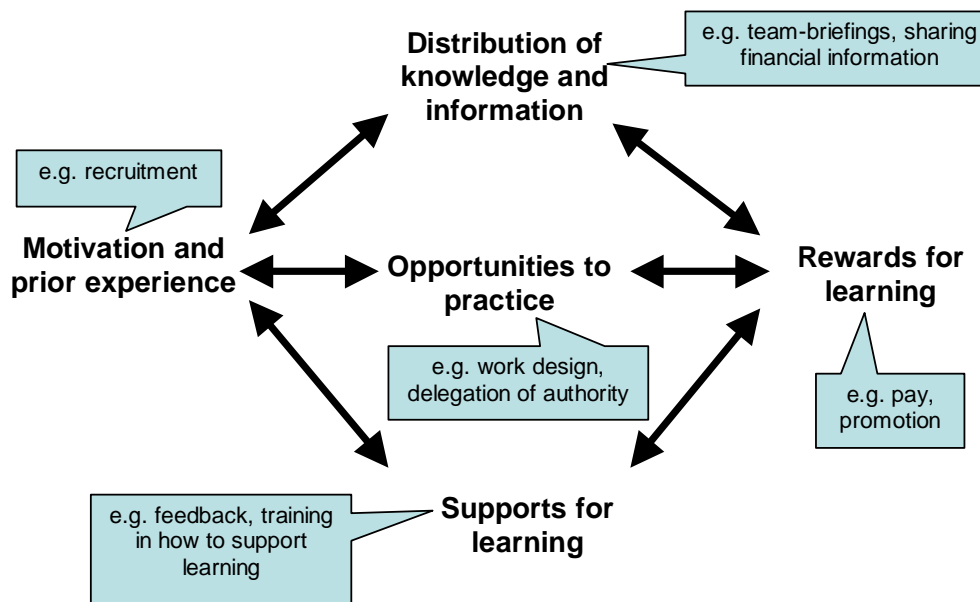
In this model, although the individual's motivation to engage in the process of

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[2] This model was published in 'The impact of organisational structure and practices on learning in the workplace', International Journal of Training and Development, 8:1, Page No 45, Copyright Blackwell Publishing (2004). Reproduced with kind permission.

learning is seen as determined by his previous experiences, these interact with organisational constraints in four main areas:

- In the extent to which the organisation facilitates access to knowledge and information;

- In the opportunity it provides to practice and develop new skills;

- In the provision of effective support for the learning process; and

- In the extent to which it rewards learning.

Ashton's paper discusses the degrees of organisational information available to different levels of employees within the hierarchy and the crucial importance of the attitude of management, supervisors and co-workers in sharing that knowledge, as they are all in a position to act as 'gatekeepers' of knowledge (Ashton, 2004, p.49). Building up internal networks and being willing to share information was seen as an important means of levelling out uneven distribution of knowledge. This reiterates similar conclusions previously mentioned (see Boreham, 2002b; Kruger et al, 2002). Several other studies (e.g.: Mariani, 2002; Rogalski *et al.*, 2002; Samurçay and Vidal-Gomel, 2002) also highlighted a need for organisations to document and store information within the organisational memory systems and share information with their work force as being important factors in WPK development. However, Ashton stresses that the attitude of individual workers to engaging with learning was also significant, as although company-level decisions may provide the broad framework within which the process of skill formation takes place, the pro-activity of individual employees can contribute greatly to developing their own skills.

Two further points of interest arise from Ashton's paper. The first relates to evidence that moving a worker from one department to another does not necessarily create knowledge of the organisation as a whole, just a set of discrete and unrelated skills. Where employee tasks are narrowly defined and if the worker is not included in sharing information about the overall system, the opportunities to acquire knowledge or skills remain limited.

The second point relates to reward systems within an organisation and their relevance to supporting the acquisition of WPK. Ashton (2004, p.51) states:

> …decisions about the system of rewards, and whether support for learning is a component part of those qualities that the organisation seeks to reward, are equally important in determining the breadth and depth of work-based learning.

Division of labour within an organisation as a potential barrier to learning about the work process is discussed by Huys and Van Hootegem (2002; 2004), where they maintain that many organisations make substantial improvements for flexible working without actually departing from traditional structures. They make the case for organisational structures to take into account that the jobs that offer the best learning situations are ones that are demanding, offer a high degree of autonomy and confront people with problems to solve. They conclude that if work is divided in such a way that the execution of tasks does not give workers opportunities to learn about the whole system, then workers are less able to adapt themselves. This endorses Boreham's (2002b) point that the development of WPK relies on the removal or blurring of boundaries between different occupational groups.

Rasmussen's (2002) study of workers in industrial design makes a similar point about the perpetuation of Taylorist management principles within an organisation seriously restricting the accumulation of WPK. However, his focus is more on

advocating for organisational structures to build in opportunities for informal interaction and allowing time for reflection on work process experiences. Rasmussen (2002, p.93) argues that:

> … young, relatively inexperienced industrial designers will have difficulty targeting an implicit understanding of collective models of how design work is carried out in practice, if informal interaction patterns with elder and more experienced colleagues are seriously restricted or eliminated. Creative work process experiences are not automatically transformed into work process knowledge. They have to be reflected on, discussed and reframed in relation to one or several collective models, before the transformation occurs.

Many of the aforementioned themes are picked up in the conclusions drawn from the studies of both a UK oil refinery and a German chemical company (Fischer *et al.*, 2004). Both organisations in these studies met the criteria for a 'learning organisation' (Fischer *et al.*, 2004; Fischer, 2005) which are:

- Organisational work routines are being evaluated and improved;

- Formal and informal learning processes are being evaluated and improved;

- Transformations are occurring in the culture of the organisation;

- Knowledge is being created within the organisation, at different levels (not only by the managers/scientists) and it is being shared within the organisation.

Both organisations within these studies aimed to provide an organisational structure that allowed knowledge creation and knowledge sharing and were doing so through either creating self-directed teams or initiating a system for workers to rewrite the plant manual. These methods had increased self-directed learning and reduced the extent to which learning processes were controlled by masters and

foreman. The methods had been successful in creating 'learning organisations', which had increased the WPK of workers (Fischer *et al.*, 2004, p.127):

> The knowledge being created and shared is what we call work process knowledge: knowledge about the whole labour process within the organisation, including reflection on practical and theoretical knowledge that might be useful for work.

However, there was a caveat about the ambiguity of a learning organisation, regarding the reasons behind why workers had to be supported to learn (Fischer *et al.*, 2004, p.127):

> In both case studies, processes of organisational learning are a response to a major reduction in manpower and in particular the loss of experienced workers. In one sense, organisational learning can be regarded as an attempt to compensate for the loss of know-how caused by this. Knowledge which formerly belonged to the individual worker or a group of individuals is objectified in two ways. It is objectified through a process of generalising individual knowledge, and also through artefacts in which knowledge is stored in the organisation's 'memory'. It is not yet clear to what extent organisational learning may support a hire-and-fire policy or an out-sourcing and in-sourcing policy, and to what extent the individual worker benefits from processes of organisation learning.

Mention of 'artefacts' as a means of conveying knowledge is raised in several papers (Boreham, 2004a; Fischer *et al.*, 2004; Fischer, 2005; Lammont and Boreham, 2002; Norros and Nuutinen, 2002; Waibel-Fischer *et al.*, 2004). Knowledge is conveyed not only from one mind to another but also by 'artefacts', which can be tools, media and from facilities such as company intranets, structures and rules. These tools become part of the workplace culture and are the means by which knowledge is shared. Within the workplace, the 'agent of learning',

therefore, is not just the individual and thus knowledge should be valued as a collective asset (Waibel-Fischer *et al*, 2004, p.89).

The role and importance of language in WPK is also a common theme. The role of language in the workplace has shifted both quantitatively and qualitatively. Whereas under a Taylorist structure, talking in the ranks was seen as something of a distraction to workers and therefore to be frowned upon, in the modern workplace the general importance of written and spoken language has increased. Language is also an important means of making implicit knowledge explicit and it is only when workers can recognise and use the 'speech genres' (Griffiths & Guile, 2003, p. 66) of work that are they fully able to participate in workplace communities of practice (see: Griffiths and Guile, 2003; Moser, 2004; Oliveira *et al.*, 2002).

Expanding on Mariani's (2002) case study mentioned earlier, Mariani and Mazza (2004) explain how the main practices that the chemical company undertook (role rotation, integration of departments, training courses and teaching newcomers) contributed to this organisation's 'community of practice'. They comment (Mariani and Mazza, 2004, p.61):

At [this chemical company] practices are regarded as valuable repositories of work process knowledge that can be accessed through participation and experience. Practices, when shared, are the primary resources for organisational learning and corporate restructuring.

They also note (in Mariani & Mazza, 2004, p.69) that:

Learning is speeded up by full participation in team activities. Integration-times [of new workers] are reduced by immersion in the community, facilitating

mastering of a common language…interpersonal sense making… and the development of personal competence.

The collective attainment of knowledge is noted in Waibel-Fischer *et al* (2004, p.89), where they comment that:

> …the process of knowledge development is embedded in a physical, social and cultural environment. The agent of learning is not just the individual: knowledge should be regarded as a collective asset…Learning environments, knowledge management, vocational education and training, work process design and similar programmes should consider the activity system as a whole, including its subsystems, as the carrier of knowledge. Knowledge and innovation are created via a process of collective mediation and construction in, as well as between, activity systems.

The concept of 'collective competence' in relation to WPK has been successively developed in a series of papers (see: Boreham, 1995; Boreham *et al.*, 2000; Boreham, 2004a; Boreham, 2004b; Boreham, 2005). The idea of teams sharing collective knowledge as part of a workplace culture is explained by Boreham (in 2004a, p.2):

> Creating and sharing knowledge is the basis for competitive advantage… and teamwork, collaboration and shared responsibility – not just individual effort – are increasingly being harnessed to promote corporate effectiveness. The concepts of *collective competence* and *work process knowledge* have been developed as tools for observing, understanding and theorising these changes…it is helpful to view work process knowledge through the lens of collective competence, for in this way, it appears less like a *commodity* and more like a *social accomplishment* – less of an *asset to be managed* and more of a *culture to be nurtured* (emphasis author's own).

In a different paper, Boreham (2004b, p.9) reiterates the importance of culture:

The foundation of collective competence is the *culture* of the group... [The] three interrelated aspects of a work group's culture [are]: its capacity to *make sense of events in the workplace*, its *collective knowledge* and its sense of *interdependency* (emphasis author's own).

And concludes that (Boreham, 2004a, p.1):

Work process knowledge constitutes a significant part of the common knowledge base on which collective competence depends.

Accordingly:

...if it is accepted that knowledge is both embedded in social practice and constructed through it, the social context that makes work process knowledge available [to workers] must be considered an inseparable part of the knowledge itself (Boreham, 2002c, p.235).

The question of collective competence is also focused on by Rogalski *et al* (2002) where they suggest that the concept of collective competence is not a simple one. The main point here is the distinction made between the 'collective competence' of a team of people engaged in a common task, working as a single entity, as opposed to the 'collective competence' of a group of individuals working co-operatively to accomplish tasks distributed across the team. The latter definition would be the one that describes most closely the flexible working practices of the modern workplace and fits the epistemological assumption that WPK is held collectively as well as individually and is part of the workplace culture.

A different aspect of organisational structure is examined in Clases and Wehner's (2004) study of co-operative aspects of knowledge development. Of particular interest is the examination of WPK in an inter-organisational relationship between an automobile manufacturer and one of its 'just-in-time' suppliers. In this case, the

study related the problems surrounding the supplier delivering pre-assembled brake light cables that the automobile company would use in their manufacturing process. It highlighted the problems of communication, understanding of the internal processes, and trust relationships between the supplier and the internal organisation, finding that 'expansive knowledge-oriented co-operation' was needed to ensure that production was met. However, the automobile manufacturer experienced problems with this relationship, for example, when the supplier failed to meet the required quality standards of parts, sometimes delivering faulty or substandard goods. Problems also arose, when the 'contact partner' went ill, leaving others within the supplier company to cope, who were not familiar with the automobile organisation's internal culture.

Clases and Wehner concluded that the crises that arose in this relationship were rooted in the planning stage: simply trying to transfer existing forms of the internal company coordinatedness to the inter-organisational relationship had contributed to its failure. It is apparent from the study that suppliers bear a great deal of responsibility in meeting the quality standards of the customer and that there must be trust between them to do so. It also highlights that in a relationship where two partners contribute to a single production process, both organisations must share an extensive understanding of the work processes of the other company.

The final area examined in this section of the review is the relationship between WPK and the individual. The way in which workers represent the work process is critical; many of the new work situations are characterised by work intensification and information overload and when modern production systems have to cope with critical situations, they are not able to leave problem solving to management (Fischer, 2005). Workers may also have to cope with boundaries arising from the spatio-temporal arrangements of the group (see: Lammont and Boreham, 2002; Norros and Nuutinen, 2002; Rogalski *et al.*, 2002). These are limitations set upon

the worker by time and space: employees may have to carry out work in separate physical time and spaces from their colleagues but they nonetheless need to understand the work as a whole in order to appreciate the interrelationship between goals, tasks and outcomes (Boreham, 2002b).

Fischer (2005, p.381) emphasises that "the successful implementation of new forms of work organisation is not only dependent on job design but on the motivation, competences, and experiences workers bring into the work process". Therefore, personal attitudes towards work and an openness to change at work without being overwhelmed by threat and uncertainty are important factors in developing WPK.

Heinz *et al* (2004) postulate that not only the external working conditions but also internal motivations and attitude have a heavy influence on how persons acquire WPK. They identify a range of 'biographical agency' definitions based on the way employees differ in the way they combine criteria for the evaluation of experiences in training and occupational contexts. This work suggests that people with various 'orientations' have different attitudes towards acquiring WPK. For example, people who have a 'company identification' orientation are more likely to socialise themselves to accept the learning requirements in a restricted range of job related tasks, whereas workers with a 'wage-orientated work attitude' will tend to restrict their interest in WPK to immediate job requirements.

People with the modes of 'optimising chances' and 'career orientation', however, have quite a different attitude towards the acquisition of knowledge. They are far more interested in roles that offer them the opportunity to work on a broader variety of job tasks that require theoretical knowledge and insight about a range of tasks and jobs around the business process. As Heinz *et al* (2004, p.208) explain:

This mode of biographical action orientation may improve access to differing job assignments, prepare for the collaboration in teams and projects and open pathways to different divisions within the company... For those who belong to the modes of 'optimising changes' and 'career orientation', theory and practice are not seen as mutually exclusive. The work organisation of the company and the nature of their jobs require an overview of, and an insight into, the whole work process of the organisation.

Workers with a 'career orientation', for example, were found to have a desire to acquire knowledge that reached beyond the task-specific requirements of the job in order to increase their flexibility to meet the various demands of the organisation or understand new technologies in their field. Heinz *et al* concluded that self-initiated work process learning is most often associated with workers with these orientations.

Other important factors that the literature raises about the individual in relation to WPK include:

- The importance of knowing how someone's role fits into the company as a whole, i.e., how their individual experience of work fits into the life of the company (Fischer and Röben, 2002);

- That people use past experience in the creation of WPK (Fischer, 2002);

- That development of identity is inseparable from the development of knowledge and skills (Norros and Nuutinen, 2002);

- That occupational identity is part of social identity and that individual identities build up over a lifetime to inform WPK. Problems can arise if an individual considers his or her own identity to be different from the identity assigned to them by others (Oliveira *et al.*, 2002);

- The development of professional competence is measured in months or years (Rabardel and Duvenci-Langa, 2002);

- The acquisition of WPK as an individual, empowers employees within the social system of the company (Krüger *et al.*, 2002);

- Attainment of WPK can contribute positively to the improvement of work ability, increase job satisfaction and improve employees' general well-being at work (Leppänen *et al.*, 2005).

Summary of Main Findings in this Section

In this section, we have seen that the study of WPK is still a relatively new field. Work process knowledge is defined as a systems-level understanding of the workplace and informs the work carried out within it, involving a synthesis of theoretical and practical knowledge. Interest in this field has arisen because of the macro changes in the working environment: flexible working, teamwork, non-hierarchical organisational structures and information-sharing cultures have required workers to develop WPK to operate effectively in these new conditions. Within this context, understanding the nature of WPK has become of importance to vocational education policy makers. This review has revealed that much of the research in this field has been heavily influenced by the ICT focus of policy makers and research funders. An examination of the types of organisations previously studied found only three case studies related to customer service industries in the literature. Within those case studies, 'customer service' was not a main issue.

However, this review of the literature has uncovered several important insights into WPK: it is held not only within the individual but is also socially and culturally based, with knowledge and information shared through common language and artefacts within the workplace. Organisational structure, formal and informal communication structures, organisational climate, division of labour and

management approaches have been shown to play a major part in the development of WPK by workers. Where these are positive, then it can speed up and enhance its development, whereas an unwillingness to share information can hinder this. In relationships between external and internal partners, knowledge of the work process of both organisations is an important factor. Moreover, the culture of the workplace and the people within them are also important. What the individual brings to the workplace in terms of their experience and attitude makes a substantial difference to their development of WPK.

Thus, we see that the working conditions of a domain are of crucial importance in understanding the WPK within that realm. To understand more fully the context within which this work will take place, therefore, the working conditions and drivers of the particular service sector under investigation must be examined. It becomes obvious that the review of literature undertaken for this work must also include aspects of the visitor attraction industry that have been found in the WPK literature to be pertinent. These include factors such as the microenvironment in which organisations in this industry operate, organisational structures, and an understanding of the culture and people working within visitor attractions. Consequently, these topics are examined in the subsequent section of this review.

Section 2: The Scottish Visitor Attraction Domain

Introduction

As the purpose of this section is to achieve an understanding of the current state of the Scottish visitor attraction domain, the search for literature concentrated primarily on UK publications within the past decade. However, it is noteworthy that this search revealed that the vast majority of academic investigation specifically about the VA sector did not really get under way until this century anyway. Unlike the closely related tourism and hospitality sectors, both of which have received much wider academic investigation, data collected on VAs have previously tended to concentrate on basic 'supply and demand information', such as visitor numbers and number of days open to the public (Garrod *et al.*, 2007; Leask and Fyall, 2006). Only two books specifically about the management of VAs were identified (see: Fyall *et al.*, 2003; Swarbrooke, 2002). There were a few chapters about VAs found in general tourism books (e.g.: Holloway, 2002; Lennon, 2001; Smith, 1998) and a modicum of journal articles, some of which were in the Human Resource Management (HRM) literature. Two theses were identified, however, while Benckendorff's (2004), thesis supported the same general findings concerning the macro environment forces on the tourism industry, its focus was on management planning in Australian VAs and so has minor relevance for this work. Kerr's (2002) thesis was much closer to home, being about Scottish tourism, however, it was a study evaluating Scottish tourism public policy, so, although it would provide the reader with an excellent background analysis about the structure, politics and history of Scottish tourism, it is not directly relevant to this work.

The approach taken for this section has been to concentrate on recent Scottish visitor attraction literature, drawing on general tourism literature and visitor attraction focussed HRM literature where it has been necessary to round out the picture. The main findings of this review are summarised below. The section begins

by examining the macro forces that have played a role in shaping the Scottish visitor attraction microenvironment in recent years. It then turns to examining how organisations within this sector have been affected by these forces in terms of their working practices, structures and workforce cultures, taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the tourism product and the difficulties in defining VAs.

The Size and Structure of the Visitor Attraction Sector in Scotland

There is general agreement that VAs are the mainstays of the tourism industry (Garrod *et al.*, 2007; Graham and Lennon, 2002; Smith, 1998; Snowdon and Thomson, 1998; Swarbrooke, 2002). The importance of the role of the visitor attraction within tourism is summed up by Fyall *et al* (2003, xxii):

> Individually and collectively, [visitor attractions] represent the catalytic focus for the development of tourism infrastructures and services.

In Scotland, the visitor attraction sector consists of almost 1000 attractions, 394 of which charge an entrance fee (Watson *et al.*, 2004). However, Scotland lacks a 'must-see' attraction, which on its own is capable of attracting visitors from beyond its borders, and it has been asserted that the small resident population of the country and its peripheral location in Europe make the economics of building, for example, a large-scale theme park commercially unviable (for further discussion see: Smith, 1998).

Instead, Scotland's visitor attraction stock is based primarily on its culture and heritage, boasting a plethora of castles, historic houses, museums, galleries and gardens, which are geographically dispersed across the whole of Scotland (Smith, 1998; Watson *et al.*, 2004). There are currently only two Scottish attractions drawing more than one million visitors per year, with around 87% of all attractions drawing fewer than 100,000 and three quarters of all Scottish attractions receiving

fewer than 50,000 visitors per year (Scotexchange, 2007a; 2007b). The Scottish sector is therefore dominated by small to medium-sized enterprises and micro businesses (SMEs) the criteria for which are shown in the table below (European Commission, 2005, p.14):

Table 3: European Commission SME Definitions

Criterion	Micro	Small	Medium
Maximum number of employees	9	49	249
Maximum annual turnover	EUR 2 million	EUR 10 million	EUR 50 million
Maximum annual balance sheet total	EUR 2 million	EUR 10 million	EUR 43 million

As might be expected with such a diverse assortment of attractions, distribution of visitors is not evenly spread across the sector. It is estimated that 57 per cent of all attractions receive less than 6 per cent of all visitors while just 7 per cent of attractions cope with 58 per cent of total visits (Mintel International Group Ltd., 2002).

The ownership of the sector is also somewhat unusual. Around 62 per cent of attractions can be classed as 'not for profit' organisations, owned by the public sector, voluntary sector charitable trusts, preservation societies, religious bodies, Historic Scotland and the National Trust (Smith, 1998; Watson *et al.*, 2004). A consequence of this is that they have to operate in a number of inter-related internal/external environments, and are sometimes faced with conflicting roles, where their primary concerns of heritage conservation, education or other objectives directly conflict with meeting the needs of tourists (Leask, 2003; Smith, 1998).

Middleton (2003, p.271) observes that the role and value of VAs as a "key motivator" for visits to leisure destinations was not really noted by tourist boards until the mid-1970s, when they started to collect data on visit numbers. However, it was not until the late 1990's that either UK government or tourist boards thought it necessary to devise a national strategy and consequently the sector has been characterised as lacking strategic direction at the national level (Fyall *et al.*, 2003; Middleton, 2003). This is attributable in part to the lack of representative bodies acting on its behalf (Fyall *et al.*, 2003). It is the evidence and trends emerging from data collected on a broadly analogous basis for the two decades between 1977 and 1998 that have provided the information basis for the current development of a strategic approach to VAs in the UK (Middleton, 2003).

To set analysis of the sector within a wider context, it is relevant to note that, particularly during the last two decades of the last century, mass tourism experienced an enormous world growth (for more discussion see: Holloway, 2002, chapters 3 and 4). Visitor attractions enjoyed their share of this bounty, with *The World Travel and Tourism Review* recording throughout the 1980s that the VA industry was one of the most dynamic sectors in tourism (Stevens, 2000). As demand increased, so supply increased exponentially and this period saw a rapid expansion in the number of attractions worldwide (Leighton, 2006; Smith, 1998). Stevens (2000, p.61) sums up this growth:

> The past 20 years has seen an unprecedented growth in the number of traditional, stand-alone visitor attractions, such as museums and heritage properties, farm parks, zoos, aquaria and theme parks. In many countries, supply has doubled.

This was certainly true within the UK, with almost half of its stock of 6000 attractions having opened since 1980, much of this growth attributed to the availability of funding through European Regional Development Funds (Lennon,

2001; Stevens, 2000). During the 1980s, new developments were outpacing closures at a rate of five to one in many parts of the world and by the beginning of the 1990s the attractions industry worldwide was in an optimistic mood about the future for its members (Stevens, 2000). By the mid-late 1990s, the VA market in Scotland had the distinction of having, with just under 1000 attractions, the largest number of attractions per head of population in the UK (Leask and Fyall, 2006). However, the level of growth could not be sustained indefinitely and peaked in 1996 (Leighton, 2006).

By the end of the 1990s, there began to be concerns about over-supply and a Confederation of British Industry report of the time drew attention to the heightening of competition in VAs (CBI, 1998). Nevertheless, this did not prevent a second round of major development in the UK attraction market being brought about through an injection of funding by the National Lottery and Millennium Commission. The Millennium Commission was established by the 1993 National Lottery Act as one of the bodies designate to distribute proceeds from the newly created National Lottery (Millennium Commission, 2007). It's short-term *raison d'être* to "fund projects to celebrate the end of the second millennium and the start of the third", saw an investment of £1.3 billion in 222 capital projects on over 3000 sites around the UK (Millennium Commission, 2007). Between 1997 and 2002, over £700 million was directed towards UK attraction development (Lennon, 2001) with the largest of these in Scotland being Our Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh and the Glasgow Science Centre, each receiving awards of £34 million and £36.2 million respectively (Garrod *et al.*, 2000; Hansard, 2004). The Millennium Commission contributed up to fifty per cent of the cost of each project, with the balance being raised by the projects themselves. However, Lennon (2003) questioned the reliability of the demand projections and feasibility studies undertaken, as many of the project attractions have since under-performed.

However, as well as the now substantial over-supply in the market, there are unfortunately several other additional factors combining to put increasing pressure on the VA sector. These are summarised from the literature (drawn from: Fyall *et al.*, 2001; Leighton, 2006; Mintel International Group Ltd., 2002; Smith, 1998; Snowdon and Thomson, 1998; Visit Scotland, 2007; Watson *et al.*, 2004; Watson and McCracken, 2002) as:

- A steady and continuous decline since the early 1990s in domestic visitors (a mainstay of the Scottish Market). Main reasons for this have been suggested as: the strength of the pound; high cost of fuel; increased international destination marketing competition; globalisation; perceived lack of facilities; difficulty of booking; less disposable income for Scottish residents due to rising fuel, utility costs and interest rates; the World Cup in 1998; and poor weather;

- A series of crises in 2001, including both the foot and mouth outbreak and the terrorist attacks of September 11th, causing a major slump of inbound and domestic tourism, the effects of which reverberated for several years afterwards;

- Public funded attractions struggling to survive in the face of dwindling government grants and falling ticket sales of the National Lottery, which have reduced financial support; and not least,

- The introduction of a standard £1 ticket for adult entry, and free admission for concessions, at national museums and galleries by the government in 2001, as part of their social inclusion agenda. This reduction in charging for around 100 VAs in Scotland has had consequent displacement effects on competitor attractions.

Since 2001, the growth of international tourism to Scotland has recovered strongly, with recently published Visit Scotland tourism figures for 2006 showing a 12.2 per cent growth in international trips to the UK since last year. However, the international market remains small in comparison to the dominant domestic

market, which again dropped last year by a hefty 10.7 per cent. Visit Scotland (2007) commented that this "significant decline in the UK domestic market over the last year... has in effect cancelled out the significant growth we have seen from international markets".

A bit of good news from Visit Scotland is that, despite an overall drop in general tourists, the figures they record from the VA sector have shown a growth of seven per cent since 2002. However, Visit Scotland tracks only 432 attractions, as survey returns are voluntary, so there are no figures for the other half of non-recorded attractions, some of which reputedly refuse to cooperate on the grounds of commercial confidentiality (Smith, 1998). In addition, although international figures are up, Smith (1998) points out that international visitors are only the main visiting group at Edinburgh Castle and a handful of other heritage attractions. The largest market group for most attractions is still Scottish residents on a day trip from home, within a 45-mile radius. Except for the highest profile day visit destinations, the "distance decay factor" sets in beyond the 60 to 90 minute drive zone (Smith, 1998, p.194).

The nature of the attraction visitor also has undergone substantial changes since the sector's heyday in the 1980s. The modern VA visitor is characterised as:

- **Having undergone demographic and lifestyle changes:** an older population and an increase in leisure time of elderly people; a generally higher level of education generating more demand for cultural attractions (Schouten, 1998); visitors who are more affluent, more travelled and more experienced in quality service and facilities (Stevens, 2000);

- **Being more sophisticated:** the new "smart consumer" is less innocent, more "alert to commercial gimmickry" and sees the visit essentially in terms of a transaction, in which "economic exchange value [is] a key feature" (Voase, 2003, p.259);

- **Being more demanding:** the increased competitiveness of the marketplace have raised service expectations, with today's tourist generating "an intense preoccupation with the 'quality of service'," making them unwilling to settle for mediocre service (Kandampully, 1997, p. 4).

Thus, it becomes apparent that the market is currently over-supplied and competing for fewer and ever more discerning visitors. The sector faces significant challenges both on the supply side and on the demand side.

Future Directions

The literature records that opinion appears to be somewhat split on the possible future directions these pressures will push the industry. In 2000, Terry Stevens, managing director of a Welsh specialist tourism and leisure consultancy, wrote an article for the first issue of *Travel and Tourism Analyst*, which he later reprised as a book chapter (see: Stevens, 2000; 2003). In these, Stevens predicted that the changes currently being experienced in consumer demand would lead to a considerable number of casualties among traditional attractions as the appeal of 'stand-alone' attractions was diminishing. These changing patterns of consumer behaviour have, argued Stevens, "resulted in the growth of demand for leisure shopping, eating and drinking and entertainment as essential components of a day trip" (Stevens, 2000, p.65).

Stevens' (2000, p.61) argument centres on the premise that these influences on the market, and changes to the type of investor drawn into the market, would see an "emergence of a new geography and typography of visitor attractions [, in which] the concept of multi-faceted and multi-occupier sites" would predominate. He notes that these trends have already emerged in North America and Western Europe and would influence worldwide within the next decade. The trends and predictions Stevens (2000, p.64) make include:

- The emergence of a new geography of attractions that emerges from the continued development of attractions in association with other sectors of business or tourism;

- Attraction designers will innovate to create a new generation of all-inclusive, multi-faceted destination attractions capable of year-round operation, appealing to different markets and providing sound returns on large-scale investments;

- The recent blurring of boundaries that have traditionally segregated and polarised the retailing activity from the entertainment and enjoyment aspects of day trips will disappear so that shopping and entertainment will become fully integrated;

- The investment appeal of these developments will lead to fresh sources of funding and finance being introduced to the sector. In return, the investors, especially institutional investors, will require a more professional approach to the management of the attractions, essentially reducing the risk potential.

Garrod *et al* (2000, p.7), however, addressed some response to this view in a paper written shortly afterwards, in which they comment:

If we simply accept Stevens' forecast of market trends in the visitor attraction sector, then the prognosis for the visitor attraction sector in Scotland would not be at all good. Scottish tourism is blessed with a wide range of visitor attractions, but most of these are the traditional, stand-alone genre – and this is the type of visitor attraction about which Stevens expresses serious concern for its viability and survival. Scotland is also ill placed to take advantage of the market opportunities forecast by Stevens. Geography, demography, transport networks and human resources would all appear to conspire against the Scottish visitor attraction sector.

Their paper, based on the results of a survey of 510 attractions in 1999 about visitor impacts, draws the conclusion that (Garrod *et al.*, 2000, p.1):

… predictions of future external trends do not bode well for the Scottish industry in its current form, and that an internally-focused, quality-oriented strategy is required if the majority of attractions are to survive and prosper in the coming decade.

And reckons:

If Stevens is correct and the future of visitor attractions is in the development of large, 'destination' attractions – the very antithesis of the Scottish product – then there are few other options open to the Scottish visitor attraction sector (Garrod *et al.*, 2000, p.36).

However, this is not so very far away from Stevens' own conclusion in both his articles (both: Stevens, 2000, p.84; and 2003, p.297), in which he states:

The future is likely to remain relatively positive for those signature attractions that are regarded as 'must-see places' on most tourist itineraries. Equally, those attractions that continue to innovate with their product and become market, or customer-focused are more likely to survive. This will necessitate a real commitment to quality as well as becoming price competitive and developing multiple sources of revenue.

Effectively, both agree that the quality of the product and a strong customer focus are likely to become increasingly vital aspects of the future VA landscape.

In a paper published around the same time (Fyall *et al.*, 2001), and which was also later reprised as a book chapter (Fyall, 2003), the likelihood of collaboration as a route forward for the sector was also considered. The premise of these papers is that if Scotland is unlikely to benefit from the building of large purpose built 'destination' attractions, then perhaps existing attractions could group themselves into 'destinations' to the same effect. However, these works concluded that there were a number of impediments to this happening, as there was "a great deal of

reluctance on the part of tourism businesses to collaborate with other operators in the same geographical area or tourism industry sector" (Fyall *et al.*, 2001, p.212). It was noted that attractions are "notoriously reticent about intramarket collaboration, with individual attractions, tending to regard themselves as separate from the surrounding tourism industry and its related businesses" (Whitehead, 1999, cited in: Fyall *et al.*, 2001, p. 212). Nor is likely that attractions would "collaborate in the search for a differential competitive advantage with regard to their core product offering" (Fyall, 2003, p.241).

Nonetheless, Fyall *et al* identified other potential areas for inter-organisational collaboration, which include (see: Fyall *et al*, 2001, for full discussion):

- Joint activities and events;

- Themed identities for a group of visitor attractions in an area;

- Exchange of exhibits between Castles or historic sites to stimulate demand;

- Joint-ticketing initiatives;

- Retail collectives and buying groups;

- Marketing communications; and

- Joint development of internet websites.

One further point of interest was the noting in Fyall *et al* (2001) of the suggestion of developing collective pools of quality part-time, casual or volunteer workers for groups of visitor attractions in a destination to draw upon. They comment that while this may be more problematical in rural areas, the collective training of staff is particularly appropriate for VAs in close proximity to each other. They note that

preliminary discussions along these lines have already taken place among visitor attractions in Edinburgh's Royal Mile.

Although Fyall *et al* (2001) point out that many of these initiatives are still in their infancy, they note that such collaboration initiatives have the support of Visit Scotland, driving them forward, as this agency believes that:

> …the ambitious growth targets set for Scottish tourism can be achieved only through the creation of effective and creative partnerships, predominately between the public and private sectors (STB, 1999a, in Fyall *et al,* 2001, p. 212).

Other trends that have become prevalent in the sector relate to the increasing need to generate alternate revenue streams. The main channel for these have revolved around the expansion of core activities. The findings of a survey of Scottish VAs in 1995 (Leask and Golding, 1995, in Smith, 1998, p. 191) found that attractions contain a wide selection of on-site revenue generating facilities such as gift shops (78% of responding attractions); café snack bars (45%); guided tours (33%); and *ad hoc* events (28%), with only 10% reporting no facilities or services on-site. Encouraging school visits, coach parties and special interests such as business meetings or conference organisers are other ways to boost revenue (Smith, 1998).

This last suggestion seems to have been widely taken on board by the sector, as VAs as venues for wedding and corporate events have seen a sharp rise in popularity in recent years:

> UK visitor attractions, whether museums, castles or theme parks, certainly tick the box when it comes to offering corporate event organisers something unusual. Public venues have seen a sharp rise in popularity among the

corporate sector in recent years, with 26% of buyers listing them a favourite venue in 2006 (MIA 2006 survey, in Hemsley, 2006, p.21).

The potential money-spinning benefits of the private function and events market have motivated many attractions to make changes to the way they operate, as an events director commented:

Twenty years ago, if you approached a historic venue with an idea for a corporate event they would see it as an annoyance because they were not geared up for it…They would have had to use their daytime staff to run the event, and these people would be tired and therefore not deliver the level of service our clients expected. Things have changed enormously (Hemsley, 2006, p.22).

Hemsley's (2006, p.22) article also makes comment about the logistics of transforming an attractions' facilities from a public to private venue and says "this is something it usually has to achieve within an hour of the last paying guest leaving" and that "public venues must be slick operators these days to win business clients":

Often they will shut their doors at 6 pm and the first corporate guests start arriving between 6.30 pm and 7 pm. Our clients can be concerned that visitor attractions will struggle to turn everything around that quickly, but venues do it because it has become a huge part of their business strategy (Hemsley, 2006, p.22).

This additional type of product in an attraction's portfolio means the VA team now has to be as aware as a specialised event company of what the client is trying to achieve from a team-building event or product-launch.

Management and Structure of Visitor Attractions

Offering their sites as events venues, is just one of the ways in which VAs are being driven to evolve and adapt to an increasingly competitive environment. However, concerns have been raised that management and staff are not equipped to cope with these rapidly changing working conditions as major skills gaps exist among the workforce, compounded by a comparative lack of formal training within the sector (Watson *et al.*, 2004). As Graham and Lennon (2002, p.215) note:

> … the history of applied managerialism throughout the sector is weak, with many organisations being tied to an ineffective system of administration that is led by people with little or no management skills - the unfamiliar environment has led for demands for a more business-oriented approach.

Until recently, the area of visitor attraction management has been comparatively unexplored, as previous academic scrutiny in this area was directed towards the hospitality sector (Watson and McCracken, 2002). However, some recent studies (Graham and Lennon, 2002; Watson *et al.*, 2004; Watson and Drummond, 2002; Watson and McCracken, 2002) have sought to address this and contribute to "the wider debate on the future management of attractions" (Leask and Fyall, 2006, p.24).

Many of these later studies refer back to Swarbrooke's book from 1995, *The Development and Management of Visitor Attractions*, later released as a second edition. Swarbrooke (2002), predicted that the prevailing market forces would certainly create great challenges for future attraction managers worldwide, and these are identified in the model below (from: Swarbrooke, 2002, p. 391).

Figure 2: Challenges Facing the Visitor Attraction Manager[3]

| Developing the 'wow' factor and a unique selling proposition to differentiate their attractions from others | The growth of competition and the need to find new competitive advantage strategies other than just price and promotion | The need to attract and retain visitors with special needs, particularly those with disabilities |

A point worth noting is the way in which Swarbrooke (2002, p.186) characterised the future manager's role:

> …it is the unique role of the manager to take an overview of the attractions as a whole, while other staff will take a narrower, partial view based on their role at the attraction and/or their particular area of expertise.

He went on to say (Swarbrooke, 2002, p.198):

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[3] This model was published in The Development and Management of Visitor Attractions, 2nd edition, Swarbrooke, J., Page No 391, Copyright Elsevier (2002). Reproduced with kind permission.

The approach taken by managers has an impact not only on the visitors but also on the attractions staff – staff are likely to follow the example set by managers in terms of their attitudes towards customers.

Later returning to this point ((Swarbrooke, 2002, p.247):

It is obvious that the style adopted by managers is crucial to how staff feel about their job, their line manager and the organisation as a whole, and this will in turn influence the way the staff deal with the visitors.

Swarbrooke identified that future success in the management of VA staff undoubtedly lay in: an increasing emphasis in quality; having flatter organisational structures and empowering staff; a greater emphasis on effective recruitment, development and appraisal; and a growth in performance related pay for employees.

In a later work, which reviewed the literature on management and leadership competence, Winterton *et al* (2000) put forward a range of competences and competencies that will be required of successful managers in the future. Such competences which are considered to be *critical* include: possessing knowledge based on a technical speciality; ability to see and act beyond local boundaries; learning and innovation; managing change; flexibility; group oriented view of leadership; and transformational skills. However, results from Watson and McCracken's survey (2002, p.376), found that only "effective communications and enthusiasm and commitment" were rated as essential competences, currently and in the future, by managers.

A more recent study by Watson *et al* (2004, p.49) found that more than two thirds of the 107 visitor managers who responded, fitted into a profile of "managerial maturity, long service and relatively high qualification when compared to general

hospitality managers". However, despite the general adequacy of managers' qualifications, Watson *et al* point out that "41% of the managers indicated no training for their current role with a further 13% attesting that they had learned solely from experience" (Watson *et al.*, 2004, p.49).

Graham and Lennon (2002), in a review of findings drawn from two previous visitor attraction surveys, found that:

- Existing employment structures have been identified as being too rigid to cope with achieving best value and addressing the needs of customers;

- 65% of the reported workforce are paid members of staff, 34% are volunteers, with 1 per cent being unpaid owners and/or relatives. In addition, 67% of the private sector reported buying in skills on contract;

- Medium sized and larger attractions (>10 employees) were more likely to consider people oriented skills and issues such as recruitment, training and development and effectively managing diverse employee groups important in comparison to micro sized attractions;

- Many managers are failing to understand the importance of strategic management and they are also not realising the vital role that information technology and people management skills will play in ensuring success in their business in the future.

The literature widely recorded concern about the lack of management skills in the sector. Leask and Fyall (2006, p.23), for example, quoted from the English Tourism Council's publication *Action for Attractions* in 2000, which had recognised that "many of the problems facing the attractions sector were a consequence of a management deficit". They noted that this view was shared by Scottish Enterprise whose "principle objective for the future of attractions in Scotland should be to achieve a more market-driven and coordinated approach to improving the quality

of the visitor attractions product" (Leask and Fyall, 2006, p.23). They went on to say:

> One key finding put forward by Scottish Enterprise in their study *Scottish Visitor Attractions Review* was the need for operators to adopt 'best practice' from 'leading edge' destinations around the world.

Defining Visitor Attractions

It is evident that 'benchmarking' has become the latest issue for the sector, as it featured largely in the most recently published literature (e.g.: Garrod *et al.*, 2007; Leask and Fyall, 2006; Pearce and Benckendorff, 2007; Scottish Enterprise, 2007), with many of these being international comparison studies. However, these studies all highlighted the problems of benchmarking due to the difficulties in defining VAs. As Visit Scotland (1997) noted:

> The biggest impediments to undertaking international comparative research include consistency of definition, comparability and equivalence - whereas other sectors of tourism such as transportation and accommodation, are reaping the benefits of globalisation in terms of product standardisation, economies of scale and uniform global management systems, the individuality of visitor attractions inhibits the uniform adoption of such benefits by researchers to better understand the dynamics of visitor attraction management.

The ways in which a VA can be categorised are numerous, overlapping and confusing. Holloway (see: 2002, for full discussion) notes, for example, that attractions can be divided into different types: 'man-made or natural', 'nodal or linear', 'sites or events'. Natural attractions can then be sub-categorised into 'managed' or 'unmanaged', while man-made attractions can be subcategorised almost *ad infinitum*. For example, 'man-made' can be sub-divided into 'purpose built' i.e. it was always designed to be an attraction, or 'non-purpose built' in that it was built by man but for another purpose, for example a cathedral, but which now

welcomes visitors. Holloway (2002, p. 182) gives a list of the main man-made categories, as devised by the English Tourism Council:

- Historic properties

- Museums and art galleries

- Wildlife parks

- Gardens

- Country parks

- Workplaces

- Steam railways

- Leisure attractions

- Other attractions

However, 'historic properties', can be further sub-divided into: ancient monuments; historic buildings; archaeological sites; battlefields; historic towns; listed buildings etc. Another example is 'workplaces', which can be sub-categorised as 'heritage sites', preserving past industrial heritage or 'modern workplaces', where work is the main concern, such as pottery, glass manufacturers or distilleries, but visitors are also encouraged. Other ways of grouping visitor attractions noted from the literature (drawn from: Holloway, 2002; Leask and Fyall, 2006; Swarbrooke, 2002; Visit Scotland, 2007; Wanhill, 2003) include not only by type, as described above, but also by: geographical location; number of visitors; the physical size; ownership (e.g. public, charity etc); whether or not it charges or does not charge for visitor entry; its capacity; target market; or catchment area. The model below

demonstrates the complexity of visitor attraction classification (source: Leask, 2003, p.7):

Figure 3: Classification of Visitor Attraction Model[4]
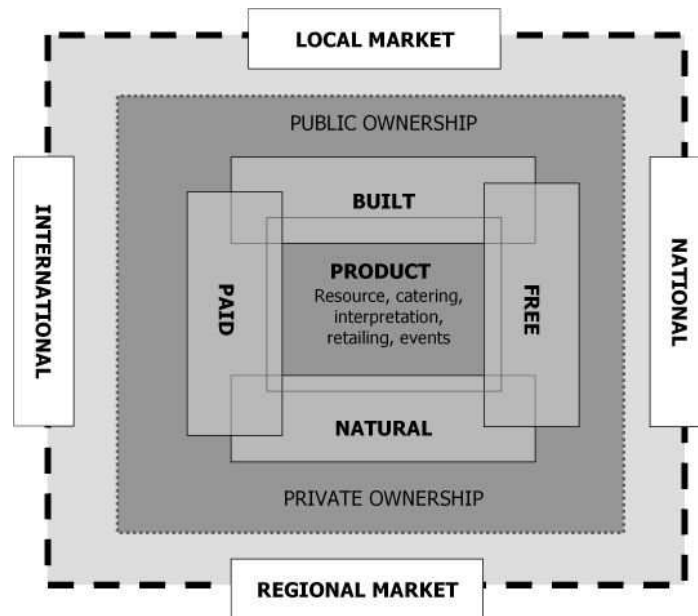
Consequently, many VAs inevitably fit into several different categories, depending on how and who is grouping them and for what purpose. The definition of a VA currently being used by all four national tourist boards in the UK was first harmonised in 2000 for the purposes of data collection for the *Visitor Attraction Monitor*, which reports on the results of surveys undertaken monthly and annually on behalf of each tourist board (Scottish Executive, 2007):

> ...an attraction where the main purpose is sightseeing. The attraction must be a permanent established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow access for entertainment, interest, or education; rather than being primarily a retail outlet or a venue for sporting, theatrical, or film performances. It must be open to the public, without prior booking, for published periods each

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[4] This model was published in Managing Visitor Attractions, New Directions, A. Fyall, B. Garrod, A Leask, eds, Page No 7. Copyright Elsevier (2003). Reproduced with kind permission.

year, and should be capable of attracting day visitors or tourists as well as local residents. In addition, the attraction must be a single business, under a single management, so that it is capable of answering the economic questions on revenue, employment, etc... and must be receiving revenue directly from visitors.

Stevens (2000, p.62) asserts that this definition, reflecting the terms used by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and other representative bodies, reveals "a myopic, restrictive and outdated view of the attractions sector" as it does not take into account the new type of 'destination' attraction, which incorporates eating, drinking and leisure.

Wilson 2004 (cited in Leask, 2003, p.10) concurs that a process of de-differentiation has been taking place, "through which visitor attractions have ceased to function as a sector of their own but are instead becoming effectively part of the wider 'entertainment' sector". Lennon (2001, p.153) notes that the development of attractions in association with other sectors of the community, especially retail and entertainment, blur the boundaries between them and thus "stretch the traditional visitor attraction definition". As a result, says Stevens (Stevens, 2000) "the term 'visitor attraction' now encompasses a wide range of products making a succinct definition both elusive and increasingly irrelevant".

The lack of a standard and agreed definition of a VA has made it very difficult to gather an easily accessible or central source of data about trends or markets, and only a very few Western countries collect data in a systemised way (Stevens, 2000). The voluntary nature of the data collection that is undertaken has also been criticised as being incomplete, inconsistent and not easily validated. This has consequently made benchmarking difficult, as the English Tourism Council (ETC, 2000, p.24, cited in Leask and Fyall, 2006, p.26; and in Watson and Drummond, 2002, p. 254) stated around the same time:

Although a highly useful means of identifying the processes that deliver best practice, enabling operators and managers of visitor attractions to assess performance against that of competitors, to date the use of benchmarking in attractions has been limited.

The first international review of good practice in VAs, *'New Horizons'*, was published in 1997 (Visit Scotland, 1997). The most recent study, *'Visitor Attraction Benchmarking and Good Practice Management'* in 2004, followed up that earlier research by "focusing on the management processes, systems and philosophies that lead to high quality, innovative and successful visitor attractions" (Scottish Enterprise, 2007). This research aimed to identify key examples of good tourism practice around the world, with 22 leading attractions in five different countries participating in this international study. Their findings identified the commonalities between all high quality VAs, which include having clear mission statements and operational targets and following good management principles. However, the study (Scottish Enterprise, 2007) also found that top attractions:

- Were attractive and unambiguous, with a strong sense of arrival with accurate information, signage and good first impressions;

- Offer high standards of service by customer-focused, motivated staff;

- Have on-site staff who have a genuine pride in the attraction and themselves;

- Have clean, well-maintained amenities, grounds, landscape, equipment and exhibitions;

- Have a product appropriate to its market which is promoted with a strong sense of place, innovation and regular revamping;

- Have high quality retail and catering attractively presented; and

- Place a real emphasis on entertaining the guest through activities, events and animation.

However, more recent international comparison studies have found that Scottish VAs do not necessarily lag behind others. Garrod *et al's* (2007) most recent study found that there was "no strong evidence to suggest that attractions in Australia, Canada and New Zealand are generally following common 'international best practice' in respect of their management" and there was "no 'international best practice' being followed in the three countries for Scotland to follow" (Garrod *et al.*, 2007, p.40). They continued:

> Indeed it might be argued that the very nature of visitor attraction management is predicated on the notion of 'individuality' and each country has a particular sectoral context in which its attractions must operate. Therefore, although the duplication of international best practice might be suitable in other economic sectors, this is not necessarily the case in the visitor attractions sector.

They go on to qualify this, however, (Garrod *et al.*, 2007, p.40):

> Nevertheless, there does remain considerable scope for the identification and adoption of more sophisticated management practices on an individual, site-by-site basis, particularly between organisations that share common structures and operating practices.

Further points that the literature raised in relation to benchmarking and best practice include:

- A certain scepticism by some tourism practitioners on the value of best practice developed outside the UK in light of the nuances of tourism infrastructure and markets in the UK (Phillips and Louvieris, 2005); and that

- The nature of the priorities of visitor attractions, such as budgetary control, customer relationship management, strategic management and collaboration,

make it "difficult for SMEs to simply implement management tools developed in larger organisations" (Phillips and Louvieris, 2005, p.208); also

- Although there was a certain "backwardness" in the adoption of modern management techniques, there were still "several successful private sector operators in Scotland who are fully alert to best practice in the field and lend themselves to emulation" (Smith, 1998, p.192).

However, one of the main challenges for all VAs in achieving excellence lies in the availability and standards of suitable staff. Smith (1998) states that these difficulties have been well documented and there seems general agreement in the literature that the Scottish tourism industry is "characterised by a workforce with high staff turnover, seasonality, poor status, unusually demanding jobs and lack of management expertise" (Swarbrooke, 2002, p.246). There is a high prevalence of part-time working in the sector, where it accounts for almost half the workforce, which is two or three times the rate of European counterparts (Jones and Haven-Tang, 2005; Smith, 1998). Recent empirical studies by both Watson and Drummond (2002) and Graham and Lennon (2002) found widespread skills shortages among visitor attraction employees, particularly in relation to customer service skills. However, Graham and Lennon noted that casual and part-time employees may not be inclined to view tourism employment as a long-term career option and as a result may be unwilling to invest in developing tourism-related skills and achieving tourism-related qualifications.

Moffat (2000) states that many of the problems in relation to employment in the sector lie in the UK's poor cultural attitude towards service, blaming employers, employees, customers and government alike for this:

The difficult truth is that those who are currently unemployed do not want to become waiters, kitchen staff, guides or porters because these jobs are seen as servile, demeaning, badly paid and often worked in unsocial hours. This is a

cultural characteristic that applies to the whole of Britain. By and large we are bad at looking after visitors (and incidentally, bad at being waited on ourselves) and service can be poor and grudging in a way that it rarely is in other countries. These attitudes cannot fail to transmit themselves to visitors. So begins the turn of a vicious cycle (Moffat, 2000, p.35).

However, Cossons (2003, p.xix) states that there is a "growing industry perception that a satisfactory visitor experience is determined not only by the tangible and augmented elements of the product but also by the quality of the service delivery and management response to customer behaviour and attitudes". In light of this, Jones and Haven-Tang (2005) record that some operators are moving away from recruiting people with craft skills to instead recruiting and training individuals with the right attitude, enthusiasm and interest. Leighton (2006, p.117) highlights the importance of employees in achieving excellence:

… one of the great breakthroughs in recent times, particularly in the heritage sector, has been the realisation that it is not a business based on buildings or monuments or even shops and cafes. It is about people, their inspiration and professionalism. The attractions business is universally characterised by the need to deliver excellence in visitor service. But this excellence can only be delivered if supported by exemplary management standards and practices. In recent years, the sector has come to appreciate this.

Unique Characteristics of the Visitor Attraction Product

Before going on to discuss service excellence further, it is important to note that the service industry in general and tourism in particular, possess some unique characteristics that differentiate them from manufacturing or other non-service industries. These different characteristics are explained in much greater detail elsewhere (e.g.: Holloway, 2002; Jones and Haven-Tang, 2005; Kandampully, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2002). However, a brief summary of the most relevant are

summarised below so that the nature of the VA product, and thus the context in which they operate, is better understood. These are:

- **Inseparability**: the product is inseparable from those delivering it; hence, the staff involved in producing and delivering the product are part of the product itself. The concurrence of production and consumption consequently forces the customer into intimate contact with the production process.

- **Intangibility**: there is no tangible product, as service is produced and consumed at the same time; thus, service cannot be inspected before it is delivered, making quality control the direct responsibility of every person providing service. In addition, the intangibility of the product means that it cannot be inspected by the customer before it is bought, making word-of-mouth recommendation of the site of greater importance;

- **Heterogeneity**: services are not standardised. Every service encounter is a product of the unique interaction between server and customer. Moreover, the customers themselves are involved in the production process and bring to it their own needs and desires. Thus, service quality can vary between one server and another, and for the same server from one occasion to another;

- **Interdependence**: the product is fixed and the consumer comes to the product; in doing so they come into contact with many separate suppliers (taxis, coach, guides, café, shop, events, reception etc) however, the consumer will expect to receive levels of broadly comparable quality throughout their trip.

The characteristics outlined above, make the framework in which VAs operate very different from goods manufacturing. However, in common with producing tangible products, the different elements involved in the planning and production of a service product should still be considered (Kandampully, 1997). It is now usual for the VA product to be considered an 'experience', which begins with the trip planning and includes the journey as well as the visit itself. Swarbrooke (2002, p.44) identifies a number of elements that have an effect on this experience:

- **The tangible elements of the product:** these would include for example: rides, shop, restaurant, cleanliness of the site;

- **The service delivery element:** this includes the appearance, attitudes, behaviour and competence of the staff;

- **The customers themselves:** in terms of their expectations, behaviour and attitudes;

- **A range of factors outside the direct control of either the visitor attraction or the individual customer:** these include the mixture of people using the attraction at any one time, traffic congestion and the weather.

Consequently, the VA product has many parts, not just whatever it offers as its unique core product, for example its historic artefacts, but also the service provided by everyone on site, what the customer hopes to get out of their day, and the peripheral parts offered, for example facilities like car parks and toilets (Goulding, 2003). This complex interrelationship of factors makes the experience of visiting an attraction unique to every visitor (Swarbrooke, 2002).

However, Leighton (2006, pp.119-120) points out that in the past, marketing of VAs has often failed to recognise the significance of the consumer as part of the product, instead tending to be:

> … product or supply focused, emphasising the importance of product features and benefits, such as the collection, the site or the architecture as the basis of the visitor offering. There are a number of potential flaws in this approach but the most significant flaw lies in the lack of recognition of the role and expectations of the visitor as an active and discerning participant in the consumption process.

She continues:

The consumption process is thus a series of 'moments of truth', those make-or-break occasions when the organisation has the opportunity to disappoint the visitor or exceed their expectations. This presents a particular challenge to visitor attractions where the experience is likely to be fragmented… For example, the experience may comprise a static exhibition, followed by a guided tour then a visit to a museum shop. Critically, the visitor is likely to evaluate the experience as a collective whole … rather than viewing the constituent elements as positive or negative. The overarching requirement is to ensure that the visitor experience as a whole is exceptional in order to ensure positive word-of-mouth and repeat visits.

Quality and the Individual Employee

Lane (2007, p.249) talks of this 'visitor journey' and states " no single organisation is responsible for the whole journey, yet the overall experience for visitors is only as good as the weakest link in the chain". A comparable sentiment has been expressed in relation to employees:

Successful tourism firms have found that the biggest single factor in visitor satisfaction and loyalty is the perceived responsiveness of employees …the role of the server, the employee, cannot be over emphasised (Buissink-Smith and McIntosh, 2001, pp.80-81).

Williams and Thwaites point out that (2007, p.98):

This 'moment of truth' judgement is repeated at each encounter that the customer makes with any employee. The customer takes away from these multiple encounters a perception of the quality of the service experience – the perceived quality - which will influence their future visit or ensure that they will never return.

As such, (Hoque, 1999, p.65):

… employees must be committed to service quality goals and they must have the skills, authority and access to information necessary to be able to provide a professional, high-quality service that is responsive to customer needs.

These suggest that the individual importance of each staff member being a 'strong link in the chain' is becoming of paramount importance, making them central to the success of the business. It is evident from the literature that this increasing responsibility has necessitated employees having a wider understanding of their organisation, as is expressed by this quote from the managing director of Baxter's Highland Village, a workplace related tourism attraction in the Scottish Highlands (in Watson and McCracken, 2003, p.179):

A member of the staff is an ambassador for the company…so that the member of staff has to have the same knowledge, skills and passion for the business as I do.

The increasing importance of the individual employee's contribution to service quality has been noted in tourism literature (see for example: Buissink-Smith and McIntosh, 2001; Lashley, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2002; Williams and Buswell, 2003), especially by those authors whose work overlaps with the vast fields of 'service quality' and HRM related literature. It is not the intention or the remit of this review to delve too deeply into either area; however, some aspects have relevance to this work and are consequently summarised here.

For a broad background in the nature, design and delivery of quality in a tourism industry, refer to Williams and Buswell (2003), which covers this in depth. Watson's (1997) book chapter gives a detailed account of management development in the UK Hospitality industry. While neither of these is of direct relevance to this work, they give contextual background for the changing movements in service management. Watson's account relates ways in which firms have sought to find

'competitive advantage' in an increasingly hostile and competitive environment in the hospitality industry. However, references to many of the same trends have been noted in the VA industry literature. These include: 'the team' as the 'competitive weapon'; changes in leadership styles from 'autocratic' to 'leadership'; a focus on quality, service and customer responsiveness; empowerment of employees; and the importance of attitude and the personal qualities of employees.

The concept of 'quality' was introduced in the service literature at the beginning of the 1980s when it became apparent that the nature of service marketing was different from product manufacturing (Kandampully, 1997). The "emergence of preoccupations with quality in service delivery" has since become a principle theme in the strategic management of tourism (Foley *et al.*, 1997, in the preface). Jones and Haven-Tang (2005) emphasise that the simultaneous production and consumption of service make people the key to successful service delivery and that ultimately, responsibility for high-quality service provision rests with front-line staff. The importance of front-line staff as part of the core product of a VA is expressed by Kandampully (1997, p.8):

> In many tourism services, the core service focuses on the one to one interaction needed between the visitor and the service provider. For example, the service offered by a tour guide *is* the core service. Even in tourism services where tangible core services are apparent, the one to one interaction between the visitor and the service provider is perceived by the customer as an indispensable part of the core service, not a component of the peripheral service…

He goes on to highlight the importance of this for attraction management (Kandampully, 1997, p.8).

…it is therefore, important that tourism managers see the performance of the employee as a component of the core service and not as a peripheral service… Service quality management literature has repeatedly illustrated that, in tourism services, positive interaction between the employee and the visitor, the so called 'moments of truth', is the factor most important in determining customer satisfaction, and a subsequent indicator of the perceived quality of service.

Kandampully (1997, p.12) points out that "service quality refers to customer perceived quality… it is the customer who determines and is the final judge of quality, hence it is the customer's definition (interpretation) of quality which counts". However, the concept of 'quality' does not remain static (Kandampully, 1997, p.6).:

> …the progressive nature of quality expectation renders superior service seemingly insurmountable to many organisations. In other words, what customers consider to be excellent today may only be adequate or even insufficient tomorrow

Quality in service, therefore, he suggests, "will demand spontaneous and ongoing improvement" (Kandampully, 1997, p.11).

Jones and Haven-Tang (2005, p.7) stress that the businesses that are most likely to survive and emerge as profitable in such a future, are those that anticipate the expectations of consumers and establish services that offer differentiated quality:

> In order to provide tourism SMEs with competitive advantage, the product and/or service is required to progress from 'quality' to 'excellence'… excellence can be said to be exceeding the expectations of customers. The flexibility and innovative nature of small firms makes this strategy a real possibility.

They go on to state:

Tourism SMEs must promote a customer focus among staff to ensure that their product meets and exceeds customer expectations rather than founding their quality management system on physical inspection of the facilities against national quality standards schemes.

Much of the tourism HRM literature (Hoque, 1999; Lashley, 1997; Maxwell, 1997) reports on the move "away from a directive and autocratic style towards a consultative approach" bringing with it "appraisal systems, training and development, communications systems and extensive consultation …in order to support a new culture of service quality" (Hoque, 1999, p.65). It has been argued that "managers have increasingly taken on board notions of empowerment and team working and the need to devolve responsibility to lower levels" (Hoque, 1999, p.66). A definition of 'empowerment' is given below:

When frontline staff are required to a greater or lesser extent to use their own initiative in the application of service guarantees, they can be said to be empowered (Williams and Thwaites, 2007, p.99).

Lashley notes that 'empowerment' became an employment strategy in the 1990s as it was felt that it could help "enthuse and enable employees to take responsibility for the service encounter" (Lashley, 1997, p.34). In attempts to bring standardisation and quality control to the employee-customer encounter, some organisations have applied manufacturing techniques and introduced scripted service encounters. However, Lashley (1997, p. 36) points out that "even the most standardised operation encounters occasions when customer service needs are difficult to predict and a quick response is needed at the point of service encounter". Empowered employees are thought to make the service event more successful as they will (Lashley, 1997, p.57):

… react to customer needs as they arise, they will respond quickly to complaints and will take personal pride in ensuring that service encounters are a success. Importantly, they feel pride and concern for the customer experience.

Empowerment thus enables employees to "sense their own power and the significance of their role in the service drama [which] may help employees manage the emotions required of their performance…[and can generate] feelings of commitment to the service encounter" (Lashley, 1997, p.36).

Lashley (1997, pp.40-41) points out four types of empowerment:

- Through participation (giving employees decision-making authority previously held only within the management domain);

- Through involvement (consultation and joint problem solving);

- Through commitment (as a result of participation and involvement);

- Through delayering (removing layers of management within an organisation and giving employees more responsibility for the service encounter).

Lashley (1997, p.34) notes that managers may use any, a combination, or all of these types of empowerment in their strategy and the impact each type of initiative has on the employee is a "crucial ingredient", in the need "to engage employees at an emotional level and to generate the appropriate feelings about the service encounter".

Maxwell (1997, p.58) noted that the concept of empowerment enjoyed ascendancy for a few years and then fell into some decline because of some resistance, as it is "a more complex, multi-faceted phenomenon than initially appreciated". She notes that potential barriers to successful empowerment include employee reluctance to

accept responsibility i.e. having to take on management responsibility but for no increase in pay, and management not wanting to give away power because of lost control and trust issues. Maxwell (1997, p.57) also notes:

> A pre-requisite for empowerment is the competence of every employee in their job. Empowerment practices cannot compensate for incompetence, but only operate and build on the basis of competence.

However, empowerment seems to have resurfaced in the tourism literature as Williams and Thwaites' (2007, p.95) recent work argues that:

> …even organisations judged excellent by their customers need to develop decision-making skills of front-line staff in preparation for unforeseen occurrences. Service leaders must allow their frontline staff to go beyond normal empowerment policies.

One further point about empowerment relates to a study in Germany of one of Europe's major hotel chains to determine what changes were made in knowledge requirements needed by its employees following the introduction of new empowered working practices. Empowering reception staff to make a series of complex decisions had turned " what had been a simple call centre job…into a position of strategic importance, not just for the hotel employing the person concerned but for the entire area" (Hermann, 2004, p.52).

The remaining literature on service quality revealed relevant but solitary points, which are listed below:

In relation to customer service when things go wrong:

> The result of any customer dissatisfaction is two-fold for the organisation: the costs of complaint handling, and the potential loss of future business both from

the distressed customers and from others to whom they voice their
dissatisfaction (Laws, 2006, p.229).

Consumers will pursue a service-encounter gone wrong for days or months,
feeling intense emotions that create physical or psychological consequences
even when only small amounts of money are involved (Lane, 2007, p.249).

However:

A customer who complains and then receives exactly what he needs or even
more can be returned to an even greater level of satisfaction than the
satisfaction derived from a problem free experience (Williams and Thwaites,
2007, p.98).

This suggests that employees who are empowered to handle customer service
successfully can give a swifter response in solving problems because they are
confident in their right to do so, which supports the premise that:

… frontline staff operating in a culture of empowerment, and who have received
training in naturalistic decision-making, will make a higher percentage of
appropriate decisions, thereby returning a greater proportion of dissatisfied
customers to a state of satisfaction, and hence increasing customer retention
(Williams and Thwaites, 2007, p.102).

The attitude of employees towards their work was another point of interest and
some literature investigating 'service predisposition' was identified. In relation to
personal qualities of employees, it was found:

The key value dimensions that affected service predisposition were those of
empathy for the customer and willingness to work hard. Both of these can be
more regarded as personal values than ethnic ones, and individuals of all
nationalities who show these values would be preferred for service work
anywhere in the world (Johns *et al.*, 2007, p.155).

Enormous organisational benefits can be gained if managers use effective screening techniques to ensure that workers have positive attitudes (or predispositions) towards service provision. Moreover, these individuals will be more receptive to, and fast-track through, training programmes (Lee-Ross, 2001, p.45)

With further regard to personal qualities in a service workplace:

Working in such an environment requires more than an ability to operate a cash register; emotional demands are made of employees to constantly be in a positive, joyful and even playful mood. An ability to cope with such demands must be recognised as a 'skill' par excellence (Ritzer, 1993, p.240, in Baum, 2002, p.348).

The following quotes demonstrate that the server's attitude is more important than the surroundings:

Despite the fact that the quality of the physical part of the tourism product is important, the quality of the human part of the service offered constitutes a critical success factor. A room of top quality standard is not in a position to compensate for the unfriendly and inhospitable behaviour of staff (Augustyn, 1998, p.149, in Jones and Haven-Tang, 2005, p.7).

A similar point is made in Wall and Berry (2007, p.63). They discuss 'mechanic clues', such as the setting and quality of the facilities, and state that these are important as they influence customers' expectations of quality. 'Humanic clues' directly relate to service performance:

It would seem critical that these two types of clues be viewed as consistent for the customer to determine that the firm delivers excellent service.

However, of the two, the human service element outweighs the setting:

Important though the role of mechanic clues can play in influencing customers' expectations and perceptions of service, however, humanic clues typically have even stronger effects…employee behaviour was, by far, the most influential factor in shaping customers' perceptions (Wall and Berry, 2007, p.63).

The affect a change in job title can have on an employee's perception of their individual role is discussed by Evans-Platt (1991, p.8), who has observed:

Subtle changes in personal behaviour when titles are changed from 'Pool attendant' to 'Recreation Assistant' or from 'Supervisor' to 'Recreation Officer' or from 'Ticket Officer Attendant' to 'Receptionist'. Whilst there were no alterations in the actual job descriptions there were noticeable changes in attitude and perceived status.

Evans-Platt's article goes on to advocate that changing nomenclature from 'customer' to 'guest', with employees being renamed 'hosts', and moving away from a 'customer care' model to a 'guest care' culture, would encourage greater mutual respect and understanding.

Watson and McCracken (2003, p.175) discuss the issue of employees holding conflicting values from organisational goals:

…it is considered that human capability and commitment distinguishes successful companies from others. A cornerstone of HRM theory is that employees should be carefully selected and developed to their full potential. Therefore, it is such beliefs and assumptions that inform approach to managing people within the organisation.

They continue:

When considered in relation to visitor attractions, certain factors may undermine an organisation's ability to adopt such beliefs and assumptions. One of the most

fundamental relates to the diverse nature of the workforce, which can make it difficult to engender full commitment in such organisations. In attractions, particular staff may hold conflicting values that are not fully aligned with the goals of the organisation.

For example:

> …museum professionals (curators, archaeologists and conservationists) often demonstrate more commitment to scholarly functions associated with their area of interest than to the needs of visitors (Watson and McCracken, 2003, p.175).

Therefore getting employees to align themselves with the values of the organisation is a top priority, as an attraction manager exemplified:

> If staff do not trust your ethos then you will not succeed – nothing is more important than keeping staff on board (Watson and McCracken, 2003, p.176).

Seasonality and Functional Flexibility

A final area to be examined in this section relates to a generic characteristic common to every sector of the tourism industry, which is the variation in patterns of demand known as **seasonality**; at various times of the year there are high, low and shoulder (or mid) seasons. However, it is not only changing seasons that affect tourism industries. A further aspect of seasonality is the peaks and troughs of demands at various times of the week or day, known as **periodicity**. Like most other tourism businesses, VAs are heavily affected by fluctuating visitor flows.

The main factors that contribute to seasonality in Scotland include the weather, school holidays and cultural events such as the Edinburgh Festival. Lennon (2001) comments that seasonality is particularly critical in Scotland where tourism in many rural areas is limited largely to a three-month period in the summer. Many VAs in the industry "achieve half their year's turnover within these twelve weeks and

approximately 45% of all tourism expenditure takes place between July and September" (Snowdon and Thomson, 1998, p.80). The 2000 *Visitor Attraction Monitor* (STB, 2001, in Goulding, 2003) recorded that 116 Scottish attractions operate for less than six months in the year.

The seasonal, weekly and even daily fluctuations in visitor flow caused by seasonality and periodicity means there is "a need for constant manipulation of labour supply to match labour demand" (Riley and Lockwood, 1997, p.413). Part-time employment is a common antidote to uneven work distribution, accounting for around half of tourism employment (Jones and Haven-Tang, 2005), which enables management to stagger employee work hours to cope with demand ebb and flow (Graham and Lennon, 2002; Riley and Lockwood, 1997), with many organisations relying on students to cover seasonal peak times (Lucas, 1997). It has been noted that a widespread response to seasonality by many managers has been to "employ above average rates of numerically flexible workers who are more core than peripheral to business needs" (Lucas, 1997, p.101). Although Lennon (2001, p.151) noted that:

> There appears to be a reduction in part-time permanent and part-time seasonal staff…with clear growth in full-time seasonal employment evident. Full-time seasonal staff are the favoured resource that possibly serves to accommodate the highly seasonal pattern of visitation evident in Scottish Visitor Attractions.

Goulding (2003) discusses the instabilities in local labour markets, especially in rural or peripheral areas, caused by a short tourism season, noting that these can cause a negative impact on service quality. The main problems affecting service quality relate to:

- Issues of recruiting quality and skilled staff for short periods from limited labour pools;

- The cost and lack of time for training and developing seasonal staff, particularly where the work pattern is part-time;

- Lack of commitment to the organisation by seasonal workers; and

- Loss of skills at the end of the season, which can affect consistency in service quality from year to year.

Ioannides and Debbage (1997), point out that the shifts from Fordism to flexible working practices observed in manufacturing, were mirrored in the tourism industry during the 1990s. However, it appears from the literature that the industry has leaned heavily towards a reliance on numerical flexibility to cope with demand fluctuations. Kelliher and Riley (2003, p.99) note that most "research into flexible usage of labour has focused on the use of numerical and pay flexibility", and this they considered, was probably due to the "somewhat limited use" of functional flexibility in the UK. Swarbrooke (2002) notes that the wide use of numerical flexibility to cope with seasonality of demand has contributed heavily to high staff turnover, the casual and temporary nature of the labour force and the poor status of jobs that characterise much of the tourism industry.

Therefore, it seems that the uptake of functional flexibility in the sector still seems to be low. However, there was evidence that it has been effectively adopted by some managers, with Kelliher and Riley (2002, p.237) commenting that functional flexibility "in order to succeed in the longer term, needs to be introduced as part of a wider human resource strategy".

Riley and Lockwood (1997, pp.413-414) discuss two types of 'functional flexibility':

- 'Whole job substitution' where workers take over other jobs when required; and

- 'Boundary loosening approaches' where parts of jobs are merged so that the task can be moved from person to person instead of the person moving to the task.

They note that the ability to substitute one person for another increases:

- The more training is offered by the organisation;

- The more unskilled the job;

- The more personal attributes count in a job;

- The less dependent the job is on previous knowledge;

- The more knowledge can be substituted by information; and

- The less the degree of specificity.

However, Riley and Lockwood (1997, p.414) note that "substitution can present problems for a strategy that encompasses standards of quality, because some of the principles of substitution have the effect of pushing quality downwards", and that "functional flexibility is umbilically linked to the maintenance of quality".

Kelliher and Riley (2003, p.101) also make comment on the relationship between functional flexibility and service quality:

The use of functional flexibility has implications for the quality of the workforce. The ability to learn new skills is clearly crucial. If functional flexibility relies on the multiskilling of the workforce, then successful implementation may depend on the ability of the workforce to become multi-skilled. (It is important here to draw the distinction between multi-skilling and multi-tasking – where employees are deployed across a range of activities, but are not necessarily provided with

the appropriate skills to enable them to do so.) Effective multi-skilling requires investment in training, but also has implications for the type of worker selected.

Certain obstacles to adopting functional flexibility have been noted (in both: Kelliher and Riley, 2002; 2003):

- Negative employee reaction to the intensification of work;

- It can be threatening to longer term employees who feel they have secured 'rights' in their job;

- Functional flexibility may be seen as a threat to job identity or status (if employees are moved to a task perceived to be of lower status or skill);

- Workers may be more interested in working in one area than another; and

- Cost and availability for training and tight staffing levels can make it difficult to 'spare' staff time off for training.

However, Kelliher and Riley (2002) report more positive outcomes from a study of two organisations that introduced functional flexibility or multiskilling. These case studies were not of VAs but in the hospitality sector. Nevertheless, there are still some relevant points that can be drawn from their findings. The first is that when multiskilling was introduced, new recruits were given a generic job title to forestall problems with job demarcations and boundaries:

Operational staff were recruited to the generic post of 'host'. This had been done in order to encourage an environment where "a host feels they…are transferable and not necessarily assigned to one department" and to "encourage everyone to take on board that…any guest is their responsibility" (Kelliher and Riley, 2002, p.239).

Benefits of functional flexibility for staff included (Kelliher and Riley, 2002, p.240):

Staff who were multiskilled could be moved to work in different areas as demand levels varied, and as a result these staff were less vulnerable to being laid off in low season… this process had increased job satisfaction, both through greater variety and through the opportunity to learn new skills.

There were also benefits for managers (Kelliher and Riley, 2002, p.240):

For managers, using staff in a more flexible way had brought about labour cost reductions, by allowing them to reduce the use of overtime. They also reported higher retention levels amongst staff, a breakdown of departmental boundaries and improved teamwork…Functional flexibility enabled managers of a seasonal business to move away from a model of employment based on short-term relationships…to longer term, more stable relationships with staff and to reap the benefits of greater commitment and loyalty.

Moreover, the main benefit for the organisation was an increase in the quality of customer service:

Both managers and employees reported benefits for customer service…staff suggested that they were able to offer better service because they were more knowledgeable. Teamwork and inter-departmental co-operation were also reported to have improved. Staff indicated that they now felt they worked for the [organisation] rather than for their individual department (Kelliher and Riley, 2002, p.241).

Summary of Main Findings in this Section

This review of the literature has shown that the VA sector is currently in a state of transition. The nature of the sector is fragmented and dominated by a large number of SMEs. The environment in which these organisations operate is volatile, over-supplied and increasingly competitive, with these pressures looking set to intensify rather than decrease in the future. Political pressure is being put on the sector to be less dependent on public sources of funding and more commercial in

their activities. Market forces are pushing VAs towards collaboration and increasing their core product to include additional revenue streams, such as handling private events and functions on site. This has resulted in some significant changes to operational practices and has introduced new working partners.

Management and staffing of the sector has come under considerable criticism. The management model regarded as still dominant in the sector is typified as one that is reactive, fails to anticipate market movements and copes inadequately with competition. For a large proportion of the sector, there is a heavy reliance on numerical flexibility to deal with seasonal demands and this has been said to contribute heavily to the high turnover of staff, the casual and temporary nature of the labour force and the poor status of jobs that characterise much of the tourism industry. The heavy reliance on day-tripper markets means that VAs are competing directly with the retailing, leisure and hospitality sectors for the consumer leisure spend of an ever-smaller pool of local visitors.

Many attractions are struggling to survive in this hostile environment and the search for a competitive edge is becoming urgent. There is consensus in the literature that existing paradigms do not provide the basis for future prosperity and it is only customer-focussed and quality-oriented attractions that are likely to survive. The future is believed to lie in delivering excellent customer service. Tourism leaders are advocating: an emphasis on quality and best practice; an increase in team working; better communications; having flatter organisational structures and more empowered staff. The crucial and central importance of the individual front-line worker in the future VA landscape is becoming increasingly recognised. Employees with the right skills, knowledge and attitudes to their work are said to be the key to meeting customer needs and achieving organisational goals.

Conclusions Drawn from the Literature Review

This review of literature has shown that previous studies in the relatively recent field of WPK have largely neglected the service sector and the issue of how WPK relates to customer service since it was first mentioned by Kruse in the 1980s. The comparatively young Scottish VA sector has also received virtually no academic scrutiny until the last decade. Consequently, a study that investigates WPK in the Scottish visitor attraction industry would substantially further academic knowledge in both fields.

The main finding of the WPK literature review is that work process knowledge is most required in organisations with flexible working, teamwork, non-hierarchical organisational structures and information-sharing cultures. Work process knowledge is held not only within the individual but is also socially and culturally based, with knowledge and information shared through common language and artefacts within the workplace. Organisational structure, formal and informal communication structures, organisational climate, division of labour and management approaches have been shown to play a major part in the development of WPK by workers. Moreover, the culture of the workplace and the people within them are also important. What the individual brings to the workplace in terms of their experience and attitude makes a substantial difference to their development of WPK.

Evidence was provided in the review of VA literature to show that, although this has not typified the visitor attraction industry in the past, the industry is currently being pushed strongly and rapidly in this direction. Moves are being made to flatten organisational structures and use more functional than numerical flexibility. Customer service, and the pivotal role of the front-line employee, is now considered to play a crucial role in competitive advantage in the future of the VA

sector and front-line employees are becoming more empowered to deal with customers. It appears that the conditions that require WPK development are rapidly becoming established in the VA sector.

This review has thus highlighted the gap for a study of what WPK is required in a service sector, like the Scottish VA sector, that has an inherent customer service focus and involves constant interaction with the public. Kruse's original study highlighted the cultural importance of colleagues supporting each other to provide quality service, but as the main focus of WPK has since moved more into the manufacturing and industrial arenas, this aspect has become somewhat sidelined. However, manufacturing is declining as an employer and the tourism service sector is one of the fastest growing sectors worldwide. It is therefore appropriate to turn the attention of the field of WPK back towards its service roots. By returning to a similar area of study, this work completes the circle, re-establishing the customer service focus but in a context that is enhanced with both an expanded understanding of WPK, plus the greater knowledge and experience of customer service available to industry, that has been gained since the 1980s.

The central undertaking of this work is thus to investigate the nature of WPK in the Scottish VA industry where customer service is a key aspect, and identify what relationship WPK has to customer service. It is also significant to understand how WPK in this service sector differs from selected manufacturing and other service sector industries. Finally, it is essential to understand what factors affect the development of work process knowledge in VAs. Answering these questions is the focus of this work.

3 Methodology

Research Questions

This chapter examines the social constructivist and interpretivist framework and qualitative case study methodology used in this study to address its central questions, which are:

- What is the nature of work process knowledge in Scottish visitor attractions?

- What relationship does work process knowledge have to customer service?

- How does WPK in this context compare with previous published studies of work process knowledge in manufacturing and other service contexts?

- What factors affect the development of work process knowledge in this context?

The data gathering instruments used were a questionnaire to identify sites where multi skilling was evident, semi-structured interviews with key informants to provide an overview of each site, and 'shadowing' workers. These enabled exploration of the central questions and the emergence of themes across all sites.

Research Design

Good social science, as Flyvbjerg (2006, p.242) points out, is "problem driven", with methodology being chosen on the basis that "it employs those methods that for a given problematic, best help answer the research questions at hand". Hence, this research project began with the research questions and thereafter, a series of decisions were made concerning the epistemology, research paradigm and methodology, which framed the research design.

The main aim of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of work process knowledge in Scottish visitor attractions. This involved finding out: what the work processes were; how each department interacted with others; how work process knowledge was developed and shared; what artefacts and tools were used; and what cultures and staff attitudes prevailed. Considering the nature of the data required, and the paucity of literature in both WPK in relation to service industries and within the VA sector itself, a primary empirical research design from a qualitative perspective was considered most appropriate.

As a recent review of journals showed that objectivist and positivist research has dominated the study of tourism since the 1970s (Tribe, 2004) and that tourism research "has yet to embrace with any conviction, a qualitative approach" (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004, p.37), it may have been more typical to consider a positivistic approach. However, as this research was concerned with theorising experiences of WPK within a tourism service context, it is only through using the "open and unstructured approaches" (Thomas, 2004, p.210) of qualitative research that this issue could have begun to be addressed.

Theoretical Perspective

In terms of its theoretical underpinnings, this research adopted a line of inquiry that had "the richest sustained ontological and epistemological fit with the problem area being investigated" (Hollinshead, 2004, p.63), which is one of social constructivism. The social constructivist views all knowledge as 'constructed', subject to convention, human perception and social experience (Crotty, 1998) and assumes that there are no external realities waiting to be discovered, but that there are multiple realities with many contradictory or opposing views (Hollinshead, 2004). As the constructivist considers knowledge to be constructed in complex social contexts, and that the researcher and researched are partners in the production of knowledge, the social constructivist approach requires the researcher

to participate and engage in dialogue with people within the social context, then write up the findings in a qualitative way.

The abductive research strategy that arises from such an ontological and epistemological position is one based on interpretation and understanding, i.e. interpretivism. As knowledge is considered not independent of, but rather conditioned by, the particular culture or society in which it is produced (Tribe, 2004, p.52), the researcher, in order to grasp socially constructed meanings, must enter the everyday social world to observe the phenomenon in context and ultimately develop ideas through the induction of gathered data and openly reflexive interpretation. Consequently, as this research aimed to investigate the "subjective world of human experience" (Jordan and Gibson, 2004, p.216), a research design drawing on interpretivist paradigms enabled this to be done most effectively.

Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology was thus chosen as an ideal methodology for the holistic, in-depth investigation needed (Decrop, 2004) as it would elicit rich experiential data about WPK within its everyday context (Yin, 2003). Case study methodology aided entrance into and exploration of the social contexts that tend to be ignored by positivist approaches, but which were essential to illuminating the central questions of this work.

As VAs tend to offer a unique core product and operate within different contexts around Scotland, it was preferable to study a number of sites to observe if similarities or themes in WPK were apparent and indeed, many of the themes that emerged would not have done so from a single site case study. Therefore, the case study was designed to be comparative, across six contrasting cases. In multiple-participant research, the strength of inference which can be made increases rapidly

once factors start to occur with more than one participant (Lester, 1999). Consequently, if common conclusions arose from six sites, across a range of different contexts, it would measurably expand the external generalisability of findings (Yin, 2003).

Trustworthiness

Given its interpretative nature, an important goal of qualitative research is to build trustworthiness of its findings into the research design. Bearing in mind that case study methodology has been criticised as lacking the rigour of positivist research (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Kyburz-Graber, 2004; Ruddin, 2006; Yin, 2003), Lincoln and Guba's (1985, presented in Decrop, 2004, pp. 160-161) typology of four criteria for qualitative inquiry were used as the basis to address the *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability* of this study.

Credibility in terms of the study's "referential adequacy" is enhanced through providing rich contextual information to support data analysis and interpretation, and through giving VA 'key informants' several opportunities through feedback sessions to examine the interpretations. This also increases the study's *confirmability*, as giving access to factual data allows others to assess the way in which major interpretations emerged from the empirical material. Credibility is also supported by the explicit clarification of this researcher's experience, perspective, status and 'presentation of self' in the research project.

The replicability of interpretative research is constrained by the existence of multiple and contextual realities, bound by time and culture (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, in Decrop, 2004, p.160). However, the *dependability* of this study, in that if it were replicated with the same participants the same outcome be achieved, is augmented through leaving an 'audit trail' of information (within the text and appendices) that helps others to trace the route that led to the inferences

made. Further dependability was built in through having a flexible research plan and prolonged engagement with most of the sites.

Transferability or 'generalisability' was increased through purposively selecting case studies that were richest in information (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The sample was chosen to be as varied as possible, to provide the broadest range of contexts, and was written up using 'thick description', which gives other researchers the opportunity to appraise the findings and the extent to which they could be transferred to other settings (Decrop, 2004).

However, as the most comprehensive way of building trustworthiness into a research design is through triangulation (see Decrop, 2004, pp.161-163), this research incorporates several types of triangulation. *Data triangulation* comes from using a variety of primary data sources such as field notes and interview transcripts and some secondary information sources, like websites. Using multiple methods to gather data, such as a questionnaire, interviews and shadowing, provides *method triangulation*, which also contributes to increasing credibility and dependability. *Informant triangulation* is incorporated through using a broad range of informants from six different sites, comparing what they said. What workers and key informants said is triangulated with broader activities such as regular sets of behaviour and changes over time. This is known as *multilevel triangulation* and links to *longitudinal triangulation*, as in this case, four of the sites were visited three or four times over the space of a year, allowing comparisons of observations at different points in time.

The Researcher in the Process

This work aligns itself with Dupuis' (1999, pp. 59-60 in Jordan and Gibson, 2004, p. 220) stance that reflexive research methodologies in "strong, vigorous, qualitative research and good science" rely on the inclusion of "personal experience, emotions

and collaboration" within the research process. Thus, throughout the research, a reflexive self-introspection has been adopted and this work has tried to make explicit the ways in which the researcher is connected to the world in which the research is taking place, and the impact of this on the research. Consequently, it is important to note that, with a strong practitioner background, it was always a personal concern that this research should apply to "real world" problems (Sturman, 2003, p.10). However, as Walsh (2003, p.73) notes, while academics may seek new understandings and practitioners seek useful information to shape decisions, there is no reason why those two goals must be mutually exclusive. This, coupled with the perennial problems of getting sites to engage with the research process (Piccoli and Wagner, 2003), contributed to the decision to collaborate with Kate Tetley, Learning Manager with People 1st, the SSC for Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism, alongside their first development of National Occupational Standards (NOS) for VAs.

Levine (2007) points out the potential dangers of conducting research in conjunction with another agency, however, in this case the 'trade offs' were very much in favour of this work. At the time of meeting, Kate Tetley was having difficulties in getting respondents to engage with research needed to develop these NOS, as People 1st had no existing contact network within the VA sector in Scotland. As improving customer service is a key issue in the sector, People 1st were exceedingly interested in the concept of 'work process knowledge' and its possible application to industry. It was realised that, with minor modifications, one vehicle could easily serve these two overlapping but distinct purposes. Consequently, I was permitted to adapt their usual 'functional analysis' process and use the authority of People 1st name during the initial recruitment and key informant interview stages of the research, to gain access to companies to explore WPK. In return, People 1st received a share of the findings and gained the benefit of my expertise and existing contacts within the industry. Hence, this collaboration

was mutually beneficial. People 1st received the data they needed to develop new NOS and access to academic research which had potential usefulness in the industry they served. At the same time, this research gained the benefit of wider and supported access to potential participants in the initial recruitment stages, without any loss of autonomy or authorship of findings, and provided an extremely useful channel for dissemination of findings in the practical arena. Once contact with sites was established, later stages of case study research were negotiated and conducted solely as doctoral research.

Instrumentation and Procedures

A variety of methods was used to generate sufficient and suitable data for analysis. These data collection methods were: a questionnaire for initial recruitment of suitable organisations; in-depth, one-to-one, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with key informants; and shadowing workers. Alternative approaches that were considered included structured interviews, log books, focus groups and direct observation. However, as this study aimed to explore emergent themes, it was necessary to allow interviews to develop organically, so as not to preclude information that may emerge and thus, semi-structured interviews were preferable. The idea of getting workers to complete logbooks of their work was quickly abandoned when it became obvious that organisations were not willing to engage with these as they were felt to be too onerous for workers. Focus groups also fell at two hurdles, firstly because VAs rarely operate with slack capacity making it difficult to draw a number of workers away at one time and secondly, because it would remove workers from the context of study. Consequently, when it came to gathering data on the nature of WPK it was important to select a method where workers could be viewed in context and which did not require them to be apart from their duties. Plain observation might have sufficed, however, this was not considered as useful as 'shadowing', a type of 'observation-as-participant'.

Informed by the theoretical framework and methodology previously depicted, the procedures followed and considerations taken into account, are now outlined.

Selection Criteria for Participants

Mirroring the criteria shown for selecting cases in Yin (2003, p.12), it was considered an essential part of the research design to have multiple cases. The unique nature of VAs made it unlikely that a single organisation would provide enough information about work process knowledge to satisfy the need to inform national policy. Therefore, a first criterion for selection was that the sites had to demonstrate, before final selection, that they were exemplary models of work process knowledge, as the typical or average case of a random sample is not always the richest in information (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The second criterion was that cases should be drawn from different categories of attraction and geographical area to gain some diversity of conditions. Consequently, purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants were drawn from a spread of contexts.

Initial Recruitment of Organisations

Identifying suitable sites from Scotland's 1000 visitor attractions took account of the information gained from the literature review that work process knowledge is most necessary in organisations requiring multi-functional working practices and that this was just beginning to become a prevalent form of working in the VA sector. Multi-functional working was therefore considered most likely to be found amongst the leading successful attractions.

Consequently, using Yin's (2003, p.78) two-stage screening procedure, an archival source (Scotexchange website) was first used to identify the top-10 paying and non-paying attractions in each administrative country area, from which an initial list of 140 VAs was compiled. This list was placed in a database where they were

categorised and relevant criteria defined, in an attempt to reduce the numbers. The VAs were categorised by: the size of attraction (annual visitor numbers and number of employees); location (town name); area (county name); whether in the Central belt or Highlands; whether a paying or free attraction; whether a rural or town attraction; plus a general typology category (cultural, leisure, historic, industrial etc). De-selection then removed historical and cultural heritage sites, as these were covered by a different SSC, and those in very remote areas that would over-stretch resources. Further consultation with both Visit Scotland and ASVA, drawing on their insider knowledge of sites to establish suitability, reduced the final list to 40 attractions, 27 in the Central belt and 13 in the Highlands.

This in effect, also contributed to the second stage of the screening process, which involved collecting limited documentation about each candidate. At this stage, the addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of each company were sourced through the ASVA website, which listed members. Those not listed were found via Google, as all top VAs have a website. To improve response rates, each organisation was contacted by telephone to identify the name, title and address of the most appropriate person to target. The information email sent to these specific contacts within organisations is found in **Appendix 1.**

Questionnaire

The main data collection method chosen for this initial recruitment approach was an on-line questionnaire, devised and administered through a host survey website (www.SurveyMonkey.com). However, a paper-based version of the questionnaire was produced for those who had expressed a preference for this method. The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify VAs that purported to employ multi-functional practices. The questionnaire was drawn up and administered with attention to the issues described in Cohen *et al* (2000, chapter 14).

This questionnaire was brief, asking only seven, short-response questions, as its purpose was simply to identify companies willing to engage in the research process and allow targeting of those organisations indicating that staff did multi-task. The questionnaire was piloted by sending it for comment to informed colleagues in both academe and industry. From this, minor amendments were made to the questionnaire, for example, inclusion of the respondent's position in company and rewording a clumsily phrased question. The online survey was accessed through a hyperlink in an email, a copy of which is found in **Appendix 2**, with a copy of the posted, paper-based version of the questionnaire shown in **Appendix 3**. Using the People 1st logo and brand design guidelines, the questionnaire was sent to the list of 40 top attractions by either email or post. After two weeks, a polite reminder was sent by email to those who had not responded, which returned a few more. The final response rate was a respectable 60 per cent: 24 responses; 19 online and 5 postal.

From these 24 responses, 12 were selected for further study on the basis that they showed most evidence of multi-tasking. As can be seen in **Appendix 4**, the email sent to these 12 organisations following up the questionnaire asks initially only for interviews with key informants. Breaking the research into incremental stages, with each site being asked for only a small degree of commitment at any stage, allowed the organisations most likely to provide the richest sources of WPK to emerge and gave the researcher chance to build rapport with organisations before asking for further engagement.

The recruitment of sites at each step of engagement is shown in Table 4 on the next page, which indicates how sites were filtered to the final six. Table 5 on the subsequent page, demonstrates that the six sites selected for inclusion in the final case study represent a reasonable spread of visitor attractions, as categorised by geographical area, type, size and ownership.

Table 4: Recruitment of Sites at Each Stage of Engagement

Timescale:	April 2005	April/May 2005	May/Sep 2005	Dec 05/Jan 06	Apr/Jun 06	Jun/Jul 06
Stage:	**Phone calls and advising emails**	**Questionnaire**	**Key informant Interviews**	**Shadowing Expert Worker**	**Team Shadowing**	**Final testing of methodology**
Details of Recruitment:	Phone calls were made to 40 selected sites to identify name of key contact so correspondence could be specifically targeted to them. Emails were then sent to each key contact advising that a questionnaire would be sent	Questionnaire was sent to 40 top attractions either by email or post on 21/4/05 By 29/4, 14 online replies received. Sent out email/post reminder only to those not responded. By 13/5, received 24 responses: 19 online and 5 postal = 60% response rate	House Science Centre Canal Village Dungeon Food Site Science Centre 2 Funhouse Farm Park Ship	House Science Centre Canal Village Dungeon	House Science Centre Canal Village	Mountain Castle
At each stage, sites were de-selected or self-selected out of study	Initial list of 140 was edited to 40 on basis of type and suitability for study	12 were selected for further study on basis they reported most evidence of multi-skilling	Interviews were undertaken at 10 sites. Five sites then elected to drop out or were de-selected	Shadowing one expert worker for a full shift – usually duty manager. One site de-selected	Shadowing workers in each customer facing area of the site	Refined methodology was tested at two further sites, each taking two days

Table 5: Categorisation of Case Study Sites

Attraction:	Castle	Mountain	Canal	Science centre	Village	House
Geographical area:	Perthshire	Highlands	Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley	Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley	Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley	Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley
Classification of Type(s):	Historic Property	Natural (managed) and Visitor Centre	Visitor Centre and Workplace Heritage	Visitor Centre	Visitor Centre and Historic Heritage	Visitor Centre
Purpose built / not purpose built:	Not purpose built	Attraction is natural but visitor centre was purpose built	Attraction is a current workplace but visitor centre was purpose built	Purpose built as a visitor attraction	Not purpose built as a visitor attraction but village was later developed specifically as an industrial heritage attraction	Purpose built as a visitor attraction
Approx annual visitors:	160,000	215,000	300,000	400,000	100,000 to VC	100,000
Ownership:	Charitable trust	Charitable trust	British Waterways	Charitable trust	Charitable trust	Charitable trust
Charge for visitor entry:	Charge made at entry gate for access to grounds with additional fee to view Castle	Charge for journey on funicular railway but free access to walkers to mountain and bottom level café and shops	Charge made for ride on canal mechanism. Free access to visitor centre and grounds	Charge made at door entry depending on which area(s) of the centre is/are to be visited	Charge to enter certain buildings within the Village but open access to shops and grounds	Charge to view suite of display rooms. Free access to shop and café

Key Informant Interviews

As was shown in Table 4, in the first round of key informant interviews, 10 sites were visited. Each interview, with a key informant representing the organisation at manager or director level, took place on-site and usually lasted for around one to one and a half hours. All sites permitted a familiarisation tour of the site before the interview. The first two interviews, attended by Kate Tetley and myself, were 'organic' in that themes were allowed to emerge naturally from the conversation. The themes thus generated were then incorporated into a semi-structured schedule (see **Appendix 5**) for subsequent interviews by this researcher. This showed discussion areas to be covered, but allowed the format to be sufficiently open-ended to enable the "contents to be re-ordered, digressions and expansions made, new avenues to be included and further probing to be undertaken" (Cohen *et al.*, 2000, p.146). On all but one occasion, when the interview perforce took place in a noisy restaurant (when shorthand notes were taken instead), these interviews were tape recorded and transcribed into a format for data analysis. Having undertaken these key informant interviews, three of the sites elected not to engage in further research and two sites were deselected as not providing enough richness of material to study, which left five going forward to the next stage of study.

Shadowing

Having selected five cases for study, the next stage was to begin to gather data about the nature of WPK within them. The technique considered most fit for purpose in this instance was 'shadowing', As an experienced observer, I could confidently adopt a position similar to "observer-as-participant", as described in Cohen *et al* (2000, pp.310), drawing on my skills and training, as outlined in Yin (2003, pp.58-62). Shadowing involves following a worker while they do their job, observing and questioning what is occurring, while being as unobtrusive as

possible, especially during customer-employee exchanges. This is a well-used form of job training in this industry and was thus a concept everyone within the VAs both understood and could easily incorporate into their work with little disruption. This method thus provided the opportunity to perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone 'inside' the case study (Yin, 2003, p.94), yet allowed me to maintain a comparative detachment.

In the first round of shadowing, expert workers were recruited, as it was considered most likely that they would have the most developed WPK. These were usually duty managers, whose job tended to take them into most areas of the site during the course of their day's work. An example of the email used to gain access to sites for this process can be found in **Appendix 6**. At each of the five sites, one expert worker was followed for an entire shift, usually extending to 8 hours.

As shadowing relies on both close observation and informal verbal exchanges, it was critical to establish a good level of rapport and empathy to gain depth of information (Lester, 1999). Consequently, interaction was kept as informal as possible. However, field notes were discreetly jotted down in a small notebook during the process and written up immediately afterwards. These field notes contained the results of observations and interactions, including pen portraits of the participants, a log and descriptions of events, descriptions of physical events and settings, interactions between workers, and verbatim quotes. Also noted were ideas that arose during fieldwork and some tentative analysis and interpretation.

As Cohen *et al* (2000, p.147) observes, this type of research rapidly amasses huge amounts of data, which made early analysis desirable both to reduce data overload and select out significant features for future focus. From an initial analysis, it became apparent that it would be necessary to shadow a wider range of workers to gain a range of different perspectives and thus a more holistic view of their

interrelationships. This led to recruiting sites for a second round of shadowing (see **Appendix 7** for example of the recruitment email sent).

During this second day of on-site engagement, a schedule was drawn up to shadow at least one worker within each customer-facing department for around an hour, although this time was usually flexible, dependent on how much useful data was being gathered. In addition, some expert workers, often section managers, were interviewed off the job, to gain further in-depth information about how their section interacted and inter-related with others. As WPK is often constructed during problem solving, querying the types of problems they had to solve elicited many useful data in highlighting where work process knowledge was being used or seemed lacking.

The different stages of the research process are shown in Table 6 on the next page. The section on key informant interviews shows both the initial key informant interview and, in italics beneath, expert workers who were interviewed on the second shadowing day. The 'day 1' column identifies the expert worker shadowed. The column for day 2 shows the different staff shadowed or conversed with in the course of their duties.

Table 6: Site Visits to Central Belt Attractions

Attraction	Key Informant Interviews		Day 1		Day 2	
	Date	**Key informants**	**Date**	**Shadowing expert worker**	**Date**	**Shadowing customer service staff**
Science Centre	16 May 05 *29 Jun 06* *29 Jun 06*	Duty Manager *Events Manager* *Assistant Catering Manager*	01 Nov 05	Duty Manager *(also attended morning staff briefing)*	29 Jun 06	Customer service staff in: reception desk, IMAX theatre, call centre/sales desk, welcome hall and on three different science floors. Also café, shop and (briefly) a janitor
House	01 Jun 05 *28 April 06*	CEO and Marketing and Business Manager *Head Chef*	03 Feb o6 05 Feb 06	Duty Manager Banqueting Manager at a wedding on-site	28 Apr 06	Customer service staff in: café, shop, reception desk in suite of visitor attraction rooms, and telephone reception/ administration office
Canal	06 Sep 05 *13 Jun 06*	Customer Service Manager *Catering Manager*	11 Oct 05	Duty Manager *(also attended morning staff briefing)*	13 Jun 06	Staff in café and kitchen areas, customer service staff in retail/ reception area, boat crew (during a canal trip), sales and events coordinator (in office)
Village	06 Jul 05 *18 May 06*	Deputy Director *Catering Manager and Wedding Coordinator*	15 Dec 05	Duty Manager	16 May 06	4 guides in different areas of the Village, 2 shop staff in different shops, 2 ride staff, 2 staff at visitor centre reception, senior catering assistant in the café and a janitor setting up rooms for a wedding

After this round of shadowing visits, a further two sites in the Highland region were investigated, as it was important to know if the different conditions in those areas made a difference to WPK. These two sites had been previously identified from the initial questionnaires, but had been held in reserve to test the refined methodology. Prior personal contact with three of the sites in the Central belt and the close geographical proximity to the researcher had made it easier to focus on these while the methodology was being refined.

As visiting the Highland sites involved a long journey and overnight stay, they were undertaken on two consecutive days. The first day involved a site familiarisation tour followed by a key informant interview of around and hour and a half, which was tape-recorded. A schedule for shadowing was then agreed for the next day, drawing at least one staff member from each customer-facing area. On the second day, the shadowing followed the technique as previously described. Details of these visits are shown in Table 7 on the next page. At this stage, the weakest of the seven sites was dropped from the study leaving the final six cases being compared as the House, Science Centre, Village, Canal, Castle and Mountain.

Table 7: Site Visits to Highland Attractions

Attraction	Key Informant Interviews		Day 1		Day 2	
	Date	**Key informants**	**Date**	**Shadowing expert worker**	**Date**	**Shadowing customer service staff**
Mountain	15 May 06 *16 May 06*	Chief Executive *Catering and Events Manager*	15 May 06	Key informant interview and site familiarisation visit	16 May 06	Cafés in top and bottom sites, customer service staff in shops in top and bottom sites, funicular rail operator (during journey up and down mountain), staff in pay booth areas, ecology/ranger
Castle	12 Jul 06 *13 Jul 06*	Chief Guide *Catering Manager (also responsible for on-site wedding and function catering)*	12 Jul 06	Key informant interview and site familiarisation visit	13 Jul 06	Guides in reception and greeting hall, guide taking a tour, 3 guides on different floors (two of them German), 3 staff in reception at Castle entrance, 3 staff in shop and staff in restaurant

Ethical Issues

Throughout this study, the revised ethical guidelines of BERA (2004) were observed, although it was also important to conform to accepted practices and norms within the visitor attraction domain. For example, it was not considered necessary to get participants to sign consent forms, as this is not standard practice in the industry and would have been regarded as officious. However, at each stage in the process, participants were informed of the purpose of research, the length of time that would be taken, exactly what the research entailed, what would happen to participants during the visit and the benefits to be gained from research on the larger scale e.g. society/industry.

As the case study methodology evolved over time, recruitment for each stage of the research was incremental. With each stage of the research, sites were implicitly given the option to opt out, as they could elect not to respond positively to the recruitment approach. On each occasion, at least a two-day cooling off period between consent and participation of the organisation was allowed for, and permission to tape record interviews was always requested before a visit if this was intended.

As the organisation decided which employees would be involved, it was not feasible to get individual consent prior to arrival on site, however, on every occasion, each individual participant was verbally informed of what the research was about and that his or her participation was voluntary. As promised anonymity allowed participants to be more candid in their responses, pseudonyms have been used for both sites and individual respondents and no information of a confidential nature has been revealed. Readers are referred to **Appendices 1-7** for examples of information, letters and emails adhering to the above principles that were used in this research process.

Data Analysis Plan

As the purpose of analysis is to summarise the data, identify related themes and patterns, discover relationships among the themes and patterns, and then develop explanations for these relationships (Walsh, 2003, p.73), a crucial first stage was one of familiarisation and immersion within the data. This was an inductive and iterative process, undertaken both throughout the data collection period and after data collection was complete. It was important that analysis of the data satisfy the requirements of the research that the results should be based on an emic perspective i.e. on the point of view of a cultural insider. Consequently, the research process had accumulated a very large data set: these included recorded interview transcripts, interview notes, website information and field notes, which contained the results of observations and interactions, including pen portraits of the participants, descriptions of events, descriptions of physical settings, interactions between workers, and verbatim quotes. The multiplicity of different types of data sources made it difficult to utilise a computerised software tool for qualitative data analysis and so a manual analysis was undertaken.

Immersion in the data involved listening to tapes, transcribing and reading and re-reading the source material, systematically coding and classifying it into defined categories through a process of induction; from this analysis, a series of distinct themes emerged from the data. This was a protracted process, extending over a period of three to four months. Through the overlapping and often re-evaluative procedures of coding, recapitulating and comparing themes, the analysis moved from the narrative to the interpretative stage of the analysis. Through further scrutiny and grouping of these themes, they were subsequently synthesised into six broad conceptual areas, which would provide an enhanced and more meaningful understanding of the data. These six broad conceptual areas form the basis of the findings of this work. A diagram is borrowed from Thomas (2004,

p.207), shown in Figure 4 below, to illustrate how conceptual areas were developed through higher degrees of abstraction and synthesis from individual themes, supported by textual evidence.

Figure 4: Hierarchical Structure of the Thematic Framework[5]
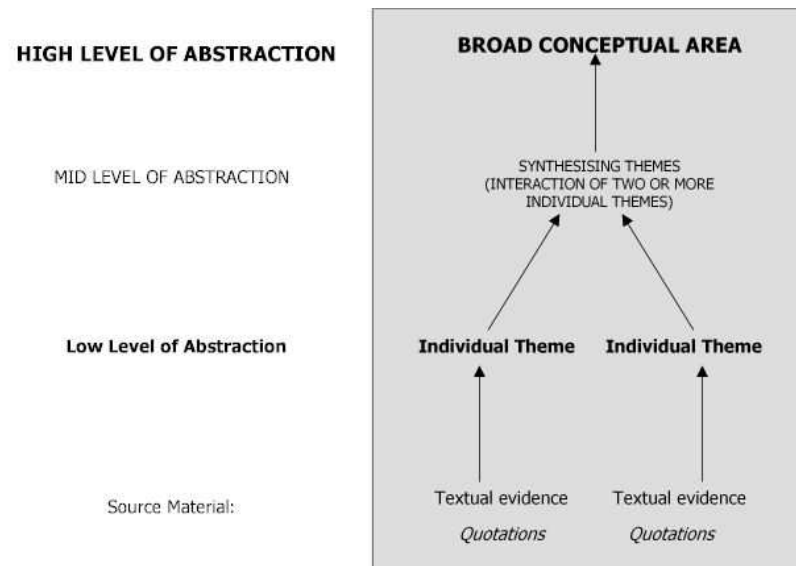
The social constructivist and interprevist approach underpinning this research recognises that there can be many ways of interpreting conversations and observations. A distinguishing precept of constructivism is that while interpretations can be 'useful', there is no one 'true' or 'valid' interpretation (Crotty, 1998). While it is possible to impose a pattern of meaning onto the case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and make theoretical statements about it, these must be supported by evidence (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). This research also recognises that "social agents are central to the construction of knowledge and that the researcher's voice is one amongst many that influence the research process" (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004, p.17).

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[5] This figure was published in Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies and Methodologies, J. Phillimore & L. Goodson eds., Page No 207, Copyright Routledge (2004). Reproduced with kind permission.

Consequently, respondent voices have been used extensively to support the argument throughout the findings and discussion. This research has also consciously tried to avoid possible biases resulting from the inevitable editing process, to prevent misrepresenting, distorting or deleting findings which have been provided in good faith by participants (Lester, 1999). Although this research is tentative about coming to firm conclusions that the theories arising from this study extend to the entire population of visitor attractions (Lester, 1999), having a comparative case study provided an opportunity for wider themes to be discerned. This allows for some "*strength of generalisability*", as this term suggests that generalisability is a judgement of degree, rather than a binary decision (Schofield, 2000 in Ruddin, 2006, p.805).

Importance and Dissemination Plan

A significant quality criterion of case study research is the way in which the findings are made accessible to an interested audience (Kyburz-Graber, 2004). This study has obvious importance to expanding knowledge in the field of work process knowledge study, as it not only illuminates the nature of WPK in a customer-focussed service sector industry, but as a result also adds a new understanding of the crucial importance of the customer in the development of WPK. However, this work also adds considerably to the body of literature on visitor attractions. Consequently, it is my intention to share these findings and theories widely with the academic community through promptly publishing a series of articles in leading educational and tourism journals and through presenting papers at appropriate conferences. This process is already under way.

However, as has been previously indicated, a strong motivating factor for me is the desire for this research not only to contribute to the body of theoretical knowledge but also to make a practical difference, empowering those who participated in the

study. This has consequently widened the audience to whom these findings have relevance and importance.

Collaboration with People 1st has already provided a useful vehicle for disseminating findings to several relevant groups and providing practical applications for them. The first route has been through providing sessions to share findings with the participants themselves. Three feedback workshops were held at points during and after the research, where representatives from the case study sites were invited to hear about the findings and give their views. It is the intention of People 1st that from these discussions, with my assistance, a management tool will be developed to help visitor attraction managers to recognise the importance of work process knowledge to their business and how WPK can be actively developed in their staff.

People 1st have also assisted in disseminating the concepts of this work to the tourism training industry, through allowing me to make presentations at seminars attended by trade and teaching professionals responsible for tourism industry training, in the latter half of 2007. A revised functional analysis methodology that takes WPK into consideration has already been developed that will be used by People 1st for future functional analysis in visitor attractions NOS. However, they have also supported future development of occupational standards that take WPK into consideration into sectors extending beyond the visitor attraction industry. In September 2007, the findings and theories arising from this research were presented to the team responsible for devising new occupational standards for Events, thus giving me the opportunity to inform this process.

Finally, as academics have been accused of seldom making their work accessible to practitioners and communicating the value of their findings to practising managers, it is also my intention to publish articles in trade journals as a "communication

outlet linking academics and practising managers" (Piccoli and Wagner, 2003, p.31).

Limitations

Many of the usual limitations that affect doctoral researchers such as difficulties in accessing organisations or enforced delays were fortunately offset by my experience, networking and good luck. Collaborating with People 1st provided extra resources, which meant the study was wider than it might have been had this support not been available and gave me a prompt start on data collection. This provided the luxury of not being too pressurised by several enforced delays in the field research arising from the inherent seasonality of VAs, when sites were too busy with either tourism pressures or workforce training to be able to accommodate the research.

However, there were still inherent limitations arising from having to design this case study to fit within the constraints of a doctoral programme. The number of cases was limited to six, which for logistical and pecuniary reasons were mostly in a compact geographical area. However, VAs are so diverse that, although the cross-site commonalities validates the findings to a great extent, it would have been better to have been able to study up to 10 cases in a wider range of contexts and geographical locations. It is also important to recognise that this study is a snapshot of an industry that is dynamic and in a state of rapid transition. Many of the sites have already moved on from where they were a year ago.

Some limitations also arose in the later stages of the study from the fact that shadowing took place during active work operation. It was of primary importance to be alert to, and minimise, any possible impact of the researcher's presence during customer-employee interactions. Some challenges to access also arose, as it

was necessary to remain flexible to accommodate shift work and changing rota pattern, and consequently, site visits had to be adapted to times and days when workers would be available.

Summary

A social constructivist approach was adopted in this study, as the best way of answering questions on knowledge was through participation and interaction with workers within their work context. The research methodology chosen to achieve this was a case study, with six VAs ultimately being chosen as cases for comparison. A larger number of sites were initially selected from responses to a recruitment questionnaire, on the basis that the organisation reported high levels of multi-skilling, which is often a key indicator that WPK is required in that workplace. After visits to 12 sites, the final six cases were selected on the basis that they showed most evidence of work process knowledge and were willing to engage in the study. Site familiarisation visits, which included semi-structured interviews with key informants from each site, gained an overview of the site and how each department interacted with others. Thereafter, front-line employees at each site were shadowed on at least two different occasions, which provided a wealth of data to answer the central research questions. A manual content analysis of this data revealed a series of themes, which were then synthesised into six broad conceptual areas under which findings are presented in this work.

4 Findings

The findings of this study are presented in six sections, one for each of the conceptual areas that were considered, through synthesis of the data, to be the main factors affecting WPK in the case study sites. Table 5 in the methodology chapter provides an overview of the six case study sites.

Section 1: Size and Complexity

This first section examines what relationship the size of the VA and the complexity of its structure and operations has on the development of the work process knowledge of its staff, and introduces some of the themes that will be explored in more detail in later sections. During the relatively short duration of this study, a period of 18 months in the field, all sites made quite significant changes to their business structures, which resulted in a rapid improvement in WPK development. These changes involved moving to multi-functional team working, developing new job roles, recruiting different types of staff and improving communication. There was a noticeable movement across all sites in this direction.

Of the six sites, four could be considered to have staff with particularly well-developed WPK: the Science Centre, House, Mountain and Village. These sites have been using multi-functional teams and comprehensive communication methods for the longest time. The Canal has made significant moves in the same direction, although it has faced some difficulties in effecting the transition to multi-functional teams working and so their staffs' WPK development is not quite so well developed as the other four. The Castle is the site where employee WPK could be considered the least well developed of the six sites, however, they too have begun to make structural changes and are striving to both move in the multi-functional team direction and improve communication.

Below are two tables that compare the different aspects of the size and complexity of each site, which influence the development of WPK. Table 8 compares various measurements of the size of the sites relating to the period 2005-2006. Size refers to the physical amount of ground across which the site extends, which has been converted to hectares to allow easy comparison. Other measures of size compared are the number of employees and the number of visitors each site receives. There is also a very rough ratio of number of visitors per employee to give an indication of the intensity of contact for each customer-facing employee.

Table 9 on the subsequent page compares different aspects of site complexity. These are: the range of departments each site has; the range of different services they provide; and whether they have internal or external partners delivering part of the main service. These are all measurable factors of complexity that have been found to impact on WPK development.

Table 8: Aspects of Size

Site:	House	Canal	Science Centre	Village	Mountain	Castle
Physical size of site: **1 hectare = 10,000m^2**	House is approximately 0.8 of a hectare, plus small surrounding gardens	The actual buildings extend to approximately 1 to 2 hectares. The entire site is 18 hectares, including surrounding land and part of the canal.	Site is approximately 5.5 hectares covering the building, car park and surrounding ground	Village covers approximately 11 hectares plus additional surrounding land	The actual buildings cover 3.5 hectares plus ski slopes extending to 598 hectares	The Castle itself is around 8 hectares although the estate extends to 5800 hectares
Annual Visitors:	100,000	300,000	400,000	100,000 to Visitor Centre / 400,000 to site overall	215,000 (50,000 ski, 165,000 non ski)	160,000
Number of employees:	45 full time employees	35 full time employees, covering both inside and outside duties, plus up to an additional 15 part time seasonal	100 permanent employees and approximately 40 casuals throughout the year for peak periods	Visitor Centre - approx. 60; Hotel approx. 60; Conservation Trust (Management, Admin and Maintenance) 25	70 full time permanent, which increases with seasonal staff to 120 during the winter high ski season	Castle: 28 Full time + 32 additional seasonal staff Total estate: 69 Full Time + 67 Additional seasonal Staff
Approx ratio of visitors to employees:	2222 visitors per employee	6000 visitors per employee	2857 visitors per employee	1666 visitors to Visitor Centre per visitor centre employee	2357 visitors per employee in summer, 417 visitors per employee in ski season	2666 visitors to Castle per Castle employee

Table 9: Aspects of Complexity

Site:	House	Canal	Science Centre	Village	Mountain	Castle
Departments:	Management/ Visitor Attraction/ Chefs/ Café/ Shop/ Events/ Administration/ Voluntary Tour Guides	Management/ Retail (Customer Service Team)/ Café Team/ Boat Crew / Sales And Events/ Finance And Administration/ Cleaning	Management/ Customer Service Team/ Security/ Maintenance/ Animal Care/ Café (Franchise)/ Shop	Visitor Centre Team/ Retail Outlets/ Catering/ Administration/ Textile Production/ Cleaning/ Audio Visual Equipment Maintenance Team	Finance and Admin, Customer Services Catering and Facilities, Retail, Marketing (includes Sales and Events), Interpretation, Technical Maintenance, Outside Squad (maintenance) Rangers and in winter Ski Patrol, Equipment Hire	Management/ Farm/ Forestry/ Game/ Castle/ Caravan Park/ Maintenance/ Countryside Ranger
Range of functions or events offered:	Weddings; corporate dinners; dinner concerts	Weddings; business meetings; full events programme	Functions, birthday parties; weddings; full events programme	Weddings; functions; full events programme	Weddings; fine dining evenings; summer ceilidhs	Weddings; balls and parties; horse trials
Internal or external partners delivering aspects of service:	All main services handled in-house	External caterers for weddings	Internal partner delivers the café and event catering	All main services handled in-house	All main services handled in-house	Internal partner delivers the café and event catering

As the first table shows, the largest site in terms of physical size is the Castle. The grounds of the estate in which the Castle is situated extend to 145,000 acres, incorporating amongst other things, a farm, a caravan site, forestry and country sports. The chief guide at the Castle described the structure of the estate and the hierarchy of management:

> The Castle manager and the deputy manager, they are effectively responsible to the greater hierarchy of the estate... the [Castle manager] is responsible to the General Manager of the estate, who's basically responsible for everything, from the sheep grazing in the field to the guides walking down the corridors. We have a caravan park, game department, pony trekking, farms, tenants, forestry etc, and all of these have got various people – and they basically all feed into [General Manager]...who reports then to the trustee...who's the overall boss.

The large physical distances between the different provisions of the site and the complexity of the services delivered on the estate undoubtedly raise issues for this site, in terms of communication and the smooth running of the business:

> [Communication] is quite a high priority within the Castle and the estate, that we are looking all the time... I think the 'inter-estate' communication is something we are having to work on... the reason is it's so big – 145,000 acres. I haven't set eyes on the farm manager for months, and there's no reason why I should, to be honest, but it is quite handy to know if something appears outside, like a tractor with a trailer of people on it, that this is something the estate is doing – and we are getting better at that, and we are meeting more regularly... pass more information more freely than we did.

Lack of communication between different areas across the estate has caused problems in the past. However, although the estate is very large, the Castle itself is only about two to three times the size of the Science Centre, so is comparable in area to the Village. Within the Castle, the organisation of the service is structured into seven separate departments, as the Chief guide explained:

The Castle is known as 'exhibition', which comprises office team, front-of-house guides and reception, housekeeping, shop, restaurant, caretakers and gardeners.

These separate teams within the Castle each have their own manager and although there is communication between departments, it tends to be at department head level, as the chief guide commented:

As for our team getting together, we only do that every couple of months or so. Most [communication between teams] is interaction with each manager, rather than a team meeting.

On a daily basis, booking information is cascaded down from the office, through the managers of the different departments to the customer-facing staff.

At this site, front-of-house workers in the guide and reception teams receive almost all their information through the chief guide, who communicates the information he has received from the office to his staff:

My own staff would have little interaction with the office; they have to get [information] through me… The reception side have a certain amount of information [from the office] because of the cash handling…but generally they're getting their information through me.

Using a cascade method, through a hierarchy of individual department heads, to distribute information relies on everyone within the chain passing on all the necessary information to everyone concerned. However, sometimes people are missed out of the information loop, as one Castle employee commented:

There is a communication issue in here – it's quite poor. The booking department doesn't always pass on details to the rest of the staff, so it can cause problems.

The chief guide also commented on the difficulties they faced in holding team meetings:

> Every time something doesn't work we think 'well what did we do wrong there?' and one of our snags is the fact that we cannot get the whole team together, ever, on the same day during the season... Our manager tries to do a monthly staff meeting... in fact we had one last week, but we were all far too busy - none of the seasonal were staff were at it... I wasn't at it, because we had 25 coaches that day, no one could be spared to go to a meeting.

There are two main reasons why team meetings are difficult to hold at this site. The first is because they are held less regularly than at other sites i.e. monthly rather than a daily basis, and as staff work a four-day-on, three-day-off rota, it is difficult to organise one meeting to convey information to all staff, as there is never a day when all staff are together on site. The second reason is that meetings are held during the working day, as staff would not be paid for coming in early to attend a pre-service meeting or to come in on a day off. Consequently, many of those who are at work cannot attend a meeting as they are delivering service.

The chief guide explained, however, that having meetings that many staff cannot attend is counterproductive, as it adversely affects staff's perception of the organisation:

> We are thinking of changing that because, if you aren't at the meeting, all sorts of things go through people's minds like 'Was I excluded intentionally? What's happening? How will it affect me?' It's actually quite a routine, boring meeting about simple things, and anything that generally affects the seasonal staff, they'd hear about through me, but there's still this feeling that there's something going on that [they] are excluded from...

The sporadic and sometimes incomplete nature of the information shared with staff restricts employees' overview not only of the estate but also what goes on within the Castle. This has contributed to workers at the Castle having the least developed WPK amongst the six sites studied.

Hence, it can be seen that although this site is very large, it is not this in itself that primarily limits WPK development. The hierarchical structure of the organisation, the exclusive (as opposed to inclusive) communications network and the lack of information-sharing culture are much more accountable. Very few people at the top of the hierarchy have an overview of the entire estate and this overview is not shared extensively with all staff. Communication is channelled in a top-down, cascade manner through heads of departments, which sometimes leaves people out of the information loop. No intranet is available for staff to access long-term plans, nor an email distribution system to share information with all staff. There is little provision and certainly no formal forum for front-line staff to convey information back up the communication channel to management heads. There is consequently no culture of information sharing on a direct basis between overall management and front-line staff at this site.

The culture at this site also lacked collegiality; it was noticeable that there were sometimes stark divisions between the teams and occasionally a 'them and us' attitude by some staff towards their employers. However, the site has recently made moves towards eradicating some of those divisions. They have begun by amalgamating teams to allow staff to be multi-functional, as the chief guide explained:

> I put the concept [of multi functional working] to the trustees this year and they were very keen. However, we've left it for the moment between reception and guiding team, which is effectively the one now.

However there have been problems initiating this changeover of culture. The division of departments had led some workers to have a silo attitude and to identify more with their individual team or specialism than with the overall site.:

> I know it's effectively one on paper, it isn't yet one in reality...I am struggling to get some of the reception team to buy into it... It may take a year or two. The guides took a year or two to change.

However, despite the resistance to the cultural change, management at the site is determined to continue in this direction as they see it as the way to reach more modern working practices:

> I think it's changing right through the estate...I'm trying to change the culture of the guiding staff because I think it needed changed. I have to say that management has allowed me to do it. Our head of estate is trying to change the culture of [Name of] Estate. He's been there, oh, five years or so. These old estates still have an 18th Century culture, if you like. I think he's got it up to the late 1900s now [laughs] ...but it's a moving culture...they are really trying in all the elements of the estate to move the culture into the 21st century, but it's a really slow process.

Multi-functional working and a better communication structure are evidently seen by management at this site as being 'best practice' to aspire to and they are slowly but surely moving towards this model. They are right at the beginning of this process and so far have undertaken only a small amount of restructuring, but seem determined to continue in this direction.

However, in all the other sites studied there is much more evidence of this movement towards multi-functional team working and improved communication already having been undertaken. One site that is probably furthest down this road is the Science Centre. This is the largest site in terms of both numbers of visitors

and employees. It is also physically a fairly large site, spread over a wide floor area and on four different levels, containing a broad range of different departments to be covered: the science mall, the planetarium, the IMAX theatre, ticket desks, education bookings, events bookings, café, retail shop and welcome hall. The site and operations of the Science Centre are thus both large and complex. However, despite their size and seeming complexity, in the short time of this study the Science Centre has instigated a few macroscopic changes that have enabled staff to become amongst those with the most developed WPK of the six sites studied.

The main factors effecting this rapid transformation are changes to the structure of the business and the management style. Examining structural changes first, the Science Centre has recently made two principal modifications to its business structure that have positively enhanced the WPK development of their employees. The first is the amalgamation of the different departments into one 'customer service team', where jobs are rotated within the team and staff members are encouraged through pay schemes to quickly train to be multi-functional.

As is explained at greater length in section 3 of this chapter, the expedient of amalgamating the different teams into one multi-functional team, and financially rewarding multi-functionality, has actively supported workers to increase rapidly the number of areas in which they can work. This has also resulted in staff having a wider systems-level understanding of the work process. Amalgamating the teams into one 'customer service' team has expanded employees' perspective of the labour process and consequently greatly improved this aspect of workers' WPK.

However, a further modification that has supported this process is to change the type of employee they recruit. When the Science Centre first opened, they employed workers with science knowledge for their separate 'science mall team'. However, they found that scientists often lacked good communication skills.

Therefore, for the past three years they have employed people primarily based on their customer service skills and ability to be good 'performers', rather than have any particular qualifications, as a duty manager explained:

> We are looking mainly for customer service skills. Some staff are doing a PhD, some are teachers... We've had different staff from all over the world. There is no one single background...for example, catering, P&O, Pontin's, hospitality... people both with formal and informal qualifications.

The level of science required to meet most of their visitor's demands is not as deep as they first considered it need be and they now prefer to start with good communicators and train what science skills they need. The emphasis of the education focus has consequently changed from science knowledge to science enjoyment. As one employee explained:

> Fun is more important rather than droning on about science...

This focus on science enjoyment is primarily being led by current education policy, to try and draw more young people into the field of science. However, an interesting aspect of this change in focus is the impact on workers' identities at this site. One employee told how, previously, the 'science team' saw their science specialism as their primary identity and did not relate well to anyone without this background:

> Scientists tend to be resistant against people with a non-science background, so now we get performers and train the science... This means we can diversify how we choose teams.

The change to multi-functional team working and employing people primarily for their customer service focus has meant that customer service, in effect, has become the workers' specialism. As all employees now share this customer service

'specialism', it becomes easier for employees to identify with the whole site team rather than a sub-specialism within it. This has contributed to diffusing the effects that specialism and the resultant silo attitude that previously separated teams had helped to create.

The second change to the business structure to be effected within the Science Centre that has had an impact on WPK is the closer incorporation of the internal catering partner into the organisation's communication system. Previously there was little integration between the franchised catering team and the Science Centre teams and there were frequent reports of miscommunication and misunderstandings. However, the simple expedient of inviting employees of the internal catering partner to attend the daily briefing meetings and initiating more integration between the two teams has enhanced understanding of the work process, as this Science Centre and former café worker explained:

> … (there is) now less 'them and us' attitude and more understanding…the new café manager is on the social committee to encourage more integration.

These changes to the structure of the organisation have very quickly had a positive impact. Although they were initiated primarily for commercial reasons (to gain the Science Centre greater workforce flexibility and promote better relationships), the beneficial side effect of these changes has been to rapidly enhance the WPK of workers and enable employees to provide better customer service. Amalgamating the teams, reinforced by renaming it as the 'customer service team', has changed the job focus from specialist scientist to generalist 'customer service' employee. This has both reduced the silo attitude caused by specialist departments and embedded the central importance of the customer service focus into the organisational culture. There is also a resultant impact on the self-knowledge of employees. The wider and more holistic WPK they develop through working in

different departments is helping them to identify with the wider organisation rather than their own speciality within it.

The second factor that positively influences the development of WPK at this site is the management style. The openness of the communication methods, and the frequency and extent of the information Science Centre management share with their employees, undoubtedly contributes to the expanded picture employees have at this site of the overall business, systems and labour processes, as this quote illustrates:

> There's no head office, no regional office – it's all contained on one site. The CEO[6] is at the daily meetings…gives us an overview of what's going on, a general overview of how it affects us… They tell us about our 5-year plan… we can hear about what's going on in other departments and how this affects us… If they've an interest, then staff can be aware of what's going on – you pick up a lot of stuff in the daily meetings.

The Science Centre also communicates its five-year plan to all staff on their intranet so they can become aware of what other departments are doing and planning for the future:

> Although we pick up stuff in daily meetings, the master plan on the intranet is so we can look at phased exhibition redevelopment over next 30 months and everyone is encouraged to look at it. This helps us to give more informed information to customers because we can tell what's coming up, for example, what will be coming on IMAX in future.

The extent of the systems and business level information that is provided to employees has thus played a key role in workers at this site developing a wider perspective of the work process. The daily forum of morning meetings allows a

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[6] Chief Executive Officer

two-way process of information exchange. The CEO and managers daily share information around a table with their workforce, about not only their daily operation but also their longer term strategic plans and goals, while employees use this forum to raise questions or concerns of their own. This not only channels information directly from management level to customer–facing staff but also keeps management in closer connection with what is going on at the customer-employee interface. Consequently, a culture of open information-sharing is nurtured and has substantially contributed to the development of the collegiality of this workforce. This collegiality and culture of sharing information is both an important aspect of, and an effective way to construct and develop the WPK of the workforce.

The Science Centre has thus managed to successfully counter the size and complexity issues they were formerly experiencing by changing three main things:

- Restructuring their workforce to become multi-functional, which has both reduced complexity and broadened workers' view of the labour process;

- Changing policy to refocus on customer service rather than specialised scientists and employing customer-focussed workers, which has reduced specialism and silo attitudes and encourages a more holistic view of the site; and

- Embedding a culture of open communication, which has broadened their employees' perspective of the systems and business levels of the organisation.

These three methods have been instrumental in developing the WPK of their staff both successfully and rapidly and have engendered a subsequent improvement of customer service.

Similar methods have led to similar results at the Mountain. Despite its physically large size and having to contend with the further issue of having the attraction spread between two sites at the bottom and top of the mountain, joined by a funicular railway, the Mountain site has still managed to encourage extremely well developed WPK in its staff. This can be reliably ascribed largely to their management style and the open and collegial way in which information is shared. They too have a daily meeting with their staff and share long term plans through intranet and emails:

> …in the staff communication folder, every email is stored in order…it's available to every member of staff. It gives us an overview of the week, in terms of budgets, maintenance, weddings etc…we have lots of opportunity to access this information…there's the computer – we have computers in the staff room and office - and it's printed out…everyone who wants access can get it.

The open management style at this site is to lead by example and have a hands-on approach, which contributes to the collegial culture, as employees explained:

> At [Mountain name] you can just as easily see the chief executive loading a ski tow or a Level 4 out on a queue taking money… it's all good team work.

The Mountain site has also moved in the direction of multi-functional teams, extending employees' ability to work across different departments:

> In winter, we will work in different departments. Catering will help out in the ticket office, ski hire or shop and vice versa. They can't do things that require trade skills but do get some training, for example, how to wax and repair skis.

Obviously there are still specialist roles within the team, especially those requiring specific skills, as the comment above notes, however, the Mountain has reinforced the team aspect by now referring to staff as '[Mountain] Employees' rather than as

a 'catering assistant', for example. This change in nomenclature, as at the Science Centre, has been an important factor in helping employees to identify with the whole site rather than one specific part of it; to see themselves as part of a wider multi-functional team, rather than as a specialist in a separate department. This has had a discernible affect on employees' self-perception. In understanding the wider work process, employees become better aware of their individual importance in the customer service experience:

> It may seem that I'm only working in a shop, but I love what I do…it's such an open management style here and that makes a difference to feeling being a worthwhile part of the workplace…

Through open communication, multi-functional working and team identity reinforcement, the Mountain has managed to foster, in the same way as the Science Centre, a collegial and information-sharing culture, resulting in staff with well-developed WPK and a very customer-focussed attitude.

A third site where staffs' WPK is well developed and a customer focus very evident is the House. If effective communication is the key to successful development of WPK then the House undoubtedly benefits from being the smallest site, because this facilitates relatively easy communication. It takes little time to go from one department to the next to have a conversation with colleagues. At the start of this study, this site was the one where staffs' WPK was already most developed. However, House management has still succeeded in making considerable improvements to the WPK development of their staff over the period of this study through relatively small changes. Like the Science Centre and Mountain, this site too has also restructured their workforce for multi-functional team working within the past two years. This has broadened employees understanding of the labour process across several different departments, as their jobs are now rotated. They

also have initiated more frequent team meetings, holding these after work in the evenings and making a social occasion out of them, with wine to accompany the long-term plan discussions.

Further restructuring has involved creating a 'general assistant' role, whose job involves handling all external enquiries, booking for different departments and co-ordinating and collating information from all over the House to produce an overview sheet of House activities for each week. This overview sheet is shared amongst all staff so they gain a better systems-level view of the organisation and, the general assistant is used as a 'repository of knowledge' to access information. Furthermore, they have reorganised their staff accommodation so that duty, catering and event managers share a staff room and so are more easily able to share information between their departments on a daily basis. This simple expedient has facilitated better informal communication, an important part of information-sharing culture. Through these changes to their structure and communication processes, the House has managed to build on the benefits of their small size, minimise their complexity and consequently further enhance the WPK of their workforce.

Therefore, it can be seen that despite the potential drawbacks to WPK development posed by the physical size of a site, it is possible to overcome these if management create effective communication systems and encourage a collegial and information-sharing culture. The physical size of a site may impact on the *types* of communication used, for example, on whether communication takes place face-to-face or via walkie-talkie, and to a great extent management are responsible for supporting and encouraging these lines of horizontal communication between their employees through providing equipment or arranging informal meeting opportunities.

However, it is the regular two-way, vertical communication between management and front-line staff that is the most important factor in the development of WPK. The depth and breadth of knowledge communicated about the business and the frequency of imparting this knowledge, such as daily meetings and ease of access to archives of business information, are the essential elements. If there is a determination on the part of management to communicate with their employees, then modern technology such as intranets and email simply play their part in keeping these communication lines open. This cultural information-sharing dimension is more essential to acquiring WPK in this context rather than the media used. Therefore, although size, whether in physical holdings, numbers of staff or numbers of visitors, does pose challenges to WPK development, these can be overcome if there is a desire to do so.

Some complexity factors pose greater challenges to creating WPK, as shall be shown in more detail in subsequent sections of this chapter. Complexity can be added to a business through things like the number of departments a site has or the number of different services it provides. For example, a site serving both tourists and wedding parties adds greater complexity to the work process than a site concentrating solely on tourists. Sites that experience extreme changes in purpose and function between seasons also add complexity to employees' jobs. Seasonal fluctuations in load and intensity raise needs, for example, to route customers differently when parts of the site are under pressure. To be able to do this successfully depends on understanding the overall system; part of WPK is about knowing alternative strategies to deal with what is ostensibly the same task.

Other complexities come through the incorporation of external partners into the system, where people outside the internal culture, come to deliver parts of the service on the site's behalf. If an essential component of WPK is in understanding the full work process, then outsourcing a major portion of the service can reduce

this wider view by both parties. Thus, the more complexity a site's operation incorporates, the more there is to learn about the work process. However, as will be seen in forthcoming sections, in many ways WPK is actually enhanced by this wider complexity as it gives employees an enlarged view of the work process. Complexity, as such, does not necessarily hinder work process knowledge. However, there is one aspect of complexity that does seem to have an adverse impact on WPK knowledge development, which shall be discussed here, and that is job specialism.

As will be shown in section 3 of this chapter, the development of work process knowledge is most supported in sites where workers are multi-functional and job complexity is reduced. However, on some sites there are particular roles where a job specialism, for example, technical, IT or catering/chefs, make it difficult for those not specialised in these tasks to cover for them. The more specialised a job, the more difficult it becomes to job rotate. Consequently, these roles are not routinely incorporated into any job rotation that may occur within the site. A result of this can be a lack of understanding of what a job entails and/or a silo attitude. Job specialism is an aspect of complexity that has caused some problems across all sites but most specifically in the Canal and the Village.

In the Village, most of the customer-facing employees work within a multi-functional team, rotating jobs across most areas within the site. However, the Village ride workers are trained technicians and their job role includes maintenance repairs as well as maintaining and servicing the ride. Very few other employees on site are able to cover even their ride duties. Nor do ride technicians job rotate and work in other areas. Consequently, because so few other staff members are trained to be able to cover for the ride, they do not posses the same understanding of this aspect of the work process.

This lack of understanding between work areas, for example, between ride staff and the bookings department or between ride staff and guides, is where the most regular problems occur:

> We've shown them (office booking staff) what goes on, but they don't seem to understand... we can't cope with large amounts of wheelchairs. It's as much about Health and safety... our fire escape was designed 16 or 17 years ago - we can't really cope with more than two at a time. We've repeatedly shown them the chaos it causes for booking people in wheelchairs and having 150 people arriving all at the same time – but although they seem to have finally gotten the wheelchair message, they still book people too close together. We often have 50 school kids shouting behind a group of old people...

Specialist functions, by their nature, are hard to rotate with other functions. Consequently, there is less understanding by others of what is going on outside their own area or of others about their area. Therefore, job specialism can undoubtedly interfere with WPK development, even when staff are disposed to at least try to understand.

However, where there is disinclination by staff to even try to understand another area, then WPK is significantly affected. An example of this was found at the Canal. At the start of this study, British Waterways had recently restructured the wider canal complex and as part of this had newly created a customer service manager role at the Canal site. During our initial interview in September 2005, the recently appointed customer service manager explained that the Canal site was not originally created as a visitor attraction but when the unique canal mechanism was created in 2002, it attracted a lot of interest and the visitor centre grew up around it:

> It was always, always designed with a view to link [name of canal] and [name of canal] as an operating lock. The result was that it generated so much interest

that, if you like, the visitor centre was an add-on. It was never built as a visitor attraction; they didn't anticipate there would be so much interest. So it's sort of evolved since we opened.

British Waterways had obviously recognised the business opportunity of providing facilities for the tourists who were drawn to view the canal mechanism and so built the visitor centre. The new structure and appointment of the customer service manager, however, meant a change of focus for the site:

My remit is to ensure that all our customers are delighted, to ensure that we drive through customer service standards and that we achieve up to a million visitors per year and five star standard, criteria attraction grading.

The beginning of this study, therefore, coincided with a major cultural shift at this site. The business was moving away from a public sector organisation perspective, where the focus had been on engineering and the business of a working canal lock, to a customer-oriented visitor attraction business. In this new customer service focussed environment, the qualities most desired in employees would be:

First and foremost, customer service experience - team player, ability to be proactive [laughs] but what you want and what you get are sometimes two different things... but again what I feel here is that as we are moving from a public sector organisation and moving into a more customer focussed environment, then customer service must be at the top of the list.

She continued:

I would also probably look for someone who has a foreign language ability or knowledge, not a fluency, but a knowledge of foreign languages because again our intention will be to try and attract new markets... Sales skills as well would have to be fairly high up, we'd obviously have to be quite robust, have to be quite proactive and there is a tradition to be reactive, whereas I need proactive

sales people. Not highly aggressive sales people but people who are proactive and will work as part of a team to meet team sales targets.

The new customer service manager went on to explain about getting staff with the 'right attitude' as being more important than specific product knowledge:

In my previous role I did a lot of recruitment and it's crucial that you get it right from that first stage… A lot of people anticipate that you have to have good product knowledge of Scotland to get a job in the tourist information centre, well actually no, you don't, because we can train you in that. All you need to do is have a natural ability to work in a customer service environment and have - possess - a *want* to sell. You might need the training skills that go along with that, but as long as you have the pro-activity then, hey, we can nurture you.

Like all of the other sites in this study, it was also the customer service manager's plan to move towards multi-functional teams:

The intention is to come away from specialised areas and move more to multi-tasking… What I'll be looking for next year are 'front-of-house' assistants and they will incorporate multi-tasking…

However, in her new role, the customer service manager took on an existing team which had worked within the previous culture, when the site was primarily a working lock with an engineering focus. The skill set she desired was very different from that previously required to work on the canal mechanism. An added complication is that parts of the team on site do not directly report to the Canal visitor attraction. They are actually internal partners:

Water operative and wheel basin masters…[the building on site where they are, is] home to the Lowland canal team…basin masters don't work for the visitor centre… the lock is not just for visitor attraction boat trips but also for passing traffic on the canal…

The Customer service manager went on to comment on the difficulties the site faced in making the transition from one culture to another:

> Yes, I certainly want to be able to recruit staff that multi-task, but I've also got existing staff who are working to contracts; working conditions that existed prior to me coming on board and prior to the restructure. So I think we'll get there. Whether I get everyone on board to do that next year, I don't think so. We have sort of conflicting ideas, I think, at the moment as to what is the role profile of the skipper, y'know, what should they be there to do? Now health and safety is a priority but they are also there to sell the services of the [Canal site]. It's those sort of issues, so it depends on how the company is being restructured or how it's changed, its life span if you like, as to how much you can achieve when it comes to multi-tasking. It's obviously to do with HR (Human Resources) to be honest - it's depending on the agreement of the contract.

In the short four months since starting in her position, the customer service manager felt that some headway had been made but there were still challenges to overcome:

> If I was being prudent I'd say that 'we are moving toward' (a customer service focus) rather that that 'we are there'… We are an engineering company and we are moving towards customer service, so I think another important thing to note that's crucial here is, the challenge is, y'know in an ideal world yes that's right, we just recruit everyone with the right attitude but we are living in an environment where we have existing teams of people with an engineering background who now need to be re-educated on the customer service focus. So, the challenge is bringing everybody along with you and achieving a balance. The great way to do that is to bring in your seasonal staff who have got the right attitude, but it's getting that balance and re-educating your whole team.

A year later, many of the plans to change to multi-functional working and develop customer service focus were well under way. The team name had changed from

Retail/Admissions to 'Customer Service Assistants'. There was evidence of staff from the café team being trained to work on the boats, of retail staff job rotating to include telephone bookings or helping in the café. However, for the internal partner, the basin masters and canal mechanism operatives, the transition of culture had not yet been achieved. A more senior member of the Customer Service team commented:

> [Canal mechanism operative] staff are not customer focussed – they don't see that as part of the job. But external and internal customers, we are all part of a team, but it's <u>knowing</u> that you are part of a team…do things like pick up litter – see that as your responsibility and not always someone else's. You need to have a whole view of the site and your part in it. It requires a mentality change, moving from industry to customer service… They have to realise the importance of their place in the product.

This suggests the biggest antagonist of WPK is the resistance to forming it by the employees themselves. In the example shown here, these employees continued to identify with their engineering specialism and not as being part of the whole organisation. Their entrenched self-identity as an engineer brought them to actively resist developing a customer service focus and see themselves as part of the wider team. Others do not understand their job and they do not want to widen their own role to incorporate aspects of others' jobs.

This aspect of complexity is difficult to overcome in terms of WPK development. Resistance to job enlargement as such, is more to do with industrial relations than WPK. However, we as have seen so far and shall see again throughout these findings, in this customer-focussed service industry, the sharing of information and possessing a collegial attitude to working collaboratively is an essential component in the successful operation of these businesses and is thus an important aspect of WPK. If workers within a site resist active collaboration with their colleagues, it

undermines the organisational culture and the development of WPK. Customer service is then adversely compromised. Thus, we come to understand the main affecting factor of size and complexity. If complexity leads to specialisation or size leads to specialisation then that may damage WPK development if it creates silos as a result. As this example shows, silo attitudes can be difficult to eradicate.

Summary

The findings in this section suggest that both the size of an organisation and its complexity of structure have some impact on the development of WPK where these affect other factors such as communication or flexible working. Although previous studies have identified these resultant affects (cf. pp.29-33), how aspects of size and complexity affect these factors does not appear to have been previously recognised.

- There are various measures of size, whether the physical size of the site or the numbers of employees or visitors. Although size can increase complexity or make communication more complex, the size of a site itself has relatively little impact on WPK;

- The far more important factor in creating WPK is in the breadth, depth and frequency of communication that occurs;

- As long as communication systems inform staff of systems and business level information and provide means to gain an overview of the site then it is possible to counteract most problems posed by size;

- An important role of the company trying to create an environment suitable for improving WPK is to establish a culture of information sharing.

- However, informal communication, as well as the formal structure, is an important consideration for management/leadership to consider, because the

cultural information sharing dimension is so essential to work process knowledge in this context;

- Complexity of site operations can be problematic to WPK development. There are various types of complexity, but the aspect of complexity most adversely affecting WPK development is job specialism;

- Many of the sites are moving towards simplifying the workforce and reducing job specialism through creating multi-functional teams;

- Sites also renamed their multifunctional teams with a customer service name. This nomenclature helps workers focus on customer service as their main job and identify with the whole site rather than a specific job specialism;

- Where specialism is unavoidable, it is important for the worker to understand their role in the overall picture to counteract a silo attitude.

Section 2: Communication

Communication is an essential aspect and driver of WPK in all of the VAs. All sites show evidence of employing daily methods of communication to keep staff informed of what is going on within, and sometimes around, the attraction. These communication methods are considered vital to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the business, to avert and handle problems or emergencies and to provide good customer service. However, communication can also more directly contribute to the formation of WPK within the VA and the development of WPK supporting culture.

For the purposes of this study, 'communication' is conceptualised as incorporating both formal and informal methods of transmitting information between people. The information can be written, spoken or through action, such as showing or demonstrating something physically. Formal methods of communication involve channels that have been set up by the organisation and are often characterised by written rules and procedures. Formal communication methods include daily or periodical meetings and written or computerised booking information. These methods of communication are the channels through which the company tends to give information to, and receive information from, its employees. These channels also tend to be vertical through the chain of command. An important point to note is that while staff may not see these channels as 'formal', in that conversations or meetings may be quite relaxed and do not follow rigid procedures, they are nonetheless channels set up by the company to exchange information.

Informal channels of communication, on the other hand, usually have no written rules or set procedures, but colleagues still use these channels to share information that is pertinent to their job. Informal methods usually involve face-to-face and verbal communication such as in an office or staff room, in the activities of their

job or through media like telephone, email or walkie-talkie radios. The sharing of information typically takes place between colleagues or with line managers in an informal setting that has not been officially organised by the company. Organisations may, however, still facilitate informal communication by providing the means to make it possible, for example providing radios or staff rooms for their employees to use.

The table on the next page summarises the main methods of communication used within each of the VAs studied. It allows easy comparison of the daily methods of formal communication used in each site, the ongoing methods of communication used throughout the day and which internal partners are included in the daily briefings. Also shown are additional communication methods and what additional information is communicated to staff.

Table 10: Methods of Communication Used at each Site

Site:	Science Centre	Mountain	Canal	Village	House	Castle
Daily communication:	Daily booking sheet for all staff. 2 daily staff meetings with all staff on duty in customer service team. 1st meeting at start of first shift, 2nd meeting for 2nd shift	Daily booking sheet for all staff Daily team meeting for all staff	Daily booking sheet for all staff Daily 'muster meetings' for representatives from boat crew, retail and restaurant, as available	Daily booking sheet for all staff No formal meetings but staff congregate at duty manager's office containing the paper-based central diary	Weekly booking sheet for all staff with overview of all activities for the week No daily formal meeting	Booking office transmits daily booking information to chief guide who disseminates information to guiding/ reception staff, retail & housekeeping
Internal partners included in daily briefing:	Staff from subcontracted catering dept invited to attend briefings	No internal partners – all main activities performed in-house	Representative from basin master office attends	No internal partners are included in daily briefing	No internal partners – all main activities performed in-house	Restaurant manager given copy of booking sheet
Ongoing communication methods used throughout day:	All floor staff have 2 way walkie-talkie radio, as do duty managers and janitors. Phone and face-to face are also used	Most mobile staff have 2-way walkie-talkie radio. Phone and face-to face are also used	Duty manager and boat crew have 2-way walkie-talkie radio. Phone and face-to face are also used	Duty manager and maintenance team have 2-way walkie-talkie radio. Phone and face-to face are also used	Phone, face to face, written messages Email also occasionally used	Chief Guide has a pager Phone, and face-to-face are also used
Additional communication:	Intranet with 5-year plan and events/ exhibits for 30-month period accessible by all staff	Intranet with communication of longer term plans 'Magic circle' every Wednesday	Duty manager diary. Monthly after hours meetings for all available staff	Managers meeting every 10 days Wider staff meeting quarterly	Computerised booking system accessible by all departments. Duty manager diary	Once a month a main meeting with representatives from each dept.

As can be seen from Table 10, all sites provide staff with a daily overview of what is happening on site. All six sites consider it important to inform employees daily of what is happening across the site and consequently how events in other areas may affect their department. Each site differs, however, in how broad this overview is and in the formal and informal methods by which it is transmitted. For example, all generate a daily booking sheet with the numbers of coaches booked and what events are organised and most include information about numbers of customers and times of arrival. Some, however, like the Science Centre also include in their roster, which personnel are covering which areas throughout the day, allowing all staff to know who is working in which area at what time.

To convey the daily briefing information, some sites use direct formal communication with all staff members, some use a formal but less direct cascade method and others use a combination of the two. The Mountain and the Science Centre, for example, go for the direct and inclusive approach and respectively have daily and twice-daily meetings (to cover first and second shifts), so that all staff on duty are informed personally of what is happening that day. Such inclusive meetings give staff the opportunity to develop a good overview of what is happening on site on that day and how this might affect their daily operation, as the restaurant manager at the Mountain explained:

> We have a team meeting every morning at 09.25 …that's where we find out how many coaches are booked, so we can anticipate when we are going to have 50 people arriving up at the restaurant at the same time.

However, daily team meetings also can convey information about the business from wider perspectives, as a trainee duty manager at the Science Centre commented:

At the meetings…we get an overview of what's going on that day, and in the future, and a general view of how it affects us… They tell us about our 5-year plan…we can hear about what's going on in other departments and how this affects us. For example, [colleague name] and [colleague name] gave us a presentation this morning about our new exhibition about 'Alice through the Looking Glass', about what it was and what its aim is - this was first mentioned six months ago.

The Canal also has daily meetings, which they nautically call 'muster meetings', in the retail area at the beginning of each day, where any available staff from each department can listen to the briefing by the duty manager. However, as these take place early in the day, and employees start in staggered shifts, not all staff are able to attend these muster meetings; it is usual practice for some departments, such as the restaurant, to send only a representative. This method of communication falls between direct inclusion and cascade, as while some employees are directly included, other staff arriving later in the day must rely on information being passed on by duty managers or other colleagues.

The Village does not have a formal daily meeting, but they do have a meeting place at which most employees gather and share information on a daily basis. Computerised printouts of the expected daily bookings, with details of who is covering which area, are distributed to all staff on duty. This is the formal method of communication set up by the company. However, employees generally still prefer to rely primarily on a paper-based central diary into which all pertinent daily information is hand written. Therefore, they usually gravitate to the duty manager's office at the beginning of their duty to check the paper-based diary and have a conversation with the duty manager or office personnel about any changes. The duty manager explained why this informal method of communication around the paper-based diary in the office continued to work best for them in practice:

People come to the office for, well, everyone's keys, change for the tills, anything they need for the day, times of tours etc. The office is the central base of ops, this is where we co-ordinate all the days' events.

The only site depending almost entirely on the cascade method for their daily communication is the Castle. The booking office gives one copy of the daily bookings to the chief guide and he is responsible for disseminating the information to appropriate members of staff, as he explained:

I have a sheet, which shows you which coaches I've got in (for the following day), so like, that's my workload – I distribute that sheet to the other departments… So the office produces it, I'll go down and get it. I'll assign my guides to it and then I'll give it, before the end of the day, a copy to housekeeping, a copy to the shop and a copy to the restaurant and a copy to reception. So - all the people who are going to have to integrate with tourists to a lesser or greater degree.

The chief guide went on to highlight, however, where this method of communication could falter:

We are trying to aid communication but sometimes think there's 'communication' and 'mis-communication' in these places! Part of it is aided by the fact that we are on rotas. I've just been off for two days, so if something happened yesterday it maybe wasn't communicated to my staff...

He also mentioned that each of the housekeeping, restaurant and shop department heads faced similar communication problems within their own departments.

This situation was in stark contrast to other sites, such as the Science Centre and especially the Mountain, where several employees were keen to praise the "open management style" and confirm how included and valued they felt. It was notable that the sites that were the most open and communicative with their staff were

also the ones where staff seemed most keen to convey how included they felt in the decisions being made. Workers at those sites, such as the Science Centre and Mountain, which involve staff directly in daily meetings and in the longer-term plans and targets of the company through devices such as intranets, reported most often to feel involved. At the Mountain, a staff member who worked in the upper shop praised the open management style:

> …management will turn their hand to anything and will work as part of the crew. You're just as likely to see them helping out on a tow lift, if they are needed….

This employee also explained about the 'Magic Circle' held every Wednesday, where all staff on duty come in early to attend these sessions. These sessions might be used for 'tool box talks', such as how to use particular goggles or binoculars, and to convey ecology training about the mountain or company information about budgets. However, this is not the only method for staff to gain information about the Mountain's business. As well as the daily and weekly meetings held there is also a staff communication folder, which contains a wide range of company business and is available to all employees (cf.p.132).

Therefore, the way a site facilitates communication or contributes to lack of communication appears to have a direct affect on the culture within the site, on how valued employees feel and how much WPK development is supported. The sites with the most open and inclusive formal methods and those actively supporting informal communication were the ones where employees had access to a wider overview of the business. This consequently better equipped them to develop WPK and also made them feel more valued.

However, despite the variance in the levels of information communicated about the business, employees interviewed across all sites appear to have a good understanding of the importance of having an overview of what is happening both within and around their site on a daily basis. They are able to provide numerous examples of how this daily overview gives them the WPK they need to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the service. One simple example relates to the selling of weighed sweets in the old-fashioned sweetie shop in the Village. When children come into the shop in a school party, it is much easier to have weighed out portions of the most popular sweeties ready in bags. Having daily information on numbers of school groups and their approximate arrival times in the shop, enables shop staff to ensure they have prepared enough of the inevitably requested 100g sweetie bags for quick sale to school pupils. Having the knowledge to anticipate demand allows them to prepare sufficient quantities to allow processing school pupils through the shop to be swift and efficient.

The knowledge of what is happening during a day becomes even more essential when an event is being run on site. The House staff, for example, report that constant liaison is necessary between the event team, catering, café, shop and the VA staff to be able to handle an event, because all need to come together to deliver the service. They all need to be fully aware of the schedule of events to turn around each space for the wedding and ensure delivery is seamless. As one employee explained:

> [Event manager] runs a tight ship. He always says 'Don't hope and pray that things go right – they WILL go right!' So everyone always knows what to do and when it's to be done.

However, knowledge of what is happening sometimes needs to extend beyond that solely happening in-house. For example, the Canal site monitors what events are

occurring on the canal network that may bring large numbers of people past their visitor centre. If the external event will bring people past the Canal site, then catering can prepare more lunches, or employees can be made aware that many people may come into the centre to use toilets.

Likewise, at the House, external events can affect the work process, causing staff to make changes to their usual duties. The House is situated close to a major football team's home ground. When an important football match is being held at the nearby stadium, House employees have to go down to shut the entrance gate to prevent match attendees from clogging the car park with their cars. As the House hosts a wedding most Saturdays in the year, these car parking spaces will inevitably be needed for wedding guests. Staff members' duties on match days subsequently involve directing wedding cars to spaces where they can safely park. Match days also invariably mean the café is busier than usual and so all major, 'at home' matches of the local football team are logged in the House's internal diary.

Although communication of a daily overview of expected bookings and even external events is important, there still, however, needs to be continual ongoing informal communication between different departments during the day. In some cases, this is just to ensure the smoother running of the operation. For example, at the Mountain, when a wedding is being held in the upper restaurant, train staff on the funicular railway joining the lower and upper sites, will radio ahead when the bride is on the train. This lets the restaurant staff know that the wedding party's arrival is imminent, so they can start pouring the arrival champagne. More routinely, staff in the Mountain upper restaurant also rely on train drivers to come and tell them how many people have arrived on trains towards the end of the shift. This will allow staff to determine how much clearing up can be done towards the end of service. This informal communication is facilitated at the Mountain by the provision of two-way walkie-talkie radios.

It is also vital to have effective ongoing communication to be able to avert and handle problems. The VA industry is dynamic and all sites are continually forced to react to changing customer needs. Although the booking sheet is nominally what staff can expect in terms of bookings for the day, it rarely, by their own accounts, ever seems to go exactly to plan. All sites, therefore, have methods that permit rapid communication. What these are depends on the size, complexity and needs of the site.

Small sites, that are more contained in one area, like the House or even the Castle, tend to rely on telephone calls or face-to-face communication to transfer information on an ongoing basis throughout the day. One very good example of where these simple methods of communication and WPK came together to avert a potential problem was at the House during an observation session. At around 11.20 am, a coach of nineteen US visitors arrived at the upper VA entrance, with their guide. This group had booked for lunch at the café downstairs. However, the VA employee who received them realised that the group had not been told that coach parties should have the *table d'hôte*, as opposed to the *à la carte* menu, and so recognised that the kitchen would not have prepared for them. This staff member did not inform the customer of this, but phoned down to inform the café manager and advise her that she had sent the tour guide down to the café to discuss the lunch booking. Pre-warned, the café manager was able to make the set menu sound a real benefit, saving time for the customer. As the tour had been held up at a previous attraction and was running a little late, the guide was very grateful at this wonderful accommodation of her group's needs and went away very happy, unaware that there had been any potential problem.

However, the result for the House was that staff in the kitchen could now prepare for the set menu for 12.15 pm and get menus printed up for them. The kitchen staff who would have been most inconvenienced by this problem were not

instrumental in solving it. They did not even know about the problem until it had been resolved. The WPK of the VA employee enabled her to anticipate the potential problem for another department and set in motion the communication chain necessary to avert it, thus ensuring smooth service was maintained.

The Village also relies on its staff, especially its guides, to have good WPK of the site to avert potential problems. Visitor groups regularly arrive late, need to leave earlier than planned, decide at the last minute they would like to change from the packed lunch room to the café, or change in some other way from their booked schedule. Consequently, the planned service must be adapted. Therefore, duty managers and guides at the Village all have to be aware of what is happening in other areas at any time and have an overview of the site, to know where to send groups next and where to avoid bottlenecks. To be able to react to the many dynamic changes they continually face, and to be able to juggle space and people effectively to accommodate these changes, requires constant communication. Most of this is informal communication on a face-to-face basis, with guides agreeing things between themselves as much as being directed by the duty manager, as the director at the Village explained:

> There are guidelines [for what to include in a tour] but you can't cover everything in an hour so we tell them these are the things to focus on for these particular types of groups… [But] on a busy day you can't all be in the same spot at the same time – so they work out a lot between themselves.

Sites that are physically larger or are spread across a wider area, such as the Mountain, the Village, the Canal site and the Science Centre, tend to rely more on two-way walkie-talkie radio communication, especially for key workers such as duty managers. Employees on the move mostly use this method of communication. They may also have to handle emergencies, which require immediate and flexible communication methods. This is particularly important for the Mountain and Canal

sites because of the health and safety dangers posed to staff and visitors by the water/mechanical apparatus or the mountain weather/terrain, to which they may be exposed. For example, Mountain employees sometimes have to organise rescue missions to take injured skiers off the mountain in winter. It is vital that staff have an understanding of who to contact in an emergency and what has to come together to handle these emergencies. In such cases, an unwillingness or inability to pass on information or communicate with colleagues could be potentially life threatening.

Emergencies aside, all sites still find themselves having to react and cope with problems on a daily basis, where communication and WPK must come together to solve these challenges. For example, at the Canal site, much of the duty manager's daily duties revolve around solving problems that occur. Staff rosters have to be juggled to cover lunches or duties if someone is off ill. Customers continually pose problems that have to be solved. The sailing times of boat trips sometimes have to be changed, if the canal apparatus breaks down or has to close because of high winds. These changes then have to be communicated to retail and café staff, as discounts or refunds have to be made and there may consequently be a large influx of waiting passengers to cope with.

It thus becomes apparent that an important aspect of the WPK of these sites is the reliance on the collegiality of workers; their ability and willingness to share information amongst themselves, to ensure that smooth service is maintained. Employees have to be aware of what is going on in and around the business and have to be willing to update and share that information with colleagues on a continual basis.

In converse support of this, it is also apparent that lack of or ineffective communication between colleagues causes problems on the sites. There are

numerous examples of when this occurs and it often appears that the root cause of the communication failure is based on a lack of understanding of the work process of the other area. Kitchen staff at the Canal site gave one example, where they explained that they base their service preparation on the daily booking sheet. However, reception personnel do not always convey to the kitchen if more customers arrive in the group than booked, or have arrived without booking, so the café may face larger numbers than they expected and have under-prepared. Conversely, if a booking is cancelled but they are not told, then they may prepare too much, which increases wastage.

These types of example mainly inconvenience the staff and site profits, although they do have a minor impact on customer service, as the customer may have to go without, if the café has under prepared. However, sometimes lack of communication can affect customer service more adversely. For example, at the same site, one employee complained:

> People sometimes hold on to information and don't share it…for example, if I'm selling tickets for a sailing, the boat crew say 'ok, keep them coming'… but then the boat goes without warning us and people who have bought a ticket don't get on and the next boat is full, so people get held up. This is especially a problem if the next trip isn't for an hour.

The boat master has the final say about when the boat departs, but if this information is not communicated to the staff selling tickets, then customer service can obviously suffer. However, this lack of understanding of the work processes of the two areas evidently works both ways.

On the same day as the previous example was heard, the boat master explained that operational difficulties also occur if the numbers of passengers booked by the

ticket desk is not communicated in time. Within the canal apparatus, which conveys the boats between the two canals:

> …the water level discrepancy has only a 75 mm tolerance. If we are out by more than that, there can be as much as a 3 tonne discrepancy in weight. We have to pump water in and out to bring it back into tolerance. If people book late or more people come on board than the desk have communicated then it can hold up the sailing while water levels are changed.

These two examples show that a lack of understanding of the work process of another area can lead to necessary information not being communicated timeously, thus causing customer service to suffer while the ensuing problems are resolved.

Sometimes problems can be caused by other departments failing to communicate their intentions. For example, at the Castle, the estate team that controls the estate in which the Castle sits had organised a 'Scout Jamboree' in the field opposite the Castle. However, they failed to communicate this to the Castle staff, who knew nothing about it until the morning that the tents were set up. As the Castle was already heavily booked with coach parties for the three days of the Jamboree, they found it difficult to cope with the 2000 scouts who also now wanted to troop through the Castle daily. The route through the Castle is somewhat narrow and even the large rooms do not hold more than 20 people comfortably. So understandably, neither the scout troops, the booked tours, the other casual visitors or the Castle personnel had an enjoyable experience because of the crush. This was undoubtedly an oversight, as opposed to a purposeful withholding of information on the part of the estate team. However, it does clearly show that lack of communication and perhaps an underlying lack of understanding of the needs of other areas of the site, can cause major mayhem to customer service.

Many of the problems, identified across all of the sites, seem to revolve around lack of understanding of the work process by the booking staff, about the problems that may be caused by taking bookings too close together, or that might be faced in handling different types of customers. The ride staff at the Village gave one particularly traumatic example. The ride involves capsule seats suspended from an overhead rail with a simple retainer bar across the front to keep customers in their seat. Staff load two passengers into each capsule and it slowly follows a convoluted, but ultimately circular track through the exhibit to the exit point, where customers leave. The empty capsules then continue to be refilled for the next circuit. Two ride technicians are needed to operate this ride at any time. One technician is needed to oversee the safe loading and another oversees the safe unloading of the capsules. When a customer is less mobile, the rest of the ride has to be held up while the customer takes time to climb into the capsule. Child buggies or wheelchairs have then to be conveyed round to the unloading area. All this takes time and holds up the ride. The occasional wheelchair or buggy does not interrupt service too much. However, one particular day, the booking office staff were called down to the ride to witness for themselves the chaos that had ensued from them accepting a booking for the ride where 17 of the party were customers in wheelchairs.

The Canal Site also explained that booking staff must understand the impact of booking seven coaches to arrive at once. "Sometimes it happens", explained the duty manager at the canal, but went on the say:

> …in such circumstances it is vital that admission staff are advised so that all the groups can be met and greeted on their coaches. This diffuses the impact of them all arriving into the visitor centre at once. It also allows retail staff to have guidebooks all ready in bags, catering to prepare sufficient sandwiches and other employees, such as events or boat crew to be prepared.

These two examples highlight part of the process of acquiring WPK in VAs, which alludes to the old analogy of 'walking a mile in another's shoes'. In the Village example, booking staff never have the opportunity to work on the ride, as this is a specialised job. However, booking staff in the Canal site also job rotate in the retail and reception areas, so are more likely to experience the aftermath of booking coaches too close together. Those who have seen or experienced first hand the consequences of their actions are more likely to consider these in future. As their understanding of the impact of their actions on the work process downstream of them broadens, so their knowledge of the work process grows to understand the needs of other areas.

It is evident from this study, that those who have worked in different areas within a site have better WPK as they understand the needs of workers in those other areas. It is also apparent that WPK in these sites requires a great degree of collegiality in the sharing of information. Communication and understanding of the work process frequently come together to ensure that customer service is maintained. How employees exhibit WPK and use communication to ensure a smoother service is illustrated in the following example.

At the Science Centre, there are two reception points. One is the public ticket desk at the front entrance, which is the first point of contact for visitors entering the building. Most business visitors will arrive and announce themselves and their intentions at this desk. They are then usually directed along the corridor to the second reception, which doubles as both the business guest reception and as the call centre for handling bookings. This is a minute or two's walk along the corridor. Employees on the ticket desk, who have also worked in the call centre, know that if they direct a business guest along to the second reception, it is useful to call and let reception staff know that the business visitor is on their way. Having been in the position themselves, they know this gives the receptionist time to contact the

member of staff the guest wishes to see. If this information is communicated promptly, then, when the guest arrives at the second reception, the receptionist can greet the guest by name and advise them that the person they are there to see has already been informed and is on their way. As the receptionist explained:

> I work at both the reception desk and the ticket desk…If someone is expecting visitors or someone for an interview then I let the receptionist know – this gives a better impression… If I'm working at the ticket desk then I can ask the customer who they're here to see and I'll phone along to reception and give the receptionist advance warning and give them time to phone the person. It gives them an extra minute to locate the person and be prepared – it makes it seem more seamless…it's not part of the set requirements, but I do it because I know it's helpful because I work on reception too.

This simple example demonstrates how WPK can help an employee to anticipate a colleague's needs and how simple communication can ensure a smoother customer service. The customer is likely to get a better first impression and feel more welcome than if they had arrived unannounced, had to introduce themselves for a second time and then wait while the receptionist located the person. This clearly demonstrates how much effective communication and good customer service within these sites relies on the collegial sharing of work process knowledge.

To foster cultures in which development of WPK is supported, the VAs in this study use a variety of additional formal and informal communication methods to ensure that information of other areas is passed on. Some of these are very straightforward. For example, most duty managers on each site have a 'hand over diary', giving details of problems handled or anticipated, and maintenance arrangements or requirements. Another example is the way better communication was facilitated by rearranging office space. This was in the House, where management had been finding it difficult to co-ordinate times when key

employees, such as duty mangers and restaurant and kitchen managers, could meet. Their solution was to reorganise the office space to allow these key staff to share an office. They found that sharing an office means staff can be kept informed formally and informally by speaking at breaks or easily leaving messages for one another. They report that communication has been much improved as a result.

Several sites also used intranets to communicate information. For example, the Science Centre communicates its 5-year plan to all staff on their intranet so they can become aware of what other departments are both doing and planning. One junior employee was eager to explain:

> Although we pick up stuff in daily meetings, the master plan on the Intranet is so we can look at phased exhibition redevelopment over next 30 months and everyone is encouraged to look at it. This helps us to give more informed information to customers because we can tell what's coming up, for example, what will be coming on IMAX in future.

Another important aspect of how WPK is supported within a site involves how closely internal partners are integrated into the daily and ongoing communication networks. For some sites, such as the House and the Mountain, all main activities are performed in-house, so this is not an issue. However, both the Castle and the Science Centre have subcontracted catering departments.

The Science Centre in particular reports how a shift in the way this subcontracted arm was incorporated into the business positively affected communication and work process knowledge. The location of the restaurant is physically distant from the main part of the Science Centre and the restaurant is run and manned by independent staff. Since opening, the physical distance and the different ownership had resulted in the two teams being completely separate.

However, a change in attitude had come about because one young man, John (pseudonym), was the first person to make the transition from working in the restaurant to becoming a member of the Science Centre team. John brought with him a unique perspective of how the restaurant and the Science Centre fit together, which enabled him immediately to begin sharing the restaurant perspective at daily briefing sessions. Many problems caused by lack of understanding of the work process in each area have since been resolved as a result. For example, it had long been a complaint of Science Centre staff that although they only get a half-hour for lunch, they often spent 15 minutes in a queue to buy food at the restaurant. John knew that it would not be possible to have a separate till for employees, but was able to suggest that Science Centre personnel could negotiate payment in advance or later so they do not waste their break time. Once John was able to share the different perspectives with both teams, the channel of communication was opened and the benefits of sharing information between the two teams became more obvious. Consequently, all restaurant employees are now invited to morning meetings.

However, this improved communication has benefited both parties. Management in the restaurant told of another communication failure that had caused problems, but has since been resolved. This was where Science Centre staff responsible for booking school visits failed to advise groups how to pay for pre-ordered lunches. They should have advised the teacher to collect the money and make one payment at the till. Failure to pass this message on, however, meant that on one occasion 31 school children each paid £4.70 individually, each presenting a £5 note, requiring 31 lots of 30p change. Inevitably, this held up the queue for other customers.

Now the restaurant manager attends the morning daily meetings, he knows if school visits are expected and does not have to rely on this being passed on. He is

also in a better position to ensure that students are asked in advance what they want, so the kitchen can prepare. Science Centre staff who meet groups arriving by bus, also now know to ask if the group are going to buy lunch so they can pre-warn the restaurant. These examples shows how effective communication with internal partners has helped expand the WPK of staff within the Centre. The unique knowledge of the café that John brought with him to the Science Centre team was the catalyst that enabled them to bridge a gap that had existed between these two parties and having been brought together, and information on both sides shared, long standing problems have been resolved.

Another aspect where it is vital that communication is effective is with customers, the lifeblood of every site. Employees at all sites seemed very aware that communicating effectively with customers is essential in adding value and enhancing customer service. Some types of communication are just a straightforward part of normal service, for example at the Canal site, there are regular customer announcements warning of 10 minutes to a boat departure, an imminent departure or any delays. However, communicating effectively with customers involves a lot more than just making announcements. It is considered vital at all sites that employees are 'good communicators'.

At the Castle, the chief guide discussed the importance of having staff who are good communicators:

> When I came here, the guides used [a style], where some rather tired, bored retainers in each one of the rooms don't speak to tourists. They were only there to make sure the visitors didn't steal anything... In my five years here I've tried to change that... The first year I was here, I was horrified to find that one or two of the guides were not communicators – they were – well I don't know what they were, but they certainly weren't communicators. ...they were probably historians...one was an out-of-work teacher. She could take a guided

tour because that was 'Class-teacher: I'm going to tell you all about this'... but try to get her to inter-relate on the floor – no way! Thankfully, most of the guides out there now are in the communicator bracket.

Likewise, at the Village, good communication with customers is considered vital. However, the director observed that when training new guides, being a good communicator is more about inter-personal conversation than just learning a script:

> What we consciously avoid doing is giving [new guides] a spiel…I avoid that because I think that you can always tell when someone's just mugged up a script. We encourage it to be much more like conversational style and they should acquire a level of knowledge where they can respond to visitors' questions.

Science Centre personnel are aware also of the importance of building up good WPK to be able to communicate effectively with customers. One employee on the Science Centre reception desk remarked that if customers called the centre or asked questions:

> …you have to have a common ground of understanding, know who to talk to, to get things done… you have to know who does what and where to direct calls. You've got to know what's on in other areas, like the IMAX to be able to answer queries. That's the main reason why new staff members are not put on the sales desk…it's the first point of contact and you need to know a bit about everything. For example, if customer asks about IMAX, suitability of workshops etc they wouldn't be able to answer because they've not done them.

Previously, Science Centre staff were recruited on their science background. Now they recruit people who are good communicators and train the science aspect. Good communication with customers is obviously considered vital in ensuring visitors' enjoyment on site. However, an employee at the Science Centre also

identified the importance of work process knowledge in enhancing customer service:

> It's really important to have an overview…get involved in workshops, make it good fun and stuff. Just giving a bit of paper isn't instructive. Knowing what each workshop is like and how it works means I can 'sell' it… I can better advise customers and add value to their day.

At the House, knowledge of what is happening elsewhere in the building is also very important when dealing directly with customers. The time of closing the suite of visitor attraction rooms varies according to what weddings or functions are booked. One staff member identified that if she was working in the shop, which serves as reception during the winter, she really needed to know what time the VA upstairs would close each day. This was so she could advise customers to go up and see rooms first and then come to the café, if an early closure time upstairs would curtail their visit. As she recognised:

> If you know what is happening elsewhere then you can give better service.

House employees need knowledge beyond their direct jobs to answer the regular questions asked about other parts of the house, for example, what events are on, layout of wedding settings and maximum numbers.

Hence, it can be seen that good communication with customers involves being able to converse with them in a friendly and open style and being able to answer their questions. To be able to do this effectively, however, employees require well-developed WPK extending across and even beyond the site. Work process knowledge is thus an integral part of the communication aspect of good customer service.

However, one member of the events team at the Canal Site observed:

> The customer-facing bit is changing fast… it becomes more difficult to exceed expectations.

She also identified that it was very important to keep on top of changes to the information they conveyed to customers to be seen to be efficient. She cited the example of how their current brochure informs customers to 'follow the AA signs' to the site. However, they have had customers complain because the AA recently took down the signs. She thus observed:

> It is important to have a global picture, but you must communicate any changes to the global picture… keep it up to date. If the global picture changes and yours doesn't then it leaves you behind. The VA industry is dynamic, constantly changing. You have to work hard just to stand still.

Summary

The findings in this section suggest that communication plays a similar role in driving WPK development to that found in previous studies (cf. pp 27-28). However, these findings extend understanding of the impact of communication on WPK in relation to customer service. The main points are:

- The daily, ongoing and long-term methods of communication used in sites not only keep staff informed of what is going on within and around the attraction, but can directly contribute to the formation of work process knowledge;

- The way a site facilitates communication has a direct affect on culture, how valued employees feel and how much WPK is supported;

- The more extensive and inclusive the methods of formal communication are on site, the more informed and valued employees appear to feel;

- Effective communication and well-developed WPK can ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the business, avert and handle problems and contribute to good customer service;

- Conversely, lack of or ineffective communication and poor WPK can adversely affect customer service;

- WPK in these sites relies heavily on the collegiality of workers; their ability and willingness to share information to ensure that smooth service is maintained;

- Most sites are increasingly using technology such as intranets, walkie-talkies and mobile phones to enhance the communication process;

- Increasing the level and effectiveness of communication with internal partners can impact positively on the development of WPK within the site;

- Many employees are aware of the importance of work process knowledge and communication in delivering good customer service;

- It is becoming increasingly difficult to exceed the expectations of customers and at the same time, it is increasingly important to continually update work process knowledge to remain current in this dynamic industry.

Section 3: Flexibility

The dynamic nature of the VA industry and the constant need to react to the changing demands of the customer and business makes flexibility an essential aspect of all the sites studied. There are various models of flexibility evident, such as numerical flexibility, product flexibility and flexibility through outsourcing some services. However, an increasingly vital component of the businesses across all the sites studied is in developing the functional flexibility of their staff. Even within the relatively short duration of this study, significant moves were made within all sites to develop workers' multi-functionality. Primarily this was to do with satisfying the business needs of the business, such as allowing the organisation to deploy staff where needed, give more rapid response to change and have a larger pool of people to draw upon. However, encouraging this versatility has also had the effect of broadening and developing the WPK of staff, enabling them to anticipate the needs of other areas more effectively and better understand how the process integrates.

Like so many industries today, 'flexibility' is a key issue in the VA sector. However, within the sites studied there was evidence of various degrees of flexibility and varying types of flexibility required by staff. Some of these had more impact on the development of WPK than others. Some aspects of flexibility involve fundamental business requirements, such as flexible shifts to suit changing patterns of business. Sites operate various shift patterns to cover long working days. For example, Castle employees work long hours on a continental shift pattern of four days on, two days off. The Science Centre on the other hand has two shifts per day, one covering early morning to mid afternoon and the second starting late morning and into evening, with additional weekend workers. The House has various shifts to cover long days depending on what functions are booked. For example, if a wedding reception is being held in evening at the House, they require…

…three tiers of service for a 16-hour day. The banqueting manager starts off the day then, [employee name] does middle section and [employee name] would do the third shift. There has be a careful hand over between them to ensure smooth service.

This example demonstrates that various shift patterns have implications for work process knowledge, as the knowledge of what has come before and what is to happen after must be conveyed between shift personnel to ensure a smooth continuation of service.

A further type of flexibility observed is within job roles. For example, all sites require their staff to have certain product flexibility within their own job area to provide more tailored customer service. This might be language flexibility. For example, Castle staff are often employed because of their language skills to provide tours in German, Italian, French or Russian. Alternatively, it may be flexibility in the ability to tailor the tours given to different audiences. For example, the Village, House and Castle all vary tours depending on needs of the customer, whether this is a school party or groups with specialised interests such as Victorian history, architecture or lace work.

However, by far the most important aspect of flexibility observed across all sites is that of functionality. Within all sites there seems to be an inexorable move towards 'multi-functionality'. Of course, all of these sites were chosen for study because they had indicated in the recruitment process that they required staff to work in more than one area. Nonetheless, it was noticeable that even within the short space of this study there was significant movement in this respect.

All sites have already moved, or are in the process of moving, their staff towards having 'multi-functional' teams to some degree. Some are further down the road of this process than others. Nonetheless, even for the sites with the most integrated

teams, like the Science Centre and the House, this is still a very a recent trend. At the start of this study in 2004, both the Science Centre and the House still operated systems where separate teams performed distinct duties and management indicated they were toying with the idea of getting staff to become more multi-functional. However, very shortly afterwards, both of these sites amalgamated their various teams and began moving rapidly towards developing the highly multi-functional teams they now have.

The Science Centre, for example, has a 'Customer Service' team, which covers the functions of sales, reception, IMAX, welcome host, education bookings and accounts, the science floors, workshops and planetarium. Rosters are made up to cover all the required functions, and staff members rotate duties on a daily basis or even within the day. For example, an employee may be on sales in the morning, cover welcome host over lunch and then IMAX in the afternoon. Primarily this is to offer numerical flexibility to the business, so that:

…if staff call in sick, everyone from a larger pool can cover.

To this end, Science Centre management actively support and encourage staff to widen their skills range by financially rewarding training for different areas within the Centre.

However, the integration of departments and cross-department working has also had major implications for the development of WPK within the Science Centre. Many of the staff demonstrated their awareness of how the new job rotation system had widened their perspective of the work process, as the following quotes from different staff members highlight:

> We used to have different departments and we'd have different perceptions of what others did. Now we are all one team and have to multi-task…[this] gives us a better perception of what another area does.

> It's better than when it opened…now all the staff have a better wealth of knowledge and experience. I know when the film starts because I've worked there…makes a smoother service and gives the customer a better experience.

Employees were also conscious that their broader WPK enabled them to perform their job better and to provide improved information and service to their customers:

> Experience helps you sell, and advise customers better, for example I can talk about the roller coaster[7] at the IMAX because I've worked there and seen it.

This new, broader perspective also seems to encourage more tolerance and awareness of the needs of other departments:

> If something goes wrong in an area, it makes you more understanding…[because you have]… a common ground of understanding.

The House has also moved towards having an amalgamated team where most employees within the House rotate between working in the shop, café, VA rooms, bar and banqueting. A major aspect of this change has been the move from employing largely part-time staff, to fewer full-time staff with a multi-skill base. Management cited that full-time workers had a "full-time attitude and commitment" and it enabled them to spread the workload and deploy staff more effectively. However, multi-functional team working has brought additional benefits to the development of WPK, as one employee explained:

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[7] The 'roller coaster' refers to an IMAX movie, filmed from the perspective of being on a roller coaster and when shown on the massive screen gives the strong impression of movement and actually participating on the ride.

Everyone always knows what to do and when it's to be done. It's useful to know what goes on in each department, for example, if you have worked both in the café and at a function then you know that if you use equipment from the café it has to go back or else when you turn up at the café the next morning you won't be able to do your job.

However, as well as enlarging knowledge of the work process to be sensitive to the equipment and other needs of the business, this way of working also enables staff to benefit customers with their broader view of the work process. For example, another member of staff explained:

If you have done weddings you can answer questions in the VA…you get asked by visitors about them and how the House changes when it's set up for a wedding.

These examples demonstrate that job rotation within a multi-functional team is an extremely effective way of developing knowledge and understanding of the work process.

The Canal is one site that is moving towards multi-functional teams, but is not yet advanced so far in the transition. In some ways, the Canal teams are still quite demarcated, as each one is specialised and there is little evidence of job rotation across areas. At the time of the study, most flexibility involved the ability to rotate functions *within* an area. For example, retail team members cover desk, tickets and evening function duties. The catering team members rotate between café, kitchen, stock handling, hot meal service, hot drink preparation and till duties.

However, there is evidence that cross-team working in the Canal site is being initiated, although so far this integration has been slower than management would wish. Most of the obstacles that have so far prevented multi-functionality have

arisen from an existing site culture. Prevailing attitudes towards demarcation of roles have led to unwillingness on the part of some employees to change their established contracts. One member of the boat crew explained:

> Role profiles developed over years, for example the lock keepers, the skippers etc …we split into departments. Then the [Canal Site] was on its own…then Lowlands (Waterways) took over ops. The Visitor Centre, café, retail and boats were all separate. We were more focussed to the boats and not the locks…but now banks, locks and boats are going to be one team again and so we can job rotate.

Management indicated that although new employees might currently be taken on for one specific area, they are now given contracts that build in a requirement to allow flexible working. Although it will be a while before all existing contracts that foster more demarcated working expectations are worked through the system, they are nonetheless intent on moving towards multi-functional teams.

Further integration plans are currently underway. For example, plans were mentioned for initiating training that would allow cross-team working, so that, for example:

> If retail are two members down, then two surplus boat crew can help out in retail.

The main driver behind this move towards multi-functional team working is undoubtedly the changing needs of the business:

> Because of the introduction of corporate events, we now have to serve food and drink on board. Catering staff are being trained to serve as crew members. A couple of them are going to get a two-day course in basic boat handling so they then can do functions on board.

The need to deliver a flexible and consistent customer service in such a dynamic industry, and service private and corporate function business, as well as the core VA function, is undoubtedly behind all sites showing distinct evidence of moving towards multi-functionality. However, it is evident that employee attitudes towards multi-functional teams differ.

As previously mentioned, certain employees within the Canal site have shown resistance to this new way of working. One employee told me:

> The [name of section] staff are not customer focussed…they don't see that as part of their job.

However, the staff member criticised this attitude and highlighted that if a staff member wears the same uniform as everyone else, then the public will expect the same service from him or her. He pointed out that if these fellow employees continue to disdain customer service as part of their role then they "let the side down". He went on to explain that an important aspect of changing to cross-team working is that it requires a mentality change as well as changes to working practice:

> External and internal customers are all part of a team… but it's all about knowing that you are part of a team…that you'll pick up litter and see that as your responsibility. You need to have a whole view of the site and your part in it…They have got to realise the importance of their place in the product.

This type of positive attitude towards multi-tasking and taking ownership of representing the site was very evident in all the personnel interviewed at the Mountain. Employees there seem universally keen to explain how multi-functional they all are and how much this fosters a positive attitude within the site. Shop staff at the Mountain, for example, may rotate between both the top and bottom sites

and are responsible for maintaining the exhibition on the upper level. During summer, shop employees primarily work in the retail area, but still help the catering team by serving drinks at weddings. However, in the winter, the shop tends to be quieter and staff explained how they are regularly called upon to work in other areas, for example the restaurant or ski hire. One employee was keen to point out that:

> All staff will help out as required… even the senior manager will clear tables.

She then expanded:

> When I worked in M&S, I probably wouldn't tidy someone else's department racks. It wouldn't be appreciated or perhaps even tolerated. In here, everyone works in other departments…will pick up litter…take ownership of the pride of the company.

Interestingly, an employee being willing to take personal responsibility for picking stray litter from the grounds was cited at five different sites as being an important indicator of staff having the 'right attitude'.

Another way used by several sites to encourage employees to have a broader and more objective perspective of the VA is to get them to look at their own work practices through the lens of comparison with others. The deputy director at the Village explained:

> Every year we take them all away - the lot, from admin staff through to the cleaners – to visit another visitor attraction… we give them the checklist that is used for visitor attractions by Visit Scotland. We give them lunch there, so they can assess the catering… and we ask them to give it a score. Which means that they aren't just there for a day out.

They are thinking about what they are seeing and making an assessment about what facilities are like in these other attractions and encouraging them to see, 'is there a good idea that we could use in our place that we've seen somewhere else?'... Or 'that's a good idea and that works well', or 'that wasn't good, we had to queue up there'... They see things from the customer's point of view because they are on the other side of the desk and finding out what it's like and thinking 'could this happen to a visitor coming to us'?

The Canal site similarly takes staff on familiarisation visits to other visitor attractions to increase their product knowledge, as the duty manager explained:

[A visit to another site] helps them get a different perspective of the gift shop, food, guiding, uniforms, access… to identify good and bad points… and to reflect on our own service.

Shortly after these trips, an in-house training day gives employees an opportunity to discuss their findings from the day. In this way, explained the duty manager:

…they pick up good practice and [it] gives staff more objectivity of their own practices from the customer's viewpoint.

In this respect, this method seems to work because several employees at the Village mentioned that these trips had made them far more aware of the benefits and drawbacks of their own site. However, some went on to mention that it also made them realise how important their own individual contribution was to the system, indicating that it had also broadened their WPK.

A further way used by some sites to promote changes in attitudes is the renaming of roles to reflect the change in focus from being employed for a specific job task to being employed for customer service and flexibility. Mountain staff advised that they are employed as '[Mountain] Employees' rather than as, for example, a

'catering assistant'. Science Centre employees are now members of the 'Customer Service Team'. Similarly, at the Canal site, boat crews are now renamed as 'guides', in recognition that entertainment is an important aspect of the trip as well as just crewing the boat.

However, a name change and an amalgamation of teams alone do not necessarily assure a successful change of focus overnight. The Castle, for example, is probably the site with the least integration, although even here there is evidence of changes, due to a desire to provide better customer service and have greater flexibility. Historically, the Castle has had extremely demarcated teams. There was such division between them that, until this year there was a physical line on the floor of the entrance, dividing reception and guiding staff and over which neither party was allowed to cross into the others' 'territory'. This led, unsurprisingly, to a rather disjointed service. As the chief guide put it:

…the whole thing had become polarised and inefficient.

Therefore, this year, for the first time, the guiding team has been inter-merged with the reception team. They are still two distinct teams with their own distinct roles, but their duties now overlap in two ways: in the main reception hall within the Castle where customers are greeted and groups begin their tour; and at the entrance hut, where tickets are sold.

A main driver for these changes to the established system is to allow the Castle to deploy staff more effectively so that:

If guides are quiet then they will do reception duties and if guides are busy then reception can cover.

There have already been some benefits, as the Castle entrance hand-over is noticeably smoother, and guides and reception staff are mostly amenable to working together there. It is also noticeable that certain aspects of employees' WPK have been enhanced as a result. For example, guides have a broader knowledge of the Castle and can provide more information to the customer at the hut entrance than receptionists. In return, the guides also have a better understanding of how busy it gets down at reception. In previous years, guides have complained about not being contacted by reception staff at the entrance to advise them of information. Once they have worked in the reception hut, however, they find out that it is not always easy to have time to phone guides when they are busy.

However, the chief guide ruefully pointed out that:

> [They] are not yet one in reality...there have been certain difficulties in implementing this change.

The main problem seems to be in the resistance by reception staff to having guides in the reception hut. Reception workers have two roles: greeting cars and passengers and giving information; and operating the till and handling the money. Reception staff expressed disgruntlement with the guides at not having the same level of knowledge of all the different discount vouchers and costs. One reception employee talked about the difficulties of having guides in the hut:

> [They have] difficulty in operating the tills, so they do outside and not the money... they don't know all the ins and outs...it takes the best part of a season to get up to speed.

This comment highlights a point that many sites mentioned having gone through in the move towards multi-functional teams, which is a transitional period where staff

are still specialised and distinct in skills and therefore not yet as efficient in other functions.

However, even in teams that have already made the transition to multi-functional working, many of the crossover activities are at a low skill level. Most sites have specialised areas that are not regularly incorporated into the job rotation of the multi-functional team roles. Mostly this is because specialised skills or qualifications are required, such as catering, which demands hygiene training and technical and skilled trades, for example, technicians and electricians. These higher and more specialised skills make it more difficult not only to get people to cover these jobs but also for others to have the same intimate understanding of this aspect of the work process as they might otherwise do if they performed the job themselves.

The Village ride staff, for example, are trained technicians and their job role includes maintenance repairs as well as maintaining and servicing the ride. They mentioned the tensions between having to cope with the dual roles, which meant that one or other sometimes has to be neglected because other staff cannot cover for them:

> Other areas can job rotate but ride technicians are difficult to cover for because we are so specialised… you know, health and safety issues. We can be drawn away to be a technician… but if the ride is busy then it's difficult to get cover.

They also highlighted that because so few other staff members were trained to be able to cover for the ride, they do not possess the same understanding of this aspect of the work process.

> …others are shown what goes on but don't really understand it.

Moreover, this lack of knowledge is reciprocal, because in response to an enquiry as to how much they knew of what went on in other areas of the site, the response was "very little". The only interaction they had with the rest of the site was for maintenance duties and, as he pointed out:

You're not picking much up by fixing a computer or changing a light bulb.

A lack of WPK causing misunderstanding was noted frequently to arise when booking staff are separate and this role is not performed as part of the multi-functional team duties. The following example highlights the problems this can cause. One day a coach left a woman with mobility problems at the front door of the Castle, but she could not get up the front steps. The guide greeting the group had to do the introduction to the rest of group and so had to get colleagues to take the woman round to the disabled access at the back entrance. It was felt that if office staff had appreciated the difficulties this would cause and mentioned to the coach company at time of booking the need to drop disabled passengers at the back entrance, then service would have been better.

Another notable restriction to having truly multi-functional teams concerns the limitations or personal preferences of individual staff members, as one duty manager at the Village pointed out:

Homogeneity is ok in principle but in practice people are all different. It doesn't give the strongest team - enjoyment can come into it. Although everyone can do several jobs, it's not possible to do all of it equally well. There are all sorts of things to consider – health, maths, dyslexia, strengths or weaknesses, their own perceptions, personal preferences, their own experience…

She went on to say:

Some people are specialised [in their individual skills] … so they tend to stay in one area because they are best suited to it … and it's easier to make up rotas if people are regularly in one space.

This was echoed by a trainee duty manager (DM) at the Science Centre:

We feed back to the DM about which areas people work best in…this can mean more training to improve areas they are not so competent in or [it can] mean putting them more in an area where they are good.

It was felt to be important to:

…understand the strengths of each staff member.

Nonetheless, despite these provisos, job rotation within multi-functional teams is still an effective method of developing employee WPK. However, during this study, a further way was identified. At several of the study sites, a few key employees were noted to perform specific job roles that have a huge impact on their development of WPK. These positions tend to involve reception and problem solving duties and require an extensive overview of the workplace to be able to solve the problems presented to them by customers and staff alike. These key members of staff become, in effect, 'repositories of work process knowledge' within the work place.

Marion (pseudonym) at the Village held one such position. Marion has been employed at the site for many years and works mostly at the ticket sales desk in the main customer reception area, which has a central position in the Village. Her duties involve meeting and greeting customers and ticket sales. Marion is also the wedding co-ordinator and works in conjunction with the hotel (an internal partner). Her role requires her to really know about the site and where to get hold of people; she needs an in-depth knowledge of who does what and where to contact

them. To help solve problems, whether to answer a query, pass on information or to find the duty manager, fellow colleagues regularly cited Marion as being the first point of contact. The expanded WPK held by Marion was evident in her understanding of what was happening in the Village.

However, although Claire (pseudonym) holds a similar position at the House, her duties are even more extensive and give Claire an even broader overview of the House activities. Claire's role is also as the first point of contact by phone or email for all external enquiries. She handles wedding and shop queries, emails from customers wanting to book tables for the café and also takes appointments for banqueting and so needs to know who to contact and where to direct enquiries. Claire was also regularly cited as a main point of contact to help solve colleagues' problems. However, Claire also has an additional function that involves co-ordinating and collating information from all over the House to produce an overview sheet that is then circulated to all staff of the House activities for each week.

This position is unusual in that the House has combined the aspects of reception, problem solving and collation of a systems-level overview into one single role. It was evident that Claire had built up a large repository of WPK about the House, but what was most interesting about this was the speed with which it had been done. At the time of the observation, when Claire featured so heavily in solving so many of the problems and issues that arose in the House on that day, she had been employed for only two months.

Claire had not worked in any of the departments individually and so had no great depth of knowledge from having performed any of the individual job functions. However, nonetheless, the role she performed, constantly having to handle problems and solve them using an overview of the site, had very effectively

enabled her to build up a large repository of WPK in just two months, which was being regularly tapped into by colleagues.

However, there may be a danger in relying too heavily on the strengths of individual staff members. In the same way staff can be specialised by their qualification and skills, employees can become specialised by their work process knowledge. At the Village, colleagues noted that it was difficult to replace Marion:

> Some tour guides are trained up to cover [Marion's] holidays. A few can do it but not all.

The duty manager's role in the Village is also very specific and she too would be difficult to replace:

> The DM's job is specifically built around her skills and it would be difficult to find someone with her specific skills set to replace her. A new job spec would need to be written…

These comments highlight a potential issue for businesses concerning the management of the WPK of their team. Several individual staff members at various sites have accumulated vast bodies of WPK, either through length of service or through the roles they perform. In addition, some staff are being used as 'repositories of work process knowledge' for the benefit of the site. However, seldom, if ever, did the site report that they had contingency plans to pass on this knowledge or what would happen if the employee left unexpectedly. This raises the issue that considering succession management and managing collective competence in the WPK of their teams is of vital importance. As businesses work actively to develop this aspect of their staff, so must they incorporate ways to protect it.

Summary

The findings in this section suggest that many of the various forms of flexibility used by management, which have been found to develop WPK in other organisations (cf. pp.29-30 and p.33), are being used in similar ways and to similar effect in VAs. However, some novel job roles have been identified, which seem to rapidly accelerate WPK development.

- The dynamic nature of the VA industry and the constant need to react to the changing demands of the customer and business makes flexibility an essential aspect of all the sites studied;

- There are various models of flexibility evident, such as numerical flexibility, product flexibility and flexibility through outsourcing some services;

- Functional flexibility is an increasingly vital component of all the sites studied. Even within the relatively short duration of this study, significant moves were made within all sites to develop employees' multi-functionality;

- Much of this was developed through job rotation and job enhancement methods;

- Encouraging multi-functionality has had the effect of broadening and developing the WPK of staff, enabling staff to better anticipate the needs of other areas and better understand how the process integrates;

- A few sites had developed roles for staff where large amounts of WPK could be accumulated and tapped into by other staff;

- However, although having 'repositories of work process knowledge' is useful for staff to draw upon, it is important to consider succession management or other ways of managing collective competence to ensure this knowledge is not lost due to unforeseen changes.

Section 4: Employee Biographies

Each of the VAs in this study, without exception, stated that the most desired skill or quality in their employees is excellent customer service skills. A key aspect of customer service skills is perceived to be the possession of work process knowledge. Employers and employees do not use this term, but nonetheless show awareness that someone who knows the work process and possesses knowledge extending across the whole site and beyond, will be able to answer questions, anticipate needs and solve problems more effectively. An employee with well-developed WPK is recognised as being undoubtedly more able to serve the customer.

As might be expected, various aspects of an employee's biography have an impact on the level of WPK they may possess. These aspects include the length of service and the level of staff turnover within the site. This makes a difference not only to the individual amount of WPK a staff member may accumulate over time, but also to the collective competence of the staff within the site, and how available this is for new employees to draw upon. The age of the employee and whether they are drawn from the local or foreign market can also make a difference to the amount of local, historical, geographical and cultural knowledge they may have about their site, the local area and the industry in general.

Some sites do rely on older, experienced and local staff to provide this knowledge. However, other sites have developed various ways of circumventing age and previous experience and instead accelerate the learning process and development of WPK through, for example, in-depth induction and training processes, multi-functional teams and job rotation. The evidence suggests, however, that it is possible for a long-term employee actively to resist developing WPK, whereas someone keen to learn and supported by their employer can accumulate a

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substantial amount of WPK within a few months. The most important single factor, therefore, thought by employers to influence whether workers in these sites effectively develop WPK, is for employees to have the 'right attitude'.

The table on the next page summarises the general employee profile of each of the VAs studied. It provides a simple comparison of the sites and gives a feel for the general employee profile across the attractions. Each site does have some specialised jobs, which do require specific skills and formal qualifications; for example, catering departments need chef qualifications or at least food hygiene. Other, more technical positions, like the ride staff at the Village, the boat crew at the Canal or electricians and train operators at the Mountain, need more specific skills and formal qualifications.

However, for the purposes of this study, the table and the subsequent analysis mainly concentrates on 'front-of-house', customer-facing staff. These employees are generally the ones responsible for reception, guiding and retail service, i.e. the employees most directly providing the main customer service. This section, therefore, focuses on the nature of WPK evident across the sites in respect of these roles and examines how the various aspects of employees' biographies impact on their development of WPK.

Table 11: Employee Profile

Site:	Science Centre	Mountain	Canal	Village	House	Castle
Age:	Mixed, but customer service team primarily young – in 20s	Mixed age range	Mixed age range from teens to retirement age	Many core staff are near or over retirement age. Seasonal staff usually younger students	Mixed, but majority are younger in 20s and 30s	FT Seasonal staff tend to be near retirement age. High season staff are mainly students
Average length of service:	2-3 years	5-10 years	3-5 years	5-16 years	3-5 years, some up to 10 years	Permanent staff 8-16 years. Seasonal staff 1-2 years
Staff turnover:	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	High
Drawn from:	Local & abroad	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local & Abroad
Background:	All types, many students. IT, science or communication desirable	Mostly local and mixed group	Mostly local Summer seasonal: 50% students/ 50% working mums	Many are retired, semi-retired or second careers. Students in high season	Tend to be hospitality or travel and tourism background, with interest in arts	Seasonal staff 2nd career or semi-retired. High season, mostly students
FT/PT Mix:	FT/PT some seasonal	FT/PT some seasonal	FT/PT some seasonal	FT/PT some seasonal	Mostly FT some PT	Predominately seasonal FT & PT
Level of job rotation:	High degree of job rotation	Medium degree of job rotation	Some overlap between roles	High degree of job rotation	High degree of job rotation	Little overlap between roles
Key skills/ desired qualities:	Customer service, presentation skills, communication, science if possible	Customer service, flexibility, skiing ability, team attitude	Customer service, sales, team player, flexible attitude, foreign language	Customer service, communication, flexibility, some cash handling	Customer service, hard worker. Employ on attitude rather than skill set	Customer service, foreign language, good communicators

Delivering consistently good customer service is considered vital for all sites. A major factor influencing a site's ability to deliver good customer service is the turnover of staff and the length of employee service. Of the six sites in this case study, four of them (Mountain, Canal, Village and House) have relatively low staff turnovers and consequently teams of employees with longer lengths of service than the two sites with higher turnovers (Science Centre and Castle).

For the Mountain, Canal, Village and House, their stable base of workers is thought to contribute positively to their good customer service ability. The Canal site, for example, is happy to recount that:

Most permanent staff have been here since we opened [in 2002] and seasonal staff return for the summer, year after year.

The Mountain also has many long-serving employees, several of whom have worked there for five to ten years. The Village likewise reports having an extremely low staff turnover with many long-serving staff of 10 to 16 years. Employees at the House were not quite so long-served, although several had up to five years experience and many had worked part-time as students and then moved to become full-time employees at the end of their course.

Having a long length of service is seen at each of these sites to be an important contributing factor to building up a body of WPK. As one employee at the Mountain noted:

[Employee name] has a very thorough view of the site because he's been here 10 years and done so many aspects of it – the funicular railway, ski patrol, he interacts with the shop and restaurant, works on information… you know, the website about the weather and snow watch… and in the ticket office and coms.

At the Village, an employee commented:

> I've worked here nine years and worked in almost all areas… I can work on the ride too. I do guided tours in the morning, man outposts in the afternoon, and rotate around the shop and house, etc.

It is interesting to note, however, that in these and many other cases noted, the length of service of an employee contributing to their accumulation of WPK seems to be inextricably linked to the job rotation of multi-functional team working. The longer a staff member is employed, the more likely it is that they will have worked in different areas of the site and thus built up much of their WPK through having performed different job roles.

In converse support of this, it was noted that where staff tend to remain predominately in one area, they are less likely to have an enlarged view of the site. For example, as has previously been explained (cf.p.179) although one of the ride technicians has worked at the Village for several years and knows his own job well, he confesses to being not very familiar with how other areas work as the only interaction he has with the rest of the site is for maintenance duties.

This seems to confirm that length of employment alone does not necessarily expand WPK. Those employees with a high degree of job rotation seem to build up expanded WPK far more quickly than employees whose job roles are more demarcated.

At the two sites where turnover is higher, the Science Centre and the Castle, each tend to lose their staff for different reasons. The Science Centre has around 140 staff, with around a quarter of these being students on casual seasonal contracts. Their high turnover of staff is attributed to employees completing their academic

course and moving on. The Castle, on the other hand, is the only site that virtually closes down at the end of the summer season. Consequently, their high turnover is due to losing staff between one season and the next.

Luckily, there remains within each site a core group of permanent staff members, or returning seasonal staff, which enables them both to maintain a stable base of employees to allow continuation of service. However, the high turnover causes problems in maintaining a body of staff with a developed level of WPK. To counteract the consequent loss of group knowledge caused by a mass departure of seasonal staff, the chief guide at the Castle has produced a guiding procedure manual, which explains the context of the job to new starts, as he explained:

> This year I've actually written an 8-page guiding process…simple things…almost do's and don'ts…something to refer to as you go along… the system of what you do – if you walk into a room you go that way and you don't cross the rope lines. What happens if an alarm goes off? What happens if you find a tourist slumped on the floor? What happens if you get a complaint?… What's our policy on photography, smoking? - all this sort of thing… Before it was quite frustrating for a new person – it was everyone's personal opinion… [This new support manual provides them with] the context, the structure of the job, the skeleton – it's nothing to do with the content of the learning... what I try to do is set the scene for them.

In using such measures, the chief guide hopes to accelerate the accumulation of WPK by new members of staff. In writing down the procedures, he hopes to make up for the lack of 'collective competence' or 'group knowledge' caused by his high turnover of staff.

Thus, the sites with long-served employees and a low staff turnover have an obvious advantage in developing a collective competence. This is important to

them because a collective body of WPK is something that can be accessed by other staff members. For example, an employee at the House commented:

As the VA is now 10 years old, there are less grey areas in the team knowledge. New starts learn more quickly by tapping into the team knowledge.

Another employee at the Village similarly reported that their:

…low turnover of staff means we have a settled base for newcomers to consult.

At the Canal, a manager commented:

…our group has collective knowledge that is shared. If one person drops out another comes in, and after a while shares that knowledge and adds to it.

Tapping into a collective body of knowledge thus enables new starts to widen their own knowledge base quickly, as well as enhancing the customer service experience they are able to deliver. For example, at the Castle, the chief guide relies on his returning team members to support new starts, especially those from abroad. Some of this transfer of knowledge between employees may be slightly osmotic:

Usually by being on the floor, listening to other guides going round on tours you start to pick up all the things that are coming out regularly.

However, the transfer of WPK possessed by the team can also be more direct. For example, at the House a member of the public asked one fairly new staff member if it cost anything to have wedding photographs taken in the gardens next door to the House. As the employee did not know the answer to this, she phoned the administration office and found out that the council owns the adjoining garden and the bride must complete a form for permission to have photos taken there. However, the new staff member also now knows that this application form is

included in the confirmation pack that the House sends out to brides who book a wedding at the House. Through this interaction and exchange of information, this staff member extended her knowledge of the work process of the House and was able to meet the customer's needs.

Therefore, willingness to share knowledge is an essential precondition in this industry to enable workers to enhance and expand their WPK. However, it is not just to benefit new employees that collegiality and willingness to share information are vitally important in this industry. The following anecdote, related by a retail employee at the Mountain, demonstrates the need to work collaboratively to cope with uncommon situations:

> A party of youngsters… came into the bottom retail unit and the chap [the retail assistant] had working for her in there was an ex-policeman and he had his eye out for what was happening and had a feeling they'd pinched something – shoplifted – but couldn't be sure. So the party went on to the funicular to the top station. He warned the top shop that this group was coming. The top shop got some of the catering staff to come through because they hadn't enough [retail staff] to keep an eye on what was happening as well.

She continued…

> Meanwhile, the guy in the bottom shop established that yes, they had stolen stuff… so they'd phoned the [local town] police who were duly brought up to the top shop on the funicular… The youngsters meanwhile had passed through the top shop, through the café and got out on to the mountain, which they weren't meant to be of course, and they'd been to the summit and then back again, and then when they got back…the police were there, gathered all the youngsters together in one room and the police gave them a stern talking to and retrieved the stolen objects.

Although the handling of this particular situation relied heavily on the astuteness and specific actions of individual employees, it was only though their collective willingness and ability to collaborate closely that a successful conclusion was achieved.

However, willingness to share information is required in not only unusual circumstances but also every day, to ensure the smooth daily running of the business. For example, at the Science Centre, walkie-talkies aid easy communication between staff to keep things running smoothly and cope with visitors' problems:

> If a customer on the [science] floor is late for a film then we point them in the right direction and radio to the IMAX to tell them they are on their way.

Or for dealing with slightly more unpleasant tasks:

> We hold birthday parties at the weekend…last weekend two of the children vomited because they were so excited and I had to radio the janitors to get them to come and clear up.

At the Canal, the duty manager's job revolves around solving problems and gaining and sharing information from and amongst staff. At the Mountain, employees share information about passenger numbers coming up on the train and what is going on in different departments. While at the House, there is constant liaison between the event team, catering, café, shop and the VA staff to handle an event, because all need to come together to deliver the service.

It is thus evident that although WPK is cognitive, it also incorporates an attitudinal component: that of possessing a collegial attitude, a willingness to share information and work collaboratively. Although WPK is embodied within individual

workers, it is also embedded within the organisational culture and held in patterns of social relationships with others. Consequently, both a positive individual and cultural attitude to working collaboratively and sharing information is seen as essential to the successful operation of these sites and is thus an important aspect of the WPK of workers in this industry.

The age of an employee and their home location are other factors that determine the degree of how much WPK is possessed by an employee. All sites have a mixture of employees of different ages, but it is noticeable that two sites in particular have a predominance of older staff. At both the Castle and Village many of the staff were nearing, or in some cases were past, retirement age. Both these sites are historical in nature and the general and local knowledge of their older employees is obviously valued. At the Castle, all employees in the reception and guide team are seasonal except for the chief guide. In April, they recruit nine, full-time, core staff for the April to October season. The average age of this group is over fifty, consisting of men and women for whom this job is either a second income or who are retired or semi-retired. Almost all are drawn from the local area, within a 25-mile radius. One older guide explained the value to the Castle of these local, older staff:

Older staff have a wealth of local or historical or geographical knowledge and of other visitor attractions. We are asked things like 'what are the local beauty spots' or 'how does this castle compare to Culzean or Inveraray Castles?'...things that extend beyond the castle itself. They therefore need a working knowledge of the local area, general history and of other visitor attractions in the same area and the same sector....older staff have this base of knowledge, whereas staff from France or Germany will be at a disadvantage because they won't necessarily have this background.

The Village also has a significant proportion of older staff, almost entirely locals from a 5 to 10 mile radius, to allow part-time and split-shift working. One employee, who has worked in the village for 17 years and is past retirement age but continues to work three days per week 'because she loves it', has a huge knowledge of the Village and surrounding community. She explained how having this wider knowledge helps her to provide a better customer service. As well as just knowing about the job:

> …we've also got to know geography and history…the quickest road to Edinburgh, distances, times to various points…I've just advised that teacher to tell the bus driver a quicker route to Tullibody than the way he came.

This illustrates the benefits to customer service of having local employees with already established knowledge of the culture, history and geography of the local area, as they are more equipped to handle such questions posed by customers.

However, it also demonstrates that customers are, to a great extent driving the need for VA staff to have knowledge that extends considerably beyond the boundaries of the site itself. A manager at the Canal site explained this drive:

> We've got to have knowledge of the market in which we operate and our competitors. Customer front-ish persons have to know, or know who to ask… our business is changing fast, it's more customer facing… the range of questions we are expected to answer rises – it becomes more difficult to exceed expectations.

The willingness and ability to answer customer questions is thus evidently an important part of the VA employee profile. At every site, workers give numerous examples of the wide-ranging, and occasionally bizarre, questions they have been

asked by customers. Some relate directly to the site operation or surrounding environs:

What are the names of those hills over there?

How many varieties of fish are there in the canal?

How much does the castle weigh?

However, many of the queries or requests for information require a much wider knowledge extending to local facilities in the area and even beyond. For example, at the Science Centre, an employee said that when answering incoming calls:

We have to know who to contact within the [Science Centre] but we also need to know about outside …how to get here - you know, directions if they get lost or whatever.

Another instance of handling queries extending beyond obvious organisational boundaries is at the Canal site, where an employee was observed giving a customer details of local bus stops and directions on how to get to the local high street. When the customer continued to ask questions, the employee got out a map to help them locate the train station and explain how far it would be to walk between points and what other attractions there were to visit in the area.

This expectation by customers, and the willingness by employees to answer questions about all manner of things, was noticeable across all sites visited in this study. All sites show a similar recognition that good customer service involves handling enquiries and giving information that extends beyond what would be expected to be the boundaries of their immediate job. As one employee at the House said:

If you can say 'I can look it up' rather than 'I don't know' [it] equals better service.

It is thus observable that in VAs, WPK incorporates an ability to answer customer questions covering a wide range of historical, geographical and cultural topics, which often extends the knowledge required by workers beyond the boundaries of the organisation.

However, although being older or living in the local area can give an employee an advantage in possessing this wider range of knowledge, it is still possible for younger incomers to develop WPK really quickly. In fact, in this study it was very notable that rapid accumulation of WPK was desirable at all sites and a variety of methods is being used to assist workers to rapidly accumulate it.

One method is through incorporating WPK into the formal training programme. For example, at the Canal, as well as training basic essentials they also aim at specifically widening the WPK of staff, as the customer service manager explained:

> We are obviously looking at the minimum requirements like Health and Safety, Food and hygiene and basic first aid. In addition to that, product knowledge…for permanent and long-term seasonals we are looking at a minimum of one week off-job and on-job training. For permanent staff throughout the year, and more predominately in wintertime, I'll be organising 'procedure and organisation' visits so that they are gaining product knowledge on the rest of the Scottish canals…

> …they are also doing mystery shopping for themselves so that they know when they get mystery shopped it will sort of mirror what we are looking for and what we expect of them. So it will be in line with standards that are set at their annual and interim appraisals, which will include customer service standards and will follow through in the winter to include some organisation visits and mystery

shops that will help them to ensure that they understand the process of what contribution they are making to the whole business.

Through this type of training, which is similarly undertaken at a number of the other sites, employees are actively encouraged to look at their business as a whole and extend their knowledge to include a wider perspective.

However, formal training is not the only way an organisation can support rapid development of WPK. It can also be through the formation of specific job roles. As has previously been explained (cf.p.182), the House developed a job role that allowed a new employee (Claire) to acquire extensive WPK in a very short time. There are three very interesting points raised by Claire's job. The first is that in this role, Claire is specifically being used as an accumulator and 'repository' of work process knowledge, which can be tapped into by her colleagues. Other staff members frequently cited Claire as being someone to whom they regularly refer for information. What is also interesting is that the overview nature of her duties allowed Claire to build up an extensive body of work process knowledge within just two months of joining the company.

The third notable point is that although Claire has not worked in any other department and thus lacks any great depth of job knowledge of any area, she nonetheless has a highly developed overview of the site and knows how it all interacts. Most employees start with a job that involves them learning their particular job and then expanding their knowledge to incorporate the wider perspective, whereas, Claire's job involves looking at the business from an overview perspective first and then gaining depth of knowledge of particular jobs. This overview perspective and constant handling of customer queries and solving problems undoubtedly contributed to her rapid accumulation of WPK.

However, other sites have also developed successful methods of rapidly accumulating WPK. For example, the Science Centre has a high turnover of staff and so relies on building WPK very quickly. Employees here are actively encouraged to broaden the number of areas in which they are able to work; supported with a pay structure that rewards them for accumulating skills. One employee felt that they had built up a fair knowledge after three months and that:

> …it takes about six months to become a well-rounded worker capable of taking workshops, dealing with IMAX and working on ticket desks and welcome hall.

Another employee at the same site but on a different occasion said much the same thing:

> After I'd been here six months full time…I know most of what needs to be known about customer facing aspects, but not the call centre – I cover three floors on the education team…do shows for P1-P3[8], also IMAX and welcome hall, and sometimes the ticket desk.

Therefore, at this site, employees are expected to have a good working knowledge within three to six months and their organisation supports this accumulation of knowledge through rewarding them for job rotation.

However, at some sites, even three to six months is considered too long. At the Castle, where they often perforce set out on their short summer season with a large number of completely new starts, they find employees are put under pressure to develop WPK in even shorter spaces of time. The chief guide explained:

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[8] Primary School Level 1 to Primary School Level 3

> [The core] new guides [taken on in April] get 2-3 weeks… there's not such a pressure in low season, the pressure builds up gently. However, when you come to the new staff in the summer [taken on in July] they have to hit the ground running. I don't have a month to play with them – I've got, like, 48 hours!

However, he was delighted to report that the new workers this year had managed to rise to the challenge:

> This year's been exceptional. I've had a French student who took a tour on her fourth day - at her request!

Another German speaking employee at the Castle said:

> I felt competent after about two weeks and by my fourth week (in April) I had done seven tours.

At this site, the low level of job complexity combined with the intensity of the work undoubtedly contributes to rapid accumulation of WPK. In high season, guides give tours to an average of 25 to 30 booked coaches per day, plus coaches which just 'drop-in', as well as having to interact with a large number of general public visitors.

However, the Castle's chief guide discussed the compromise they sometimes had to make between employing for experience and the need to deliver excellent service for visitors. There is no denying that in principle at least, a good customer service attitude is the more desirable of the two, as is shown by the following comments. The first relates to the relative lack of experience of new student guides but who will enthusiastically deliver a tour:

…the quality of their tours won't have the depth, but at the end of the day the German tour or the French tour has someone talking to them, in their own language, about the Castle.

Whereas, he also commented:

You might be an expert cashier, but if you can't communicate then you are no good to me in reception – you are the face of the Castle.

He finished by observing:

At the end of the day [the staff] are here to serve the public. If someone comes in the door, I want them to have a warm, comfortable feeling.

The best employees are, unsurprisingly, those possessing good task skills, customer service skills and developed WPK.

It is important to note, however, that the speed of developing WPK relies largely on the attitude with which an employee approaches the job. At the Castle, for example, seasonal employees for only the high season summer months "have to hit the ground running" as they are expected to perform to high standards within a very short space of time. The chief guide, however, explained that the enthusiasm of the foreign summer students to learn local history and culture is an important counterbalance to their lack of experience:

I'm amazed at the depth these youngsters will go to. My Russian girl… really goes into depth…they really throw themselves at it…it's great… you are almost trying to hold them back, saying 'No, you really, really don't need to know all about the Scottish kings going way back… but they really want to know it. We really do rely on that, so it's great.

He attributed much of this ability to learn so quickly to their age and academic background:

> They never seem to let me down, for two reasons... they are generally students at university level... they soak up information like a sponge...young academic minds...that seems to make a tremendous difference.

However, it is not only in the young that willingness counts. Of all the characteristics of staff mentioned as being important, in all sites, it was an enthusiastic attitude towards customer service that was consistently reported as the key to being a successful staff member. The Science Centre, for example, does not employ on specific skill set or qualifications but draws employees, mainly students, from a wide range of backgrounds. These might include science, IT, communication or customer service, however, the key factor in recruitment is that potential employees have good customer service skills.

At the House, recruits tend to have hospitality or tourism backgrounds or are interested in arts or travel, but like most front-of-house jobs across all six sites, employees are not employed for their existing skill set, but for their attitude. The managing director at the House explained what he meant by the 'right attitude' by commenting on what he considered the 'wrong attitude':

> I've recently been to a conference where the presentation was on the different expectations of the current generation and how today's youngsters are not prepared to work up through the industry. They are coming out of college with paper qualifications but not experience and an attitude unwilling to 'demean' themselves by, for example, picking up litter in the grounds – they do not appreciate that every job is important to the overall customer experience.

Therefore, when selecting new staff they choose people who fit the profile of the sort of character and attitude they require and he said:

We get a feel during the interview for who wants to be here.

He explained, however, that although an employee's attitude is important, it is also management's duty to convey to staff how important they are to the success of the business:

If I didn't turn up for work tomorrow no one would miss me in the short term but if the kitchen porter didn't turn up for work, the whole thing would grind to a halt.

At the Canal site, managers there also talk about recruiting staff with the 'right attitude'. However, as has previously been mentioned (cf.p.137) the current management team inherited employees who have a more traditionally canal employee background, which has caused them some problems. As they said:

We try to recruit staff with the right attitude - but here the challenge is also to re-educate the existing team, who have primarily an engineering background.

Having previously worked as engineers on the canal, some of these employees are apparently having difficulty in re-framing their identity as workers who are part of the 'customer service' team. Instead, they seemed to continue to identify themselves with a subsection of the organisation, that of canal engineers, and do not consider that customer service is part of their job, despite the business having been restructured to incorporate them into the customer service team. However, they still wear the same uniform as the customer service team, making it difficult for customers to distinguish them from other staff. This is problematical for Canal management, because they cannot be confident that customers will get the consistent service they feel all their staff should deliver.

Another site with a small core of staff showing resistance to adopting a flexible working and the 'right customer service attitude' is the Castle. When asked what the main criteria for recruitment of staff were, the chief guide replied:

People skills. If you don't like talking to people, if you don't like making a fool of yourself - you have to be someone who likes talking to people…we can always tell at the interview right away. I'm not talking about the reception staff; they need a certain amount of cash handling skill. But we've had to compromise. I know we've got someone this year who's not the best cash handler we've ever had but the personality is quite good. [laughs] So we sort of put up with the odd cash difference because he does it with a smile!

However, as has previously been mentioned (cf.p.177), this year, for the first time, the reception team and the guiding team have been required to overlap some of their duties. Previously these two teams have been severely demarcated, with physical lines on the floor over which one team could not cross to 'invade' the other's territory. The change to their working practice as an amalgamated team has proven problematical for some. The new guiding staff taken on for the first time this year have apparently been very willing to adopt this way of working, whereas staff in the reception team, who have returned from previous years, have shown some resistance. The chief guide explained:

Five out of the six [reception staff this year] have worked here before and there's still a wee bit of the old concept yet. 'We do our bit and what happens after they leave reception is not our problem.' But in fact this attitude is a problem – for the rest of the Castle.

He later returned to the problems with this changeover of culture:

I am struggling to get some of the reception team to buy into [cross-functional working]. Some of them have been here two or three years and have got a little bit of what we'd call the 'seasonal staff ethic' – 'I'll come and work and do my

job and go home at night' sort of attitude – not particularly wanting to expand their role. The guides we have brought in are much keener on this – they are dying to do other things. So I've got one side dying to do other things and the other side just happy to plod through the day.

The examples given here, from the Canal and Castle, highlight a trade-off that sites can face between having staff with established skills and having staff with a good customer service attitude. In re-recruiting staff from previous years, the Castle gains technical knowledge, employees that are well up the learning curve of specific work skills. However, because these particular employees lack real customer service drive, they are not really interested in widening their base of WPK; they want to focus only on their own job and are uninterested in what goes on in other departments and how the system fits together as a whole. On the other hand, although new staff coming in with a positive and enthusiastic attitude may require more initial technical training, the expectation and experience of sites is that they are more likely to acquire and develop WPK far quicker than their more experienced, but resistant, counterparts.

While it is undoubtedly beneficial to organisations to employ skilled workers, if these workers do not also see customer service as part of their job, then customer service may undoubtedly be compromised when they encounter customers. If an employee actively resists expanding their knowledge of different areas of the business, and chooses not to consider how their actions, inaction or attitude can affect other departments or a visitor's perception of the site, then they can actively hinder themselves from developing WPK.

This again emphasises that much of the WPK in this service industry contains an attitudinal component: a willingness to share information, to anticipate colleagues' needs, to answer customer questions and to see oneself as part of the whole organisation. This view of oneself as an important part of the whole organisation

demonstrates the significance of attitude towards delivering good customer service and is an integral part of WPK in this service sector. The following quote shows that this employee at the Mountain understands the importance of her individual contribution to the customer service experience:

It may seem that I'm only working in a shop, but I love what I do - it's such an open management style here and that makes a difference to feeling being a worthwhile part of the workplace… I'm not just selling a pencil or a thimble - I feel that I'm selling memories.

However, the above quote also highlights two further important points. The first is that attitude in respect of being positive to developing WPK is not restricted solely to an individual but is an important aspect of the culture of the entire organisation. If an organisation wishes to imbue good customer service in its staff then they must establish a culture that leads by example and supports the individual. However, as the customer service manager at the Canal noted, initiating such changes in an organisational culture sometimes has to be progressive rather than radical:

It is difficult for us to change the role profile of as many staff and as fast as we would like because of existing contract agreements – there is some difficulty in balancing the issues. These changes will be evolutionary rather than overnight.

The second point relates to the 'selling memories' comment, which alludes to the experiential nature of the VA sector. People do not visit a VA simply to see the exhibits, as the chief guide at the Castle commented:

People don't come here for a history lesson…we are actually in the leisure business. We are in the entertainment business. We are not actually in the museum business.

Much of the experience of visiting a visitor attraction is thus about *visiting:* the interaction and exchanges with staff and how welcome visitors feel, as this quote from the Castle, showing a similar sentiment about 'selling memories', illustrates:

[We are] selling memories of a wonderful day and want that whole experience to be nice – and that includes the interaction they have with the staff.

Visitor attractions rely for their survival on visitors feeling welcome and enjoying the experience. If the customer does not enjoy the experience of their visit then they are unlikely to come back or recommend the place to friends and family, so it is vital that employees understand the importance of customer service in the continuing success of the business. Consequently, an employee's understanding of the importance of excellent customer service and their role in delivering it is an essential component of their WPK. This includes how to handle different types of customers and be aware of the image they project, as a trainee duty manager at the Science Centre explained:

An important part of the job is how to deal with customers. You need to know things like which customers you can have a joke with or how to handle ones like those who are foreign or those who are complaining or aggressive… I find that when I'm doing the duty manager role I wear a shirt and tie because it carries more authority than a tee shirt.

Having good product knowledge is also an essential component of WPK, as another employee at the Science Centre observed:

It's really important to have an overview of what is happening…to get involved in work shops…all good fun stuff. Just giving [visitors] a sheet of paper isn't instructive – knowing what a workshop is about and how it works means you can better 'sell' it. You can advise customers better and add value to their day.

Likewise, knowing what is happening elsewhere in other departments is also an important element of customer service, as an employee working in the café in the House commented:

> You need to know times, for example, what functions are on. Then, for example if people want to go upstairs and you know it will be closing early then you can say 'nip up now and then have a coffee or you'll miss out on seeing [the viewing rooms upstairs]'. If you know what's happening elsewhere then you can give better service.

Each of these employees clearly takes ownership and accepts personal responsibility for the interaction they have with visitors. Interaction with customers can be used to make them feel welcome and tie them more firmly, emotionally speaking, into enjoyment of the day. Consequently, the attitudinal component is an important aspect of the WPK cultural. However, the relationship with customers is two-sided, not just one-way. Thus, WPK also depends on the customer. This emotional bonding as part of the interaction between employee and customer is the essence of good customer service. Hence, the customer–employee relationship is central to WPK because it is a central dimension of the work process.

However, despite acknowledging that WPK is key to good customer service, it is important to recognise that customer service is a subset of WPK, not the other way round. There are many other factors, beyond customer service, that an expert worker's WPK in this industry will include. An employee with good WPK will also know, for example, that they cannot always give the customer exactly what they want.

To illustrate this point, the following exchange is one observed between two customer service employees at the Canal. The first employee had answered a

telephone call, heard the customer's story, and then put the customer on hold to ask her colleague her opinion on how best to proceed. She said:

> I have this customer on the phone who says she was quoted a price of £3.00 per head – it's a booking for 52 passengers. Said it was someone called Rhona (which is not a name of any current staff member) who'd quoted this price (normally £6.50)… I wonder if, with the weather the way it is and the size of the booking and her being unhappy if it would just be less hassle just to give it to her at that price? What do you think?

Her colleague considered for a moment and then replied:

> Might have been someone from the external agency we sometimes use. I think they have someone called Rhona... Try to compromise... How about try to move her to an off-peak time and give it to her at the lower rate?

This exchange clearly demonstrates awareness by both employees that this situation has presented a conflict of interests between customer service and the financial needs of the company to make a profit. The financial impact of selling the seats at less than half their usual price is at odds with providing the customer with what she wants and they sought to find a solution that satisfied both. There were a number of factors both overtly and tacitly considered. The recent spell of poor weather meant that bookings were down and so perhaps half the revenue was better than no revenue? The party size was large, which meant the booking would constitute almost a full boatload and there would probably be additional revenue generated from café and retail sales to offset the loss. That an agency employee may have caused the confusion in the first place also figured in the equation because there was the possibility of internal blame for the mix up. Therefore, in moving the booking to a less busy time when they may not be able to sell all the seats on the ride anyway, they were able to justify selling the booking at the reduced price, rather than disappoint the customer and lose the sale completely. In

this compromise, they satisfied the customer with regards to the price, but in asking the party to move to an earlier off-peak time, made it less detrimental to company profits.

Another important aspect in relation to customer service to consider is that employees in VAs may face the challenge of having visitors who may arrive at their site through no choice of their own, perhaps even unwillingly, as the chief guide at the Castle tries to get across to his employees during staff training:

> I try to tell them, if you come here on a coach [the customer] probably had very little say over the reason [they] are coming here. These coaches arriving at the entrance hall - the people on the coach didn't have a democratic vote to come to [name of] Castle. It's on their itinerary. Their courier's coming here because he likes it, or their hotel group's decided it's one of the things you should do locally. So when they do come here, try to make it as pleasant for them as possible.

He went on to say:

> If you've come as a private individual you may have made a more conscious decision…however, a lot of people come up here in the car and it just happens to be 'Oh let's keep the kids quiet.. Or it's raining, or it's too hot - it's just something to do. It's here. So when they come in here, very, very, very few of them are coming here for a history lesson…let's give them the level they are looking for…don't flood them with history, don't flood them with dates… keep it fairly light.

Employees in visitor attractions can thus face an uphill task to woo and win over their visitors. Excellent customer service and establishing good customer-employee relationships are thus both more difficult and yet even more essential to achieve.

It is also evident that VAs maintain relationships with different levels of customers. For example, the coach drivers who regularly take coach loads to the Castle, the school secretaries who book school trips to the Village or company secretary who is organising a corporate event at the Science Centre. These intermediate contacts are key relationships, because it is through them the needs of the subsequent guests that they bring (or send) become known to the staff. The contact within the VA is likely to be specialised booking or events staff rather than front-of-house employees. These transactions involve two levels of customer: at the level of the intermediate key contact and at the level of the individual visitor.

Specialised booking or events staff build up key relationships with coach drivers or school secretaries over time, which become important contacts for repeat business. The end users, who come to the VA, are not usually part of this level of relationship. Nor, usually, are the front-of-house employees, unless their job involves a shift in the bookings department. However, front-of-house staff become responsible for delivering the final service to the visitor, on a one-to-one basis or at the very least in groups. Therefore, it is vital that information picked up by booking or events staff is communicated to front-of-house staff.

An example of this concept in practice is drawn from the Village, where a local college lecturer was taking students to visit as part of a unit on the marketing of visitor attractions. The lecturer told the booking department that this was the purpose of the visit. This was conveyed to the guide, who had not previously delivered a tour with this focus before. The guide went to the SQA website to download the unit specifications, so she would know what the group's objectives were and so could tailor the tour to coincide with the customer's needs. The lecturer was impressed with this example of good customer service.

However, for this to occur, all stages of the process had to work together. Through contact with the intermediate customer, the booking department found out the needs of the end user customer, which they communicated to the guide (the company thus has a booking and communication system that supports this process). The guide then had to understand the importance of providing a tailored tour and be willing to follow up on the information and pro-actively seek out information she knew would help. She then tailored her tour specifically to the customer's needs. This is a very good example of how positive attitudes towards collegiality, willingness to share information and personal responsibility for providing excellent customer service, are integral components of WPK in this industry. This again highlights the collegiality of WPK: the essential sharing of information to enhance the customer service process. If information is not passed on, then frontline staff may be unaware of customer needs, which have been conveyed during the booking process, causing the visitor annoyance if their previously stated needs are then not met. This demonstrates yet again that an attitude of willingness to share information is a key component of WPK in these visitor attractions and that WPK underpins customer service.

A final interesting aspect of the biographies of employees identified in this study is the wide and diverse range of backgrounds from which workers are drawn. Throughout the findings chapter, the varied and rich diversity of backgrounds has been referred to in passing, which makes it apparent that many of the people coming to work in VAs are not coming from the tourist sector, although many do come from other service industries. However, the 'people relationship' aspect of customer service jobs seems to be viewed as the continuing factor. A duty manager from the Canal, whose previous jobs had included being duty manager in both a bingo club and a concert hall, explained that for her, any job that involved facing and handling customers was essentially the same:

…it's the same principles, the same types of problems to deal with…the only difference really is the end product – a bingo game, a concert, a boat ride – but the rest remains the same.

Another interesting phenomenon observed is that, although the literature suggests that because of its short-term, seasonal nature, this industry traditionally draws people with little knowledge or skills, this was generally not found to be the case. Although it is true that the level of technical skills required for most front-of-house staff duties is not necessarily very high, it is noticeable that the VAs are nonetheless drawing their staff from what might be considered 'intelligent populations'. Many employees are students, using their job in the VA to supplement their income whilst training for a different career, often completely unrelated to tourism. Large proportions of employees across these sites are working mothers, and for many employees, this is a career in retirement or semi-retirement. The chief guide at the Castle explained about his core staff, most of who fall into this latter category.

Strangely enough, most of the people we seem to recruit…are usually well educated and many of them have held quite senior positions in all sorts of organisations… they have a very sophisticated skill base for what they are doing.

Summary

Many of the findings in this section parallel those of previous studies in relation to the individual and WPK (cf. pp.43-46). However, where they extend this knowledge is in the indication by these findings that the possession of WPK underpins customer skills:

- It is noticeable that employees entering the VAs are not coming from the tourism sector, although many do bring customer service skills. Workers are drawn from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds;

- Many employees also bring a wide range of life experiences, which contributes positively to the WPK required in this industry;

- There was good evidence for what might be expected: that age, experience, length of service, local knowledge and qualifications do contribute to employees' development of WPK;

- Sites with long-served employees and a low staff turnover have an obvious advantage in developing a collective competence. This is important to them because a collective body of WPK is something that can be accessed by other staff members;

- However, these are not emphatic requirements. What is perhaps surprising is the number of occurrences where employees with none of this profile still achieve high levels of WPK very quickly. It is possible for someone quite young and inexperienced to pick up a fair amount of WPK quite fast, which means its development is not necessarily tied to age or experience;

- Some employees have accumulated a lot of WPK in a short space of time because the company has supported them or they have felt driven to do so for themselves. Accumulation of WPK was desired at all sites and a variety of methods is being used to allow workers to rapidly accumulate it;

- The main methods identified supporting WPK acquisition include: job roles involving an overview of the organisation, intensity of work, job rotation encouraged by financial and other rewards, and formal training providing an overview of the company and/or a wider perspective;

- There is a wide acceptance of the importance of WPK contributing to customer service, even if this term is not being used. Employers and employees alike are nonetheless identifying expanded and well-developed WPK as an important factor in delivering good customer service;

- The industry is looking for people with the 'right attitude' by which they mean an enthusiastic interest in customer service and a willingness and ability to answer questions from customers, which extend well beyond obvious job roles;

- A main driver of this is perceived to be customers asking more questions and expecting staff to have the ability to answer customer questions covering a wide range of historical, geographical and cultural topics. It is not possible from this study to draw conclusions about the actual attitude of visitors, i.e. whether they do expect people to answer more questions these days, however, there is undoubtedly evidence that staff perceive this to be an expectation;

- Employees are driving themselves to satisfy this expectation. They are keen to provide good customer service and so actively work at building up their WPK to be able to do so effectively;

- Willingness to share knowledge is also a key aspect of allowing workers in this industry to rapidly enhance and expand their work process knowledge not only in non-standard situations but also in the day-to-day running of the business;

- It is thus evident that although WPK is partly cognitive, it also incorporates an attitudinal component: that of possessing a collegial attitude, a willingness to share information and work collaboratively;

- WPK in this context incorporates an understanding of where conflicts can occur between the different aims of the organisation and customer service and how to best balance these;

- Although WPK is embodied within individual workers, it is also embedded within the organisational culture and held in patterns of social relationships with others. Consequently, both a positive individual and cultural attitude to working collaboratively and sharing information is seen as essential to the successful operation of these sites and is thus an important aspect of the WPK of workers in this industry;

- It is also apparent, however, that employees can actively resist developing WPK: through being unwilling to widen or rotate their job roles; delegate

answering questions to others; choosing not to consider how their actions, inaction or attitude can impact on other departments or a visitor's perception of the site;

- This again emphasises that much of the WPK in this service industry contains an attitudinal component: a willingness to share information, to anticipate colleagues' needs, to answer customer questions and to see oneself as part of the whole organisation. This view of oneself as an important part of the whole organisation demonstrates the significance of attitude towards delivering good customer service and is an integral part of WPK in this service sector;

- The customer–employee relationship is central to WPK because it is a central dimension of the work process

Section 5: Weddings, Functions and Events

Many VAs can offer the potential bride or corporate organiser a more exciting and unique venue for a wedding or business conference than the average hotel. A VA usually also has the added benefit of having additional interesting activities and things for guests or delegates to do or see on site, as part of the package. The market demand for unusual venues and the pressure on businesses to encourage additional revenue streams have consequently led all six sites to incorporate the hosting of weddings and corporate functions as an increasingly important aspect of their business development plans.

The number of weddings or functions a site will accommodate each year, the extent to which the function is allowed to overlap with, or even supplant, the normal service and whether it will be handled entirely in-house or if external partners are required, are strategic business decisions. Each organisation has developed its own strategy for these, based on individual circumstances. Whilst these strategies are interesting in themselves, they are explained mainly to provide context, because the focus here is the effect these business decisions have on the nature of work process knowledge.

The strategic decisions an organisation makes in relation to weddings or corporate functions held on site have a direct affect on what WPK an employee within the site will need. Because of the strategic decisions made about a site's operation as both a visitor attraction and a function venue, certain tensions can arise between these two purposes, which can influence the WPK needed. These decisions include issues such as changes to the nature of the work process, conflicts over times of operation and the changeover of physical space to transform from VA to function venue.

The evidence shows that the extent of the impact on WPK is dependent on how and who handles the wedding or function. For example, if a site does relatively few weddings or large functions in a year, and where these do not interfere much with normal service, the impact on the WPK of internal employees is limited. In addition, if external partners are brought in to mainly staff and cater weddings and other functions, then the impact on the work process of internal staff similarly remains relatively small.

However, the impact on WPK is more obvious where a site handles several weddings or functions per week, using entirely in-house employees or where the wedding or function involves major changes to the times of operation and/or purpose of space within the site. Furthermore, the way each site handles functions and the main business priorities evident from them, undoubtedly influences, albeit sometimes inadvertently, the cultural attitude within the site towards different customer groups.

On the next two pages are tables comparing the nature and number of functions held on each site during 2005, which areas of each site are affected by functions and also whether internal or external staff are used for serving at weddings and functions.

Table 12: Functions Held on Site During 2005

Site:	House	Village	Castle	Science centre	Canal	Mountain
Approximate number of weddings or large functions held in 2005:	163 weddings plus additional corporate dinners and dinner concerts = 4-5 functions per week	Around 70-80 weddings with evening finger buffet. Approx. 4 weddings per year requiring full wedding buffet meal	25 weddings plus balls and parties = around 45 large functions, one most weekends	220 functions in conjunction with catering over the year	Around 3 to 4 large functions or weddings per month. More regular business meetings during the day	6 weddings in 2005, also fine dining evenings and summer ceilidhs held each week during the summer
Types of functions held:	Weddings, corporate dinners and dinner concerts	Weddings, some concerts (most weddings and conferences etc take place at a separate on-site hotel)	Weddings, large parties and balls	Large and small corporate functions e.g. product launches, awards ceremonies, civic receptions, AGMs, conferences, exhibitions	Large weddings, large corporate functions and small business meetings	Weddings, fine dining and dinner ceilidhs, birthday parties and corporate functions
Numbers of guests catered for:	Between 40-170 guests seated for dining. Up to 200 for standing buffet	No seated dining. Between 100-180 guests for a buffet	Seated dinners and banquets for between 16 and 220 guests. Larger numbers can be accommodated for balls	Banqueting for between 40-400 guests. Up to 1000 guests for a standing reception on a science exhibition floor	Banqueting for between 30 to 300 guests. Up to 1000 guests can be accommodated in a marquee	Receptions for up to 250 guests, or dinners for up to 140

Table 12: Functions Held on Site During 2005 (continued)

Site:	House	Village	Castle	Science Centre	Canal	Mountain
Areas of site used for weddings and functions:	All areas of the site are involved for weddings: kitchens, shop, café and VA rooms. Some small events will use only 1 or 2 VA rooms	Café, kitchen and one building in the Village are used, although there may be interaction with hotel and other areas of site	The ballroom, the dining room and large hall are available for functions. Most functions would use only one or two of these. Kitchens are used to reheat and prepare food brought in by external caterer	16 areas of the site are available for events. Some small rooms can be used, which would not interrupt normal business. Only very large events would use a whole floor – these take place in the evening only	Small dedicated rooms available. Larger events involve all areas of site: shop, café, boats, and quayside	The catering areas of both bottom and top sites are used for weddings. The funicular railway is used to transport wedding parties between the two sites. The upper restaurant and terrace are used for weddings and parties.
External/internal catering provision:	Internal only – chefs in House kitchen do all catering	Internal only – kitchen staff in café prepare cold buffets	External only – external caterers prepare off site and finish off and reheat in Castle kitchen	Semi-internal - On-site franchised catering department provides all food and drink	External only – external caterers prepare off site and finish off and reheat in Canal kitchen	Internal only – chefs in restaurant kitchen do all catering
External/ internal staff to man events:	Internal only, although some staff are employed exclusively for events team	Internal only – catering staff from café are used to serve at buffets. Receptionist doubles as wedding coordinator	External staff only are used to provide catering service. Internal guides and reception staff used only for security and Health and Safety	Internal and semi internal – on site franchised catering department provide service Science Centre staff help serve drinks and present shows	External staff from the catering company provide the catering service. Internal staff crew boats, help serve drinks and assist in other areas	Internal only – catering and shop staff provide all food and drink service

Table 12 shows that all six sites have incorporated weddings or corporate functions into their business operations, although some have integrated these into their main work process more than others have. Four of the sites, the House, Village, Science Centre and Mountain, handle everything in-house, using their existing staff or internal partners to adapt their duties to accommodate these additional job roles. The other two sites, the Canal and Castle, involve external partners in delivering wedding and function service. The site handling the most weddings is undoubtedly the House, which does about three to four times more than the others do. Most sites host one to two major functions per week, on average, whereas the House usually accommodates up to four or five per week. However, the Science Centre and Canal sites hold the largest events, capable of handling up to 2000 and 1000 guests respectively.

All sites considered their individual uniqueness and the bonus of additional facilities, to be the main stimulus for market demand for their site as a private and corporate function venue. However, it is undoubtedly increased profits that draw VAs to supply themselves as a venue for the wedding and private and corporate function market, as the chief guide at the Castle remarked:

> We are going to be using our dining room for exclusive dinners because we've been asked to do it... this is a commercial world. It takes a lot of pounds to keep the roof on this place.... We are not government funded and you rely on bodies through the door.

However, all sites recognised that the sometimes-necessary overlap between the two purposes of being a function venue and delivering service as a VA can cause tensions between these two different, and sometimes conflicting, focuses of the business. For example, the events manager at the Science Centre noted:

Events generate a lot of revenue, so there's quite a lot of pressure to run events…which causes a tension between revenue income and our education focus.

A manager at the Canal observed:

Events are integral to our business and impact on the day-to-day running of the site… we do car launches, weddings…these affect all of the site…

The impact on a site brought about by a wedding or function depends partly on the type and size of the function being held and the facilities available on site. Some functions are very small and held in designated private facilities, which have little impact on the rest of the site. For example, the Village, Science Centre and Canal have separate conference rooms, designated solely for hosting business meetings during the day. These conference rooms are not part of the normal VA experience and the impact on the site and the normal work process of using them is consequently usually limited. The events manager at the Canal explained the limited effect on the rest of their site caused by such business meetings:

…for conferences Monday to Friday in the conference room it usually only impacts on the café… we do some function catering during the day like coffee and buffets and lunches for business meetings.

However, other events are larger and incorporate more aspects of the site, including areas or amenities that may normally feature as part of the VA experience and therefore do have an impact on the work process. At some of the larger sites, this impact is limited because their size means that only a small part of the site may be affected. For example, at the Village, a wedding usually only involves one of the main buildings, as the wedding co-ordinator at the Village explained:

The Gallery room is closed today while the floor is polished for this Saturday's wedding. The Musician room (in the same building) is also closed to the public for decorating... the guides therefore have to know when a wedding is happening to avoid taking parties via that route.

Although in this example, the work process of the guides is affected by this overlap, the effect is small. A wedding at the House, however, has a much larger impact on the work process there. The beautifully decorated rooms that draw viewing visitors to the House are the same rooms that the bride or corporate organiser wish to use for their wedding or function. Within the House, the café also doubles as an evening reception, bar and dancing area and the shop converts into a lounge. At this venue, therefore, there has to be a very close liaison between the event and catering teams and employees working in the café, shop and VA rooms, as all parts of the building and all groups of staff are affected by, and are used in a wedding. One member of staff working in the VA rooms of the House explained the additional knowledge she needed to have in relation to weddings:

If you work in the VA then you also have to know about weddings because you get asked questions by visitors about them and how the house changes when it's set up… You can buy in the shop a picture book of the house with various pictures of the various wedding set ups... our opening hours are affected by events – we close the VA for weddings and other events.

Hence, the scale of the function and which parts of the site are used in delivering the wedding or function service can be a major determinant in how much the normal work process is affected.

Running a wedding or very large corporate function, which takes over a whole site, has numerous affects on WPK. These include: an increased need for communication and integration between different departments; changes in knowledge and duties of various members of staff; and sometimes training of new

skills. The following quote explains which departments might be involved in co-ordinating a large function at the Science Centre:

> There are lots of people to notify – the function sheet is sent to catering – audio visual and IT might be involved, if it's complex – facilities too, for things like furniture and setting up. The duty manager for staff and cleaners would be involved too… We usually communicate with each other by email…we take a note of what food and drink and other arrangements the client wants… that gets sent round to the different departments…we ask them to confirm final numbers for the meal five days in advance, to give catering time to prepare meals.

Likewise, at the Village, many departments must come together to deliver the service for a wedding, including interaction and co-ordination with the onsite but separate hotel:

> Ideally, the wedding party would have a meal in the hotel and then in the evening hold their reception in the Gallery. They'd walk in the evening from the hotel to the Gallery – we'd have new staff in the evening…staff are taken from a pool of employees…we operate split shifts. We'd run the bar and evening buffet…at the end of the evening, we have to leave it all set up for service for the next day… It's not set aside [from its purpose as a VA] any longer than necessary. [Name of employee] on the cleaning team helps set up – cleaning the schoolroom and laying out chairs etc.

> Obviously there has to be a lot of co-ordination between different teams – catering, cleaning, guides, reception, duty manager, serving staff, cafeteria and kitchen staff etc. [Name of staff member who is wedding co-ordinator] has to organise additional services – Licences, photographer, florist, piper, limousine hire, entertainment, kilts, makeup… and also see to finer details, like cleaning windows if they're a bit grubby – we can bring forward window cleaning at the bride's request.

At the House, close communication between the team upstairs handling the wedding and the kitchens is also vital, as the Chef explained:

> We've got to be flexible and maintain close liaison with [Events manager] - we can push back or bring forward weddings if necessary… sometimes they advise us late of extra vegetarians, so it's vital that staff upstairs need to check… otherwise it causes problems.

At the Mountain, the top and bottom sites and the funicular train staff all need to co-ordinate closely to deliver their wedding service:

> We do about six weddings per year, and up [at the top restaurant] that involves changing all this over to round tables and cloths. Some get married in the tea bar and then have drinks reception in the [lower site café area] and then have the meal up in the top restaurant. Train staff and ticket office – they have to let us know when the bride is coming up on the train. Evening dining and weddings has an impact on the shop – it's open on wedding and function evenings until 8 and 9 p.m.… Shop staff also help serve Pimms on the terrace to guests.

The changes to the Mountain service that weddings and summer fine dining bring also require additional staff training in the upper restaurant, as the catering manager explained:

> We also do birthday parties, fine dining and corporate functions in the summer… we do banqueting service, serve wine and have a local produce menu… so we have to have wine waiter training in June before the evening dining starts at the end of June – we do service training in June too.

Guides and reception staff at the Castle are not very involved with wedding functions, but nonetheless have to adapt their work process to accommodate wedding guests:

> Our duties are to clear the hall…we direct wedding guests at the entrance – we don't stop wedding guests at the gate reception – if they look like they are dressed for a wedding then we just wave them through… we then phone up to the castle to allow [the events co-ordinator] to be at door to greet them.

All these examples demonstrate that a wedding or similar large function adds different dimensions to the normal work process. Communication between the different departments and knowledge of what needs to be done for this different type of service is vital to ensure the smooth running of the event. All employees on duty must know what event is happening on the day and their role in delivering the service, even if it is only to recognise that the customers coming towards them are wedding guests and not general public and so must be handled differently.

However, employee WPK is more significantly affected when handling a wedding that involves a major changeover of space within a site, to transform it from the standard VA presentation to the function venue. There were interesting differences in the way sites handle this overlap of service between VA and function venue. Most of the sites tend to try to maintain their regular opening times and cause as little disruption as possible to the tourism visitor, although some will close specific areas of the site a bit earlier to allow preparation to take place. However, all sites try to maintain normal service for as long as possible, usually leaving only an hour in which to convert the space from one purpose to the other. As these changeovers are sometimes extreme, it is vital that everyone knows exactly what to do to effect this rapid transformation.

The Mountain, for example, does only a few weddings per year; however, they regularly hold ceilidhs and dinner evenings in the upper restaurant on the site. Restaurant staff therefore, soon become familiar with what needs to be done to speedily transform the restaurant from its usual day-service guise as a plain-tabled

cafeteria style restaurant, to an elegant area for either fine dining or a wedding, as the restaurant manager explained:

> When we have a wedding the restaurant closes down to the public for evening dining. While [the bridal party] are having a drinks reception in [Name of] bar [at the lower site]… the last train [for the public] goes back down at 5.30 p.m. and then we've got to have a fast turnaround. We've only three-quarters of an hour, so that we are ready by 6.15. Timing is essential – the guests arrive between 6.15 - 6.30 p.m.… so we've got to turn [the restaurant] around.

> All the servery is on wheels, so it gets wheeled back… there are velvet curtains that swing round on that track to cover the servery, so everything is hidden behind it… all the round tables are then brought out and dressed with all the linen and silverware…we dim the lights… then the bride's train arrives around 6.15…the [funicular train] driver will radio ahead to let us know they are on their way so we can pour the champagne and greet them with drinks on the terrace.

It is thus apparent that when a large function or event is being handled in-house, knowing what is happening, what to do and close co-ordination between different departments is essential.

However, sometimes a tight turnaround time and the conflicting needs of the business cause pressure on employees. At the Science Centre, the events manager spoke of the difficulties they sometimes faced in trying to balance the needs of their tourism business and the requirements of a function:

> Say we have 1500 people for a buffet – we have to be ready for 7 p.m. and we don't close until 6 p.m. We've got to be ready and turn it round in 1 hour… we can try to set up in the afternoon but it's difficult if there are lots of kids around – we have to take account of the public and children. Sometimes it's just not possible…staff find it an inconvenience.

All sites faced similar tensions in changing over space within a constrained time. However, the House is unusual in that it is the only site that supplants its normal service as a VA, by closing its doors to the public to make way for a function. Most sites may overlap or close particular sections a bit early, but will not totally supplant the service. However, House management has made the strategic decision to hold weddings during the day and close its doors as a VA at such times. Nonetheless, they do remain open as a VA for as long as possible on the days that a wedding occurs and similarly leave themselves only around an hour to make the changeover, as one employee working in the VA rooms explained:

> Today the VA shuts at 12.30 because there is a 1.30 wedding for 25 people. Because it's a small wedding there is one large table in the music room, whereas on Friday the tables were set in the music room as five tables of 10… we close up and then functions come in and set up for the wedding. They have to clear all this away… they have to know where to put favours, cakes, flowers…

However, the House does not usually close its café early; it remains open until 5 p.m. After the last café customers have left, a wooden dance floor is laid down in preparation for the evening's dancing. Once the wedding service and meal have taken place in the rooms upstairs, the wedding party will move downstairs to the café area. However, the same employees who serve the wedding or function dinner are also the ones who have to convert the space over downstairs. This tight juggling of time and space can cause pressure on staff:

> Sometimes people don't leave the café until 5.30 – that doesn't leave enough time to set up the dance floor for the evening before we've got to be upstairs to serve evening dinner…

On the flip side of this, however, although the House has a dedicated events team who handle the main bulk of the wedding delivery, many of the regular House staff

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also work in the evenings doing bar or table service. The overlap of workers in this site between these two duties improves their knowledge of the overall work process and their knowledge of how different departments operate and so helps them become more efficient, as one employee in the café commented:

...because each space is so multi-purposed it's vital that everyone knows what's going on where and when and what the consequences are if they leave things undone or move equipment...you also have to know, when you do events, how it should all be returned for the VA afterwards.

Thus, in sites where everything is handled in-house, the more familiar the team is with the entire work process, and what adjustments have to be made for a wedding or function, the more able they are to promptly and efficiently deliver the service.

However, at the Canal and Castle, external caterers are used to deliver the wedding and function service, which was found to have two main consequences on WPK. Firstly, there has to be an understanding by internal staff of the needs of the external catering company or company delivering the service on their behalf. Although internal employees will not deliver the event service themselves, they still have to know what preparations are required to bring the site into readiness for the event staff that will come in. For example, at the Canal, several staff members in different departments explained what their department needed to do in preparation for an event. The Event manager at the Canal explained how a wedding or function affected the site:

Evening events have a big impact on all departments... we sometimes have to close early to allow set up. The café has to clear away, for example at 4.30...they normally close at 6 p.m., so the café closes but the centre will still be open ...an evening session usually starts by 7.15 p.m. so we've around an hour to prepare. The retail area is used as a bar area. The [Canal] staff are also

involved because we still need people to turn the [canal mechanism] later… security are also needed – the duty manager has to check rotas.

The Canal café manager explained what preparation they had to do in their area of the site:

We shut the café early sometimes if we've an event, to allow time for it to be set up…then passengers on boats can't get a cup of tea. We have to put shutters on the servery and all the high chairs away. Events tend to affect mainly the café, unless they have booked a boat trip… We do weddings, functions for companies and parties… but it doesn't involve café staff… our outside caterers come in to do the events. [Catering company] know the site well and they use our kitchens. The mix between them and us has to be seamless…We've got to clear away before [Catering company] come in…[they] bring all their stuff with them…so all tables, trolleys etc have to be cleared away…. We've got covers for chairs or they deliver chairs and the café chairs have to be stacked…The kitchen has to be restored the next morning.

The Canal shop staff also explained how the retail area is affected by an event:

The things in the main retail area are on castors to aid clearing away… at events all these [displays on castors] are cleared away… although sometimes the shop does stay open for events. It depends what it's for. [Staff member's name] used to set up the corporate events but this is now done by [Catering company].

The duty manager at the Canal site co-ordinates the information about an event and ensures that everyone knows where they have to be and who is doing what:

At the morning brief we tell staff that the café closes at 4.45 and that 'x, y, z' staff are staying to remove chairs and tables. The retail staff have to clear the desk and then when the centre closes [events manager] becomes the duty manager for the evening…. We need two boat crew and two café staff to help turn it round. Two of them stay late to return some of it back to normal after

the event and the next morning another two come early to restore it all to normal before we open at 09.30.

An event at this site, therefore, is similar to other sites in that it requires a lot of co-ordination and communication. However, there is an added dimension here because the main components are not organised through in-house staff. This is the second major impact on a site brought about by involving external partners: the bringing together all of the different aspects of the event and yet still presenting a united front. The event manager at the Canal explained the diversity of service provision that had to be co-ordinated for a large wedding or event:

> We can have fireworks, flambés, strolling acts, photographers, bouncy castles… we regularly use suppliers to source bar, band, fireworks etc… Our turnaround is very tight; say we close at 5 then open 6.30 - in that time we've got to change over tables and chairs, linen, set tables, clear kitchens and bar area, organise stilt walkers or barbecues or whatever…things like strolling acts, jazz bands, pipers, ice sculptures… we use regular suppliers to source these sort of things, whatever [the customers] need.

The events team thus have to liase very closely with, and there has to be complete understanding between, the site and the suppliers that they use, of what is required. All sites have a corporate image that they wish to maintain and the external companies used, subsequently become responsible for presenting that image on behalf of their client. The events manager at the Canal advised me of their marketing strategy and the image they aimed for:

> We have regular events, growing weddings currently 3-4 per month…but we want to remain upmarket and we are aiming at the top end. We are not trying to dilute it to the lower end of the market… we call it 'bespoke events solutions'.

There thus needs to be a dovetailing of the cultural attitude between the external supplier and the site and a crossover of knowledge of the internal work process by the external supplier, for this alliance to be successful. The Canal and Castle have built up strong associations with a network of external suppliers over time.

An understanding of internal work processes and corporate image is thus an important part of the external partner's remit. At the Castle, the external wedding division of their internal catering partner is used to deliver the wedding service. This overlap between the Castle's internal partner, who runs the site restaurant, and their external catering partner, who delivers the wedding service, is useful to both parties, as the Castle's restaurant manager explained:

> We act as middleman between [Catering Company] and the client (i.e. the Castle) – we do about 30 weddings per year. There's a separate manager who runs functions in summer, but the staff in the [in-house] restaurant cross over and do weddings as well – it's cheaper than having all agency staff… extra staff and managers come from South Queensferry. Food is prepared there, brought up in refrigerated vans with all the tablecloths, cutlery etc…it's finished off in-house. We have to clear down the restaurant to use as a servery – we're usually open until 5 pm but if there's a wedding on, we'll usually be asked to close at 4 pm.

At this site, the internal catering partner, allied with the external catering partner, thus take on a large amount of responsibility for co-ordinating with the events manager to deliver the event service. Both the site and their external and internal partners have to come together, work closely, share information and communicate effectively in order to work as one to deliver the service.

The guides and reception staff in the Castle are involved to a certain degree in the wedding event process, but only in a peripheral way, as the chief guide went on to explain:

... if you come here on Saturday at five o'clock you'll probably find all of us rushing around doing various things... you do tend to have to be multi-skilled in here...anything from a quick hoover of the floor, to making sure the rooms are laid out correctly. It's overlapping with tourism slightly, but once the event actually starts, it will only be [deputy manager] and probably a team of three people, one of whom will be one of the care takers, because he's the fire officer. He's responsible for heating, lighting, fire alarm systems, etc...

He continued:

We have a wedding this Saturday... by Thursday it will start to get a bit fraught...some of the Castle's staff will be used at the event. But to be honest with you, the Castle staff at the event are basically 'health and safety minders', to make sure [the guests] don't run amok in the Castle, they don't smoke, or if there's a fire alert... if it's a wedding, most of the wedding is eating and drinking and dancing. Well the band are looking after the dancing, and the [catering company] look after the eating and drinking, so once it's in the ballroom it more or less runs itself.

A wedding or large event is thus a combination of location, staffing, catering and entertainment. Some sites have taken the strategic decision to handle all of these aspects in-house. Where these are handled in-house, the WPK of staff is more heavily affected in that workers must incorporate the additional duties a wedding or function brings into their routine. The knowledge of employees grows to incorporate the addition of the altered work processes. There is also a continuation of culture and standard of service; the same people responsible for delivering the usual service bring with them the same values and standards that are part of the site's existing culture. The events organiser thus remains more in control of the

service provided. However, where external parties provide a large part of the service, there must be close sharing of communication between the various parties and a sharing of culture, information and expectations to achieve the same end.

The attitude that sites have towards weddings and function on site has an undoubted effect on how employees perceive different groups of customers. The main tensions of running private or corporate functions tend to revolve around the times of operation and use of space, where these conflict or overlap with normal operation as a VA. How these conflicts are resolved depends largely on the priority allocated to the different visitor groups. As the event manager at the Canal site observed:

> There's a fine line between being a VA and a corporate venue – we've got to try to balance the needs of both customers.

The focus of a business is determined by various factors, for example, where they get their funding or their specific mission statements. The Science Centre's main focus, for example, is science education and the event manager explained their priorities if a company was trying to arrange a corporate event there:

> All private areas would be ok …but if we've got schools in, we couldn't accommodate them. We are constantly competing with the education department… if [the corporate client] want a science show we often have to knock them back if schools are booked in…[schools] usually book further ahead than business clients…but we won't close for events – we work around our main business.

Therefore, the Science Centre considers its main business to be education. Whereas at the Castle, the chief guide is very clear that it would be tourists who would take priority in terms of space and time:

We don't close to the public [when there's a wedding on]. Tourism is still the main thrust of our business, so from the first of April until the end of October, we open 9.30 in the morning and shut our doors at 4.30… that's one slight symptom of having events. We used to shut at 5 o'clock – but we now shut at 4.30, clear the Castle within an hour or so…you really can't get access to the Castle until after 5.00 for some of these functions. There's a slight overlap between tourism and the function. But if someone said 'I've got 200 people and I want to do a wedding and we want to do it at 2 o'clock on Saturday', then the answer would be 'no, I'm very sorry, we can't offer you that facility'.

However, during an observation session at the House, a customer came in and made enquiries in the shop about a corporate conference in July, asking for information and prices. The customer explained the type of event she wanted and what she had in mind. During this exchange, the employee asked:

It's not on a Friday or Saturday is it? Fridays and Saturdays are always out - because of weddings.

For this employee, the knowledge that weddings took precedence on Fridays and Saturdays in the House was forefront in her mind.

As previously mentioned, the main business priorities of a company are determined by strategic decisions at a senior management level. However, this overarching strategy is inevitably cascaded down to staff through both formal and informal methods of communication. Although an employee does not necessarily create strategy, nonetheless members of staff are quickly inculcated into an understanding of the primary aims of the organisation and its key priorities. A strategic overview of an organisation is an important aspect of WPK. The culture of a company is influenced by strategic decisions, which consequently determines how important to their organisation different groups of customers are viewed by employees.

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Summary

In this section, it was found that all of the study sites incorporate weddings or other events into their business operation. The affect on WPK within the organisation has strong parallels with previous studies involving partners (cf. p.41 and p.284). However, in this case, the findings suggest that it is the strategic decisions a site makes about the number of events they handle, or how much an event is permitted to overlap or supplant normal service, which affect the WPK or employees to greater or lesser degrees. This appears to have a subsequent effect on how WPK extends beyond organisational boundaries (cf. p.281).

- Weddings and events can be small and held in discrete areas of the site and can have little affect on the day-to-day running of the VA, or they can be large events that take over large areas or the entire site;

- The more aspects of an event that are handled in-house, and the more that regular staff have to incorporate these added duties into their work, the greater the impact on their WPK;

- The additional WPK they need includes:

    o How to transform spaces from one purpose to another;

    o How to adapt service to account for the changes that a wedding or event brings;

    o What communication and information needs to be exchanged and with whom; and

    o How to handle tensions caused by an overlap of service between the two purposes, and which groups take priority.

- Sites that involve external partners to provide much of the service rely on close communication and sharing of culture and information to meet the site's aims;

- Internal employees at such sites must also understand the needs of the external partner to be aware of how to dovetail their preparation for the service delivery by the external partner;

- The culture of a company is influenced by strategic decisions and consequently employees come to recognise the relative importance to their organisation of different groups of customers.

Section 6: Seasonality

Visitor attractions are continually forced to adapt their service to cater for the perpetually changing needs of different visitor profiles caused by the peaks and troughs of demand at various times of the day, week or between seasons. The changing clientele attracted at various times has significant impacts on the actual work process, including what services are supplied and how these have to be tailored for different groups. As a result, sometimes the essential purpose of the business itself is altered and significant staff adjustments are required to cope with these changes. This section illuminates the consequent affect on WPK.

All of the sites in this study are affected to varying degrees by periodicity. Sites rely on employees to use their knowledge of the work process to prepare them to cope efficiently with the periodical rise and fall in visitor flow throughout the day. At the Village, for example, they have a large room where it is possible to accommodate an absolute maximum of 130 school children for packed lunches at any one time. An employee told me:

> We sometimes have 200 people booked in, in four groups, all lunching at different times… we've got to know how to juggle the lunch space…to avoid overlaps of changeover of people turning up for lunches.

Workers in the Castle shop and restaurant, located at the end of the tour, also have to be aware of the flow of coach parties entering the Castle, and judge when they will arrive in their area. This is so they can tidy or replenish displays or clear tables in the lulls and have everything ready for the next surge of visitors. The restaurant manager explained:

> Itineraries of trips mean they are usually very tight for time – so turnaround has to be very quick.

They therefore have to ensure their service is timed extremely tightly, because coach parties will not have time to wait for tables to be cleared or food to be prepared. It all has to be ready and waiting, otherwise, sales will be lost and the excellent service they strive for will be compromised. Their ability to use their WPK to judge this accurately is crucial.

There can also be differences in the focus of the business between midweek and weekend. At the Science Centre, an employee told how the type of knowledge a part-time staff member working only weekends would need, could differ from those working full-time during the week:

> Weekend staff don't need education booking training, but weekend staff need to know more about IMAX films as that's when they change over… some also do birthday parties at weekends.

All sites reported that the visitor groups they receive at the weekend are regularly quite different in nature to the visitors they receive during the week. As all sites are open seven days, they have to contend with covering shifts for the week. This is often done through a rolling rota basis; however, most sites also employ additional part-time weekend staff. An employee working only at the weekend may therefore have quite a different perspective of the business than a full-time employee who covers both.

Variance in the types of visitors coming to a site at different times of the year can also affect the WPK an employee needs to have. The Village and Science Centre, for example, are both very popular school trip destinations. School coach parties visit all year round, although the main season is during May and June. Employees at both these sites have to have knowledge of how these particular groups are handled, which is different from how other, adult groups, would be handled. At the

Science Centre, for example, school groups are met at their coaches and are taken to a special area for hanging up coats, where they are also given a preparation talk prior to being taken up to the science floors. Lunch accommodation and payment arrangements are also different.

At the Village, guided talks are tailored to the interests of the visiting group. Guides therefore need to be aware of the subject of interest of the group, which is checked at the time of booking. The main related subjects of primary and secondary schools' curricula are well known to them, however, they sometimes come across a subject that is new to them. For tours on unfamiliar education-related subjects, as has been previously described (cf.p.211), guides will familiarise themselves with the objectives of the unit the students are studying, so they can tailor their tour accordingly.

During the summer holidays, there are no school trips, but the Village still receives groups from universities, women's guilds and foreign coach parties, and they adapt their tour to accommodate each one. As the deputy director of the Village advised:

> The guided tour should not be the same for a P7 class doing the Victorians as it is for a college group doing a tour on marketing or something like that.

This adaptation of service to accommodate changing groups' needs means that the focus of the tour can change which areas within the site are visited for different types of visitors. Employees, therefore, have to be extremely flexible and their knowledge of the work process has to be able to accommodate these changes. The deputy director of the Village commented:

> …You need to have a very flexible staff…you might come to work expecting to be doing the Victorians with P7 from [Name of] Primary and you end up not

doing that at all. You end up doing the Industrial Revolution with [Name of] High School, or whatever. So there's a lot of flexibility everybody has to do.

The employee base at the Village is very stable and most of the guides have been there for many years. As the deputy director explained, this has allowed the Village to build up a whole bank of employees with the range of knowledge and the consequent flexibility to do this:

> ...we don't have some guides who only ever deal with primary school kids and other guides who deal with adult groups or whatever. They have to be able to adapt what they are saying to suit different types of groups.

She went on to say:

> Most guides can do all the guided tours, but some can do them in foreign languages... I myself would do a very specialised tour like building conservation architecture or a university group doing a tour on socialism, or something like that... but for most tours, all the guides can do them.

However, at the Castle, where they also tailor tours to accommodate the interests of various groups, they are more limited in the range of staff able to do a wide variety of tours. One employee commented:

> Everyone can tailor tours to a degree, for example, if it's a group of ladies you can point out 'girlie' things... Our main groups are 'Lochs and Glens' and we get lots of German, Dutch, Swedish and Finnish... we have people who can do the tours in different languages. But [chief guide's name] and [employee's name] can do more tailored tours though, like the lace, which is locked away, or for the ones interested in the archives.

These limitations arise mainly from the high proportion of temporary seasonal staff employed at the Castle. Although all of the sites studied have some temporary

seasonal staff, the Castle is unique in that virtually all their front-of-house employees are seasonal between April and October, with further additional high-season staff taken on to cover the peak July and August period. This is in response to seasonal patterns of visiting customers, which rise from 1500 per month in the winter season to 1500 per day at the height of the summer. The Castle consequently needs seasonal staff to cope with this rapid escalation in visitor numbers. However, at the end of October, seasonal employees leave and the Castle operates over the winter months with a small core of permanent staff, opening only Tuesdays, Saturday mornings or by arrangement.

This situation obviously has major implications on the levels of WPK that seasonal employees are able to accumulate in the short space of time that they are employed. Some seasonal staff do return for more than one year, however, the chief guide is aware of the restrictions this places on the levels of knowledge a seasonal employee can build up. He commented:

> …you are kissing goodbye to potentially this good staff you've worked on, every year, thinking 'Will any of this lot come back?' A portion do, thank goodness, but potentially you could have a new set every year … what I'd do if all nine guides were new, I don't know…

To counteract this deficit in breadth and depth of knowledge within his team, the chief guide instructs his new seasonal employees to be largely strategic in what they learn:

> I tell them to keep it fairly light. When you go into each room, learn about three things… Most people only want to know: 'That's a nice chair, was that embroidered by so and so?' Or 'who is that chap with the funny crossed eyes on the wall?' That's about as deep as it gets… If you've read the guidebook and the printed notes…then you are way ahead of the public.

He points out that the difference between raw recruits and experienced guides may not be immediately apparent to the customer, and consequently the new start may be faced with questions they are unable to handle. His advice to them is:

[On our uniforms it] doesn't say 'learner' -or 'head guide' for that matter! - So people come and ask you questions and you don't know the answer. Never feel you can't say 'I'm sorry I don't know – but I'll find out for you if I can.

He goes on to tell them:

…if you've got someone who wants to know a lot about Scottish history and you are struggling, then send them along to me and I'll bore them rigid for half an hour.

However, despite these coping strategies and an obvious willingness to support new guides at the beginning, there is nonetheless a requirement for new seasonal staff to accumulate knowledge of the work process very quickly:

On a busy day they can't keep referring, and referring and referring – they should know what they can do within a certain area.

The Village has a similar strategy to help a new employee cope with a lack of knowledge, as the deputy director explained:

It will be a long time before they get to the stage where they can answer absolutely every question, but what we find is, that if we draw up a list of the 10-15 questions that visitors most commonly ask - and we know in advance what these are going to be – so we focus on getting them to know the answers to those things.

They also support their new starts by suggesting they refer to more experience colleagues, but also include the chance to do a bit of cross selling:

…and we also say if someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer, don't make it up, don't pretend you know. Say, 'I'm sorry I can't answer that question, I'm quite new here, but I'll find out…we can ask so and so…or I think it's probably covered in this book, the Story of [Village name]'.

Different seasons bring with them different work processes, which employees have to accommodate. Some changes to the work process are relatively minor, for example, at the House, the main entrance is closed during the winter months and visitors are received through the shop entrance. This means that employees working in the shop have to be more aware of what is going on upstairs in the VA, as they are now the first point of contact. Other than this, seasonal impacts are limited at the House.

At the Castle, winter brings with it more flexible working practices for the small number of core staff who remain to cover the two days a week the Castle opens. The departure of seasonal staff and the closure of the restaurant from October to April mean that these remaining employees must cover a wider range of duties, as the chief guide explained:

> In the winter the girls in the shop do reception duties because there's no reception staff in the castle… the housekeeping staff will do other things too, for example serve teas or coffees for coaches because we don't have a restaurant.

However, the chief guide went on to comment about differences in attitude towards flexible working between his seasonal and permanent core staff:

> [It] can be difficult with some of my seasonal staff, they have what I call the 'seasonal staff ethic', in other words, 'I'll come in and work and do my job and go home at night', sort of attitude… It's rather strange at the moment. We multi-task in the winter and go more rigid when the seasonal staff come in, which is interesting – but that is what I'm trying to stop. Why should the

seasonal staff, who by their nature should be more flexible, because they are seasonal, have actually over the past few years been the more rigid staff?

The seasonal changes thus bring about not only changes in the work process, at this site, but a change in the attitude of workers towards flexible working.

There are some sites, where seasonal changes involve other types of notable alterations to the site's operation. For example, at the Village, in the month leading up to Christmas, Santa's grotto arrives, pantomimes and Christmas workshops are run in the theatre and schoolrooms, the ride changes to a seasonal Christmas theme and they have a variety of festive events. Guides and other Customer Service Assistants at the Village must accommodate these changes to the work process into their daily routine.

Seasonal events are used by VAs throughout Scotland to extend their season and encourage repeat business. All the sites in this study have substantial programmes of events throughout the year, even at the Castle, where during the winter months they host a Christmas ball or parties most weekends. The customer service manager at the Canal site explained the reason behind their wide programme of events:

> We have a very thorough events programme…if you have events it gives [visitors] a reason to come back… We have a very local market, most come from a 60-mile radius and the life stage that the [Canal] is at… we are finding that the market has been saturated. So it's crucial now that we look at developing what facilities we have and our events programme so that we encourage repeat business and attract new markets.

The Canal site also celebrates Christmas in a major way, where the boat ride is transformed into a trip to 'Santa's Secret Village', which is constructed further

along the canal. There is also a funfair and festive market on site during December. However, as well as events, the Canal site is subject to other seasonal changes throughout the year. It is significantly busier in the summer and they take on seasonal employees for this time. They also employ a high season 'meeter and greeter' whose job is to help diffuse the impact of large numbers arriving at reception. More activities take place on the canal during summer, such as cycle events, runs, boat trips and wild life cruises. Many of these go past the Canal site on the water and on the towpath and employees need to be aware of these so they can accommodate extra visitors within the visitor centre. In the winter the canal mechanism can also be affected adversely by wind and weather and boat trips may consequently be cancelled. This can cause a knock-on effect within the centre, which may suddenly have to deal with a large influx of people. All of these seasonal variations in operation impact to some extent on WPK.

However, the site where seasonal changes between winter and summer most dramatically affect business operation, and consequently the WPK of employees, is at the Mountain. It is at this site that the very nature of the business changes between the winter and summer seasons. In virtually every aspect of the business, there are major changes to how the Mountain operates that affect the work process and hence what an employee needs to know. These include the types of visitors who come, their purpose for visiting and which areas of the site are accessible to the public, the operation of the funicular railway, the retail and catering arrangements, aspects of communication and the main duties of staff. These are examined in turn.

From Easter to October, the Mountain attracts a changing kaleidoscope of visitor groups who come for a variety of reasons. During Easter and summer school holidays, mainly families come to visit the shop, travel up the Mountain on the funicular railway and enjoy the spectacular mountain views. During May to July,

their main customers are older pensioners on coach tours who make good use of the lower site cafe. Coach tours of the area continue to include the Mountain as part of their itinerary during July to September. However, the summer months and better weather also bring walkers to the site, as there are several designated walks and footpath trails in the area. High summer sees locals and holidaymakers alike coming to travel up the funicular railway to the upper restaurant to enjoy fine dining and regular ceilidh dances. Families and foreign visitors also come in large numbers during high summer, tailing off as the holidays end, to enjoy a brief resurgence during the October school holiday week. November tends to be very quiet and is when most essential maintenance and training is done as there are usually very few visitors unless there is a very early fall of snow; summer is over and winter has not quite begun.

However, the first fall of snow brings quite different sorts of clientele: the skier, the snowboarder and the rock and winter climbers. These visitors come with quite a different purpose and their arrival brings major changes to the way the site operates. In summer, access to the external slopes from the upper site is restricted for ecological conservation purposes, as the mountain terrain is very fragile. However, the protective covering of snow now allows it to be traversed. The ski tows, unused all summer, open for business, as does the ski hire shop where repairs and waxing are also done. When the snow is good, an employee told me:

We can have 2000 skiers hitting the slopes between 8 and 10 a.m.

This sudden massive influx of people wanting quick access to the slopes affects many aspects of how the business operates, not least, the funicular railway. During the summer months, these trains are fitted with seats and carry up to 60 people on a leisurely 8-minute journey up the mountain, with a commentary on the history, the area and the spectacular views. During the snow sport season, these seats are

removed to allow easier access for up to 120 people and their equipment. The train doubles its speed from 4.9 metres per second to 9 metres per second to make the journey in a rapid 3-4 minutes. As the funicular driver explained:

In winter, no one watches the views! They just want to hit the slopes as quickly as possible.

Trains also run on demand, rather than the timetable they run to in summer. As one driver commented:

In winter we carry about 2000-2500 (passengers) per day and we are running at speed...there's not so much time to change over in winter. In summer and less busy times, the turnaround is every half-hour.

The trains also stop at different stations and stops. In summer, the restricted access to slopes means that the central station is not used, but in winter, this gives access to the nursery slopes. In summer the exit points for the train are different too. As summer visitors are restricted to the restaurant, shop, exhibition and viewing terrace, the train stops at the entrance to these areas. However, in winter, the primary purpose is to allow easier access to the slopes, therefore, the train stops higher up, right at the exit door. The earlier winter darkness also brings the last train down at 4.30 p.m. rather than 5.15 p.m. Funicular train drivers consequently need to make significant adjustments to their work process between these two seasons.

However, other areas of the site are equally altered by this change in clientele and purpose. In the upper catering site, the entire mode of service changes between the two seasons. During the summer, the restaurant operates a waitress service and food is cooked to order. Visitors want to sit and dine leisurely, looking out over

the wonderful vista. Skiers and snowboarders, on the other hand, want to use the facilities quite differently. As the catering manager explained:

> In winter we operate [the restaurant] as a servery - people come in with their skis and boots and trail lots of water in with them… people just want to come in to top up… so we offer things like cakes, hot drinks, soups and sandwiches and big pots of chilli… [In summer] it's waitress service and everything is cooked to order… we get quite a lot of older people and they like their table service and their freshly cooked fish and chips.

As a result, most of the restaurant service equipment is on wheels, so that it can be moved around to accommodate the different uses of the space. The type of tables and chairs used are different too, with more robust versions being used during the ski season and better equipment stored away until it is needed again in the summer months. Large numbers of winter skiers also affects how the catering manager operates her rota system and manages her staff:

> We have rushes for service, depending on skiers... we have to watch lunch breaks and judge staff numbers… we see the numbers coming up on the train…

Therefore, it can be seen that for catering at this site, there is a stark contrast in the work process between the two seasons. In winter their work process operates along the lines of a frantic cafeteria, whereas in summer, they function as a restaurant, catering for more sedate fine dining, weddings and corporate functions, which require elegant table service skills. Consequently, the knowledge required by staff to operate between the two seasons differs substantially.

The retail side of the business also has to make significant adjustments to their operation between the two seasons. The stock each shop carries is different and the levels of business change. As an employee in the upper site shop explained:

In winter, skiers just want to buy things like water or gloves. They come in with their skis and boots... things get grubby, so that's why we have to get painted every spring... In summer the shop is much busier... lots of kids come and people want to buy gifts.

She continued:

The bottom shop... gets visitors who don't come up [the mountain], for example coach tourists or families with small children or walkers. The bottom shop serves mostly coach parties, kids... they sell walking items, things like maps or poles. It's called 'The Mountain Shop' for that reason.

As well as their duties within the shop, the changing seasons bring about changes to the types of peripheral multi-tasking retail workers have to do:

The shop is a lot quieter in winter, we can be called on to work in other areas like the restaurant or ski hire... In summer we (the Mountain) do evening dining and weddings... the shop is open on wedding and function evenings until 8 or 9 p.m. ... we help out [the catering department] by serving Pimms to the wedding guests.

Aside from catering and retail, employees working in other customer service areas at the Mountain also have quite different duties to perform in different seasons. One employee, who primarily drives the funicular train during the summer months, explained how his working day changes during the skiing season, when his duties then include communicating weather and snow conditions to the public:

In winter there's this whole side of service for information – skiing reports and broadcast on radio – giving details of condition of runs, visibility... we've got to get that information out into the arena... Road signs for roads need to be changed... I need to get all the details [about the snow conditions] put onto our own website...I've also to update information for Ski Scotland website and Ceefax... this information needs to be constantly updated, for example if

ploughs are working... it changes daily...Things open in Europe more regularly, whereas in the UK things are much more unpredictable. We can still be opening tows at 1 p.m.

In winter he attends to this information generation and distribution in the morning and will usually return to train operation in the afternoon. This employee also spoke of the additional WPK he needed to have during the skiing season:

> We've got to know about the hill and where things are...the names of the runs ... We have 38 km of pisted runs here: green (basic), blue (intermediate), black (advanced) and red (expert)... We use the radios more in winter, not so much in summer, because in winter we have to have contact with ski patrols as well... We also have to work outside, which we don't do in summer, like for de-icing...

He continued:

> There's also a difference in prices. The amount of snow determines which lifts are operating and so determines the price we charge – so when we are working in the ticket office we have to be aware if we are operating on PP1, which is the most expensive or PP3, which is the cheapest.

It was very noticeable at this site that especially in winter, but essentially all year round, their work processes revolve to a great extent around the weather and the changes this can make to customer demand. For example, if there is no snow then there is little demand, but a sudden snowfall can result in the operation having to go, as one employee told me:

> ...from 'a standing start' to 'full pelt', literally overnight...

Their daily routines depend, and must be responsive to, sometimes extreme and rapidly changeable weather conditions. For example, daily service in the upper restaurant is greatly determined by it, as the catering manager explained:

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At the morning meeting…we look at the number of coaches and the weather and anticipate how busy it may be…we can then determine how much can be cleared up at the end of service.

However, sometimes, the weather can become extreme, with high winds, torrential rain, heavy fog or really driving snow, which can necessitate everyone leaving the Mountain for safety reasons. Employees at the Mountain call this being 'stormed off'. When this happens, one retail employee explained what procedure they had to follow:

In winter, if the snow gets too bad, then we close the snow gates and everyone is evacuated from the mountain… If we are 'stormed off' then we will get a warning… sometimes only 5 minutes… we've got to work together to get everyone off the hill in time. You've got to know who's working in which department so you know that they get on the train…there's no radio in the shop… got to go to the control room or phone. Everyone needs to be told…it's ultimately the duty manager's responsibility, but we all help.

Changes in seasons also bring about changes in the multi-functionality of staff at the site. Employees at this site are expected to be extremely multi-functional and be deployed wherever the business needs them most. One employee explained:

In winter we will work in different departments. If quiet we can be used in the ticket office, ski hire or shop.

An example of the need for multi-functionality and ability to respond rapidly to changing conditions was in March 2005, when the Mountain was faced with an unprecedented fall of snow, falling on a weekend, making it much more likely that snow sports enthusiasts would come in force. Their close attention to approaching weather fronts had given site staff some indication that this might occur and they had taken some measures to prepare. For example, they had turned a counter in

the lower shop into an extra catering counter, one ticket counter had been turned into a cash-only booth for speedier operation and all employees had been called to turn up. However, even so, they were quite overwhelmed. Several thousand people were attracted to 'hit the slopes' and the facility struggled to cope. There were too many vehicles in the car park, cars were queuing on the road and the gates had to be closed. Their response was to pull together as a team and the operation was adapted as best they could; the train was speeded up, everyone was working at full stretch and even senior management were clearing tables in the café.

These rather extreme conditions obviously required rather extreme changes to the work process. However, this example illustrates an important point about the WPK at this site. Work process knowledge is strategic and at this site, a strategic view includes being aware of the constantly changing weather conditions and being aware of how this will affect their work process. Their close proximity to, and the sometimes dangerous nature of the changing weather conditions, and the direct impact on their work processes as a result, mean that constant awareness of the weather is an essential aspect of their work process knowledge.

Summary

The findings of this section suggest that the highly seasonal nature of the visitor attraction industry has a significant impact on the breadth of WPK an employee has to possess and the speed with which they must acquire it. While seasonality is not unique to this industry, its seeming impact on WPK and its relationship to customer service are novel developments of WPK theory (cf. p.267):

- The highly seasonal nature of the VA industry means that sites attract, at different times and in varying numbers, different types of clients who visit with a different purpose;

- Consequently, VAs need to persistently change their service to meet the changing demands of the customer;

- They do this through changing their staff, their service delivery and the function and purpose of space and equipment;

- This means that year-round employees need to be able to adjust their work process knowledge to these, often quite significant, changes in service;

- Sites also often bring in seasonal staff to cope with sudden influxes of visitors at particular times of year. These seasonal workers have only a short space of time in which to acclimatise to their situation. They consequently do not have the same level of WPK as longer served full time staff;

- Seasonal employees, therefore, sometimes have to be strategic in their knowledge and have to quickly identify who to ask and where they can find support to help them out.

5 Discussion and Implications

It is evident from the findings presented above, that the WPK of organisations and front-line workers has become highly developed in most of the six visitor attractions, although this appears to be a relatively recent occurrence. Over the 18-month period of field study, VA managers in all six organisations actively and speedily moved away from their existing fragmented departmental structures towards developing the types of organisational structures, multi-functional working practices and information-sharing cultures that lead to WPK development, even though this concept is not well-known in this sector. Those organisations like the Science Centre, Mountain, House and Village, which have adopted these organic working conditions more fully, showed most evidence of highly developed WPK amongst their staff. Conversely, staff at the Canal and Castle, which had not yet progressed as far along this continuum, demonstrated much less-developed WPK. However, a distinguishing feature of work process knowledge in this context is the rapidity with which it is developed, which arises from WPK being driven actively on three fronts. Not only is WPK created from the top down, through employers creating the right environment, and from the bottom up, by the employee because it facilitates the performance of their duties. It is also being driven very hard by the customer.

As the review of WPK literature revealed, the study of WPK in relation to customer service in an industry with a strong customer service focus, has not been undertaken since Kruse's initial exploration of *'Arbeitsprozeßwissen'* in Mallorcan hotels twenty years ago (cf.p.20). However, as this discussion will demonstrate, this study not only builds on Kruse's original findings but also validates a great deal of what has been discovered since about WPK. This is because the nature of WPK in this context shares a number of strong similarities with other industries, particularly those factors relating to organisational structures, multi-functional

working practices, information-sharing cultures and attitudes of staff. However, the intense nature of the customer-employee relationship in VAs, with the customer being an inseparable part of the production process, undoubtedly makes some of the WPK requirements in this context distinctly different.

This discussion will explore these similarities and differences within the framework of addressing the four research questions of this study:

- What is the nature of WPK in Scottish visitor attractions?

- What relationship does WPK have to customer service?

- How does WPK in this context compare with previous published studies of WPK in manufacturing and other service contexts?

- What factors affect the development of WPK in this context?

Each question will be examined in turn.

The Nature of WPK in Scottish Visitor Attractions

In many ways, the nature of WPK in the VA industry is very similar to that found in other industries in that it is socially and culturally based. The attitude of the individual worker and the organisational structures, division of labour and management approaches all play a major part in developing WPK in workers, in the same way as they have been found to do in other industries.

However, a main feature of the WPK of workers in this industry lies in the magnitude of the relationship between the visitor and the front-line employee, which serves to intensify and accelerate the drive to accumulate WPK into a much shorter time than other industries expect. Unlike other industries, where the

accumulation of expert knowledge is measured in months and years, in this industry, the employee is expected to be fully operational within a few weeks, or sometimes even days.

It might be useful here to compare what has been discovered about the VA industry with previous definitions. In relation to Boreham's 1995 definition (cf.p.21), WPK in the VA industry undeniably meets the first two attributes he describes: an understanding of the work process in the organisation as a whole; and as 'active' knowledge that is used directly in the performance of work. However, there are some provisos for the second two attributes Boreham denotes. Solving customer problems is indeed a core activity of this industry and one that largely drives WPK in this industry. However, WPK in VAs is not constructed by employees solely while they are engaged in work, as it was found that some of their WPK is drawn from their life experience.

This experiential aspect of the nature of WPK is particularly strong in the VA industry. Unlike many of the industries previously studied, on which Boreham's, and later, Fischer's definitions were founded, the VA industry is typified by very low entry qualifications. Apart from one or two specific exceptions, recruitment tends to be based on personal qualities rather than any particular technical knowledge, and workers are drawn from all types of backgrounds. Once within the organisation, any training in customer service also tends to be chiefly experiential rather than theoretical. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that not all WPK is necessarily a synthesis of theoretical and experiential knowledge; or at least not to the same degree as Boreham suggests. A large amount of WPK in this industry appears to be created from synthesising prior life experience and an understanding of what it is to be a customer themselves, with (also largely experiential) knowledge gained on the job.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that WPK is less evident in the VA industry, nor of a less sophisticated nature. In fact, as has been shown throughout the findings, WPK in some attractions is highly developed and still growing very rapidly. This may be attributable in part to the way in which a strategic understanding of the VA blurs the lines between the labour, production and business processes. For example, a customer service employee's job knowledge might include till operation: the labour processes that are involved in a customer making a purchase in the retail shop. However, as we have seen with the worker in the Mountain shop who recognised that buying souvenirs become memories of the visitor's day at the Mountain, the transaction process at the till can be an important part of their visit experience. In this industry, interaction with the customer is an essential aspect of the production process. In addition, employees at each of the sites, through their focus on weekly and monthly sales targets, show awareness that the process at the till is an important income generator to pay their wages and meet organisational goals. Consequently, in this industry, WPK appears to holistically intertwine a systems-level view of the business, production and labour processes of the organisation, within a framework of the visitor experience.

The intense focus on the visitor is undoubtedly a key characteristic around which a great deal of WPK in VAs seems to revolve. However, if one were to pursue the aim of customer service to its logical conclusion, it would be to give the customer everything they want, and for free. This is not possible, of course, because there is a constant trade-off between customer service and fiscal reality. Whilst customer service is an important aim, it is sometimes in conflict with other organisational goals such as profitability and sustainability. Hence, although customer service is important, it is limited by what the organisation can economically and sustainably accommodate. An essential component of work process knowledge in this context, therefore, is the understanding that a trade-off must be made between maximising customer service and meeting the needs of the organisation.

Profit, however, is only one possible organisational goal that might come into conflict with customer service. For example, the Canal site chooses not to offer provision for small weddings, as they do not want to dilute their reputation as an exclusive venue, thus prioritising their marketing strategy over customers wishing to book small weddings. Sustainability is also a consideration that can come into conflict with customer service. The sustainability might be ecological: sustaining the natural environment. For example at the Mountain, customers may wish to walk on the upper mountain slopes but are not allowed to do so without there being a covering of snow, as that would do long-term damage to the fragile terrain. Many other sites, such as the Village, Castle and House also have an environment that has to be protected. This consequently leads the organisation to aim to strike a balance between short-term survival and long-term sustainability of things like local culture and environment.

Sustainability, however, might also be considering the long-term viability of the business. For example, at the House, the dichotomy of disappointing one customer to satisfy another is raised when they frequently turn tourist customers away because the site is being used as a wedding venue, which is their primary revenue stream. Whereas at the Science Centre, the educational aims of the site frequently take precedence over customers wishing to book a function. Understanding how organisational aims fit into the work process allows the employee to see the trade-off between these. An employee with good work process knowledge will understand where their company believes the balance should be struck. Thus, it can be seen that the intense nature of the customer-employee relationship, balanced against an understanding of company goals and the strategic aims of the business, make the nature of WPK in Scottish visitor attractions really rather complex.

The Relationship WPK has to Customer Service

Throughout this work, a great deal of evidence has been presented to demonstrate that WPK underpins good customer service and parts of WPK help deliver customer service. The better-developed WPK the worker has, the better able they are to deliver excellent customer service. This is because, if an employee understands the organisation they work in at the strategic level, how all the departments fit and work together, their own importance in the overall scheme of things and the goals of the organisation, then they have good WPK. Workers with good WPK are better problem solvers, better strategic thinkers, are more empowered and flexible workers and are better able to respond to the unusual. Workers with this broad range of skills are more capable of handling the unexpected situations customers pose daily. An employee who can judge, anticipate and deliver what the customer wants is providing good customer service.

Work process knowledge thus empowers workers to deliver the best customer service. It does this through helping workers to anticipate problems and prevent them from occurring, as was shown in the example of the team at House collectively handling the potential problem of the American group booked in for the wrong lunch (cf.p.153). Having WPK also helps workers to understand the consequences of their actions, as was inversely demonstrated by the '17-wheelchair at the ride' incident in the Village (cf.p.158).

Work process knowledge also helps the employee to make sure the visitor gets the most out of their day, because they are more aware of what is going on in and around the organisation. For example, workers knowing when the film at the IMAX starts, or what the workshops are like, means they can be more informative and enthusiastic about the product. WPK helps workers to appreciate the needs of internal partners, which can smooth the customer's path. For example, in gaining

understanding of the work processes of the café at the Science Centre run by an internal partner, employees at reception are now able to make lunch arrangements earlier in the visit so the transition at the café till is better for the customer. Work process knowledge helps employees, as already explained in greater depth elsewhere, to be able to answer customer questions about the organisation, related attractions and local destination. Consequently, it can be seen that customer service is undoubtedly enhanced by WPK and that WPK is the factor that underpins customer service; one drives the other.

How WPK in the VA Context compares with Previous Studies

It is mainly in that respect, i.e. in the intensity and interrelatedness of the customer-employee relationship, that WPK in the VA context is differentiated from other industries. In many other respects, as will become apparent later in the discussion, WPK in the VA context shares strong similarities with what other researchers have discovered about WPK in other industries. However, before being able to answer the question of how WPK in the VA context compares to published studies in manufacturing and other service sectors, there are two points that need further consideration.

The first point is drawn from a comparison of WPK in VAs with Lammont and Boreham's (2002) study of debt collectors (cf.p.26), which was previously examined in the literature review. On the surface, there are some definite similarities between this organisation and many of the VAs, as the agency has low entry requirements and the most important attribute of the employee seems to be attitude and the ability to communicate with customers. Likewise, most learning is on the job and the speed of developing WPK is quite quick. There is also the same spatio-temporal dimension to the work, in that work is often carried out in separate physical time and spaces from other colleagues, but each still needed to

understand the work as a whole. Furthermore, like the agency, several of the VAs use sophisticated computerised 'Customer Relation Management' (CRM) systems as tools to reproduce work culture and transmit knowledge. However, where they are at variance is in the very different management ethos, and the use that is made of the CRM tool, which has shaped each collective culture in quite a different way.

The CRM database in the debt collection agency is used to record narratives of employees' conversations with customers, which is then used to pass on knowledge of previous interactions. The same operator does not necessarily deal with any case twice. The computer tool is used in the agency to make tacit knowledge available to all employees and thus converts individual experience to collective memory. On the surface, this bears some similarities to the way in which some of the VAs use their booking systems. However, although some of the VAs have similarly sophisticated CRM tools, they are used in quite different ways from the way described in the debt collection agency, as the following example from the House demonstrates.

In the House, a computerised tool is also a method of sharing WPK, as they use a CRM booking system called 'K-express' to log details of all wedding and function bookings. However, the way in which the House uses their K-express system supports and transmits quite a different sort of culture. In the House, the Banqueting and Events Manager (BEM) is the main person responsible for handling the overall booking of a wedding, for example. The K-express system is not a substitute for a person taking charge of a case, but a way of enhancing the service, so others can assist the main contact. The initial contact with a prospective bride is most likely to have been in person, including a guided tour of the House facilities, photographs of various potential wedding layouts and discussed over a pot of tea with the personal attention of the BEM. Personal social interaction is still at the core of the relationship with the customer.

Once the BEM has agreed the details of the booking with the prospective bride, the details are entered into the booking system. Thereafter, the K-express system is used in a similar way to the agency, in that the system is a repository of knowledge and a way of transmitting information, which allows others to participate and share information. However, in the House, its primary use is to have a central store of information that any employee can access to assist the customer and prevent the customer having to wait if there is a query on the booking and the BEM is not personally available. All subsequent transactions are entered into the system, keeping all information pertaining to the booking in a central resource. The K-express system also stores the financial information of the booking, which allows the finance department to check on invoice queries. The CRM tool in the House thus enables employees to handle bookings for visits and weddings without having to search for a manual file or appear unprofessional.

Consequently, it can be seen that the technological tool each organisation uses supports quite a different culture. In the House, the CRM system is used to share information that will enable all members of staff to have an overview of the event, to enhance the wedding experience for the customer and provide better service. Compare this to the debt collection agency, which has no continuity of service and puts pressure on employees to deal with the call within three minutes. The use of the CRM, and the cultural aspect of WPK arising from it, is thus quite different in nature in each organisation, as the motivation for using it is quite different. The agency uses their CRM tool to maximise efficiency and the speed at which money is extracted from the debtor, whereas in the VA, the CRM tool is used to enhance the service to the customer. The guiding management principle in the agency seems to be that 'time equals money'. In the House, the guiding management principle is that a 'good customer relationship and repeat business, equals money'. The way the House uses its CRM tool consequently supports and transmits a workplace culture that is much more customer-focussed.

The second point is drawn from a comparison of Mariani's (2002) study of the organisational restructuring of an Italian chemical company (cf.p.29). On the face of it, the entire scale and organisational structure seem entirely dissimilar to VAs, which tend to be smaller, less rigid and less unionised. The chemical company's work focus is research and development (R&D) and manufacture, which means workers are also very far away from the end user and ICT is used primarily for production rather than information sharing, as it is in VAs. In addition, VAs generally do not have the same level of technical skill requirements or need for formal training. As has been previously mentioned, there has been a move away from subject specialism across all six sites, as VA managers have concluded that most visitors do not need any great depth of specialist knowledge but a breadth of knowledge and good customer service. Therefore, most workers bring with them much of the knowledge and skills they need, in their attitude to learn experientially, to be customer-focussed and have a communicative personality.

Nonetheless, there are direct parallels between Mariani's study and this work, in the socially constructed nature of knowledge within each organisation and the use of internal mobility, semi autonomous teams and role integration in developing collective WPK. The use of multi-skilled teams and job rotation has been used in both industries to enlarge understanding of work across the entire process. The way access to knowledge and activities of each department is used, to provide a high degree of flexibility and readiness to respond, is also the same. In the chemical company this involves manufacturing and technological research, while in VAs it involves knowledge of departments ranging across catering, retail, events, the unique attraction etc.

The chemical company similarly faces the problem of having to integrate inexperienced workers, which requires rapid acquisition of WPK. In VAs, seasonal fluctuations bring influxes of seasonal staff at various times of the year. Both the

VAs and the chemical company handle this in a similar way by integrating new workers into expert teams to encourage expeditious WPK development. The cultural, information-sharing aspect of WPK is thus created and shared in similar ways. Therefore, it was interesting to note that the same methods have achieved very similar results in quite dissimilar industries.

In considering the conclusions drawn from these two comparisons it becomes clear that, although the debt collection agency and VAs are both 'service sector' industries, the culture of WPK in the chemical company was far more akin to the WPK culture found in VAs than the one described in the debt collection agency. Which leads me to concur with Boreham's (2002) conclusion that the way in which the workplace is managed is a critical factor in the way WPK culture is developed.

The Factors Affecting WPK in the VA Context

In that respect, the intense customer focus existing in VAs has been a significant factor in the way WPK culture has developed in all six of the case study sites. In VAs, the customer is an all-pervasive driving force, influencing both the organisation and individual employee and underlying all the factors that affect WPK in this context. The six main factors found to affect WPK in Scottish VAs, which have been examined at length in the findings chapter, are:

- The size and complexity of the site;

- Communication;

- Flexibility;

- Employee biographies;

- Weddings, Functions and Events; and

- Seasonality.

However, although these factors have been found to specifically influence WPK in this industry, they are by no means unique. The work processes of all organisations are subject to their size, complexity and employee biographies. Flexible working practices and communication have long been recognised as significant factors in WPK development in many industries. Likewise, many other industries are affected by seasonality, and numerous types of organisations allow others to borrow their facilities for events. As comparisons made throughout this discussion have and will show, a great number of the factors that have been found to influence WPK development in VAs have similarly been found to influence WPK in other industries, even where these industries appear quite dissimilar in other respects.

What is a significant factor in this industry, however, is the *extent* to which the *customer* drives each of the above factors. For example, complexity in some industries may come from complex machine processes. In VAs, complexity arises from the multiplicity of services delivered to the customer. In the chemical company described by Mariani, the aim of an organisational restructure was to give a high degree of flexibility and readiness during the work process. VAs have initiated structural reorganisation to achieve exactly the same end, but the difference is that the customer is an integral part of the work process. A major feature of the role of communication in VAs, is to equip the employee with enough knowledge for them to be able to answer customers' questions, anticipate and solve their problems and otherwise meet their needs. The need to deliver excellent customer service is also behind the changes VAs have made to the types of employee they now prefer to recruit. An essential aspect of WPK in VAs is the workers' ability to understand their importance in the system, their personal responsibility for delivering customer service and to be able to balance the needs of the customer with the needs of the organisation without compromising customer service too much.

Furthermore, the VA industry is not the only industry that has seasonal fluctuations, however, the extreme seasonal fluctuations experienced by some VAs are directly caused by changes in customer demand. Seasonality in VAs changes both intensity in demand, as was most noticeable at the Castle, and the types of demand customers make, as was seen in the way the Mountain facilities changed over to accommodate the demand for winter skiing. The seasonal ebb and flow in customer demand is also behind the necessity to introduce new workers into the workplace at various times of the week or year. The need for these workers to deliver customer service very quickly after their arrival has already been noted as the driver behind the rapid acquisition of WPK in some VAs.

It is also customer demand that drives weddings, functions and other events. Events are both seasonal and in themselves cause certain members of the team to react in different ways. To meet customer demand, organisations are either extending their work processes to incorporate the additional aspects that handling a function in-house bring, or they are introducing work partners into the organisation to deliver service on their behalf, with the consequent effects this relationship brings.

Consequently, it can be seen that although these industry specific factors are not unique to this industry, the customer drive behind them is a crucial factor in the way that WPK is shaped in this industry. Accordingly, this work now turns to examining what have been found to be the three main drivers of WPK in the VA context: the organisation, the individual and the customer.

The Organisation as a Driver of WPK

As was identified by Oliveira *et al* (2002), the need for organisational flexibility drives the necessity for WPK, and such was found to be the case in the VA

industry. Confirming the predictions of many authors in the VA literature, this study found that competitive pressure is compelling VAs to consider ways of improving the excellence of their customer service and to expand their revenue streams. Excellent customer service in this industry is vital and the role of the front-line employee in delivering this service is recognised to be of crucial importance. Considering that their existing strategies were not meeting this requirement, all six case study sites initiated significant changes to their organisations to bring about what they felt was a necessary shift in culture. It was evident during the 18-month period of field study that all six sites (and many of the other VAs visited that did not make it into the final six) were in the process of rapidly developing new quality-oriented strategies. These tended to be based around changing to non-hierarchical organisational structures, initiating multi-functional and flexible team working, and creating an information-sharing culture.

Like most VAs in Scotland, the six case study VAs are small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A major advantage of an SME, especially where complex plant and equipment is not a feature of the work process, is its relative flexibility in being able to adapt and change its practices. Although all six sites made major moves in the direction of changing their working practices along similar lines, two sites in particular were observed to undertake an almost complete changeover of their business structures and practices in the space of a year.

At the initial key informant interviews, both the Science Centre and the House had organisational structures comprising of discrete departments, each with separate responsibilities. During these interviews, both organisation informants talked about contemplating a changeover to multi-functional teams. Within a year, both the Science Centre and House had introduced and developed completely integrated multi-functional team working and had cohorts of employees with highly developed WPK as a result. Through getting rid of segregated departments and creating

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integrated 'customer service' teams, the boundaries between different occupational groups were blurred in the way that Boreham (2002b) has previously recorded as necessary for WPK development.

The introduction of new working conditions by the employer as a driver of work process knowledge is well documented. However, the sheer variety of new practices initiated in such a short time undoubtedly contributed to the rapid development in employees' WPK in these organisations. Although achieving better customer service was always stated as the main reason for initiating new practices, the practices adopted by both organisations also facilitated WPK development in the ways outlined in Ashton's model in Figure 1. For example, both sites 'structured the worker's attention' towards the type of learning required through training staff to be able to work in more than one area. In the case of the Science Centre, financial rewards were offered as an incentive to staff to broaden their ability to work in additional areas. The House moved away from a model of numerical flexibility, with lots of part-time workers, towards a model of functional flexibility; employing fewer full-time staff, but who could rotate around the various areas of the organisation. As workers became trained in several job roles, work rosters began to rotate staff across different areas, often during the course of a working day.

As well as creating multi-skilled teams, a new job role was introduced at the House (cf.p.182/p.198), which combined the aspects of reception, problem solving and collation of an overview into one single role. This resulted in the worker very rapidly building up a large repository of WPK, which was regularly being tapped into by colleagues. Moreover, as Ashton's model shows, access to knowledge has a major impact on workplace learning. Both these sites significantly increased the degree of information sharing with staff by introducing or increasing the regularity

of team meetings and expanding their use of computer-based intranets or booking systems as a means of sharing systems-level information.

It was noticeable that the two sites (Mountain and Science Centre), which held daily meetings, had intranets, and gave wide access to long-term organisational plans and other systems-level knowledge, had workers demonstrating the most well developed WPK. The evidence of this study shows that the sites that had developed an extensive, information-sharing culture were much further along the continuum towards creating the type of environments conducive to learning in work contexts identified by Rolo (1996, in Oliveira *et al*, 2002, p110) than a site like the Castle, where a lesser amount of information sharing was evident. Nonetheless, at all sites, cultural information sharing is an essential pre-condition for the development of WPK in this context.

Additional methods of expanding a strategic view of the organisation are employed by several sites. For example, all sites provide information sheets that gave an overview of daily activities. The Science Centre gives new workers a 'play day', where they are encouraged to use the facilities and gain a view of the site from the customer's perspective. At the House, Village, Canal, and Mountain, it has become their practice at to take staff on regular visits to other attractions, with the intention of getting them to critique the service they experience in relation to their own. Many of the sites use 'mystery shoppers' to test the service experience they offer, and the results of this are fed back to staff. Most sites report having joined collective groups of organisations or local partnerships in the destination area, to share marketing costs, facilities and good practice.

All of these practices have been adopted because they are recognised as developing the front-line employee to be able to deliver better customer service. However, multi-functional team working, rewarding job enlargement, regular

communication of systems-level information, and bringing in new job roles and strategies that expand an overview of the business, have also effectively and very rapidly developed workers' WPK. Consequently, these new ways of working have not only created the type of working conditions that require WPK, but incorporate a variety of methods that actively support WPK development. Thus, it appears that the organisational factors that have been found to drive WPK in other industries are also apparent as a main driver of WPK in Scottish visitor attractions.

The Individual Worker as a Driver of WPK

However, as Fischer (2005, p.381) has already noted, "the successful implementation of new forms of work organisation is not only dependent on job design but on the motivation, competences, and experiences workers bring into the work process". The findings of this study again mirror much of what has previously been discovered about WPK in relation to the individual, in that personal attitudes towards work and personal qualities of workers are a second important driver of WPK development. Yet, as shall be explained, this is also an important issue for customer service.

In the tourism industry, as Jones and Haven-Tang (2005) have observed, there has been a recent tendency to move away from recruiting people with craft skills to recruiting and training individuals with what employers consider is the 'right' attitude, enthusiasm and interest, and this trend was visible across all case study sites. It is reasonable to surmise that employers have always tried to employ people with 'the right skills' for the job. However, the important point here is that, in the last few years, what is meant by 'the right skills' has changed conspicuously. In today's visitor attractions, having the 'right skills' means having 'good customer service skills'. All six sites told of how in recent years they had changed their recruitment focus to employ people who had good customer service skills rather

than a specific subject specialism. For example, the Castle had moved away from employing historians and the Science Centre no longer recruited scientists, both now preferring to employ 'good communicators'.

Furthermore, the amalgamation of separate departments into multi-functional teams, supported by a change to a team title focussing on customer service, has been used by all six case study employers to further reinforce what is in effect a move of workers from considering their identity as 'subject specialist' to 'customer service specialist'. Changing to a generic job title for multi-skilled teams has been found to forestall problems with job demarcations and boundaries, change an employee's perception of their individual role and encourage personal responsibility for customer service (Evans-Platt, 1991; Kelliher and Riley, 2002). However, as Norros and Nuutinen (2002) have previously shown, the development of identity is inseparable from the development of knowledge and skills, and Fischer and Röben (2002) have noted that an individual worker's WPK includes the importance of knowing how his or her role fits into the company as a whole. Hence, having a team identity focussed on customer service is not only clearly helpful for an organisation wishing to promote a customer service culture, it also contributes to development of WPK.

It is important here to expand upon this point, as it brings to light a further understanding of the relationship between customer service and work process knowledge. The VA literature records that the importance of attitude and personal qualities of employees has been recognised as central factors in customer service excellence. However, the personal attitudes of an individual worker towards work, and especially openness to change at work are also recognised as important factors in developing WPK. It seemed logical to suspect that there must be some overlap. However, what became apparent as the study progressed is that the attitude and personal qualities required by an individual worker to deliver the

desired level of customer service in today's VAs, and those necessary to develop WPK, do not simply have common characteristics but virtually overlie one another.

When asked to describe what they meant by having 'good customer service skills' and 'the right attitude', managers would invariably describe someone who was customer focussed, able and willing to communicate with customers, answer their questions and be willing to sort out their problems. They also would be a team player, open to changes in the workplace, willing to work within a flexible framework and multi-task. In addition, they were willing to take personal responsibility for all aspects of the customer experience, even down to picking up litter. In other words, the qualities they described are those required for work process knowledge development: someone who is willing to work in an environment incorporating problem-solving situations, willing to participate in an information sharing culture, accept devolved authority and who can interact organically in a flexible, multi-skilled, team-working environment. Accordingly, in the view of the managers, the best workers are those who have well-developed work process knowledge.

Examining this from the other side, having good WPK enables a worker to deliver excellent customer service. The way the front-line staff member interacts with the customer is increasingly of vital importance, as employee behaviour is by far the most influential factor in shaping customers' perceptions (cf.p.82). To perform their job and meet the demands of the customer, workers must be able to answer customer questions and meet customer needs in a countless variety of forms; they have to offer a seamless service. In addition, as the customer's definition of quality does not remain static and customers' concept of quality excellence is continually rising (cf.p.77), it is necessary to have workers who can adapt and develop their skills to meet those changing needs and exceed their expectations. The workers capable of doing that are those with a wider understanding of how the

organisation operates; with enough knowledge to be able to anticipate and handle customer problems; who can answer customer questions because they know what is going on in other parts of the organisation and beyond; and recognise their individual importance in delivering quality service. Thus, it can be seen that what underpins good customer service, in this industry at least, is work process knowledge.

The drive to develop employees' WPK to enable them to deliver better customer service was found to be both employer-led and employee-led. To examine the employer drive first: as has previously been mentioned, VA employers have strong organisational reasons for driving WPK development. The VA literature stresses that those organisations that anticipate the expectations of customers and establish services that offer differentiated quality are those most likely to survive (cf.p.77). Therefore, the external pressure on VA businesses to aim for competitive advantage through delivering quality service is strong. Managers in this industry seem largely unaware of the concept of WPK, however, they nonetheless have recognised that the type of employee they want have the knowledge and abilities that well-developed WPK brings.

As most of the case study organisations had found that at least some of their existing employees did not match up to their new employee profile requirements, they were faced with the choice of retraining or bringing in new employees. The nature of the VA sector, with its relatively low entry qualifications and high turnover, has made it easier and quicker for some sites, such as the Science Centre, to simply recruit the type of person who meets their changed requirements. This has been the policy in most sites for recruiting seasonal employees. However, House management decided to increase the number of full-time employees as they felt their part-time employees did not always have the committed attitude of those employed full-time. For the Mountain and Village,

which have much longer served employees with a lower staff turnover, the main route there has been to train existing employees.

As Boreham (2002a; 2000b) has previously expressed, the basis of competitive advantage in organic working conditions lies in creating and sharing knowledge in a culture of teamwork, collaboration and shared responsibility. This was certainly noticeable at the Mountain, Science Centre, Village and House; in following the various methods outlined above, each had (if not at the start, at least by the end of the study) reached a critical mass of employees with the 'right attitude', to have developed a culture where the acquisition of WPK was very well supported. Unsurprisingly, these were the four sites where highly developed WPK was most evident.

However, as has been shown in the findings, two sites had some difficulties in effecting the same changeover to a customer-focussed, and a consequent WPK-supporting culture, because of workers who actively resisted their employer's initiatives. In the Canal, a number of employees continued to regard themselves as engineers and not responsible for customer service, while at the Castle, certain reception staff resisted being integrated into a flexible team with the guides. This finding supports Oliveira *et al's* (2002) previous conclusion that problems can arise if an individual considers his or her own occupational identity to be different from the identity assigned to them by others.

However, it was also apparent that, as Ashton (2004) has identified, the pro-activity of individual employees greatly contributes to developing their own skills and knowledge. There has been plenty of evidence presented in the findings chapter to support that WPK in this context is also very much employee-led. For example, workers regularly revealed a well-reasoned understanding of how their knowledge of areas, other than the one in which they were working, could help

them provide better service. Employee-generated WPK can also be found in the enthusiasm of foreign students to learn Scottish history well beyond the expected requirements; an expressed willingness to look something up to meet a customer need; and in the understanding that having product knowledge to answer questions and 'selling thimbles' were important parts of the visitors experience. Furthermore, as was demonstrated in the example of the House, where a problem was averted by the collective competence of the employees, WPK was also evident at the group level.

It is possible to conclude that, as has been found in other organisational contexts, the individual (or teams of individuals) in the VA context create WPK and that the idea is communicated upwards through the organisation, as well as downward. Therefore, as has been found by previous studies, the individual (or group), as well as the organisation, drives the development of WPK.

The Customer as a Driver of WPK

So far, the discussion has shown mainly how the findings of this study support and validate previous studies. However, the discussion now arrives at a juncture where the findings of this study lead into new territory, as they introduce the concept of the customer as a third, and hitherto unrecognised driver of WPK. The nature of WPK in Scottish VAs is heavily affected by the distinguishing characteristics of the VA product: the inseparability; intangibility; heterogeneity; and interdependence described in the literature review chapter (cf.pp.71-74). As Leighton (2006) observed, the disparate elements of the attraction are seen by the visitor as a collective whole; all of the individual parts and 'moments of truth' have to add up to a great day. This involves not simply having great exhibits or offering a unique core product that visitors come to see or experience, but also the interaction with the staff and "role and expectations of the visitor as an active and discerning

participant in the consumption process" (Leighton, 2006, pp.119-120). Therefore, the way the customer interacts with staff forms a crucial part of the work process of the VA product.

Through aiming to provide good customer service, workers in VAs thus find themselves responding to what the customer wants and trying to deliver it. In this respect, the service sector is different from the manufacturing sector. To illustrate this, I will draw on experience from visiting a shampoo manufacturer[9] to investigate the WPK of production line engineers (EVABCOM, 2005). During these workshops, I observed that although some workers demonstrated an understanding that their work related eventually to someone using the shampoo that they made, their day-to-day work process did not necessarily include thoughts of this customer. This is likely to be because there are several other steps in the chain of distribution, from wholesalers to retail outlets, between them and the end user, which allows the factory worker potentially to feel more disassociated and disconnected from the unknown person who will ultimately use the products.

However, in the service industry there is ordinarily no middleman in the way: the product for sale is the experience of the service and this experience is inseparable from the person delivering that service. This inseparability of service and service provider is what makes the employee-customer relationship so important in service industries and what makes it very different from that in the manufacturing sector. Whereas a manufacturing worker may be aware of the end customer as an important part of the overall system, the end customer is not usually directly interacting and affecting the work process. It was evident from discussion with these factory workers that they neither considered the customer on a daily basis

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[9] This study was being conducted as part of the European Leonardo Da Vinci project EVABCOM "Evaluation of Vocational Competence Development by Means of Work Process Oriented Learning" (Reference: D/03/B/FPP146 036). See bibliography for link to resultant manual.

nor constantly focussed on the enjoyment of the end user when making the products.
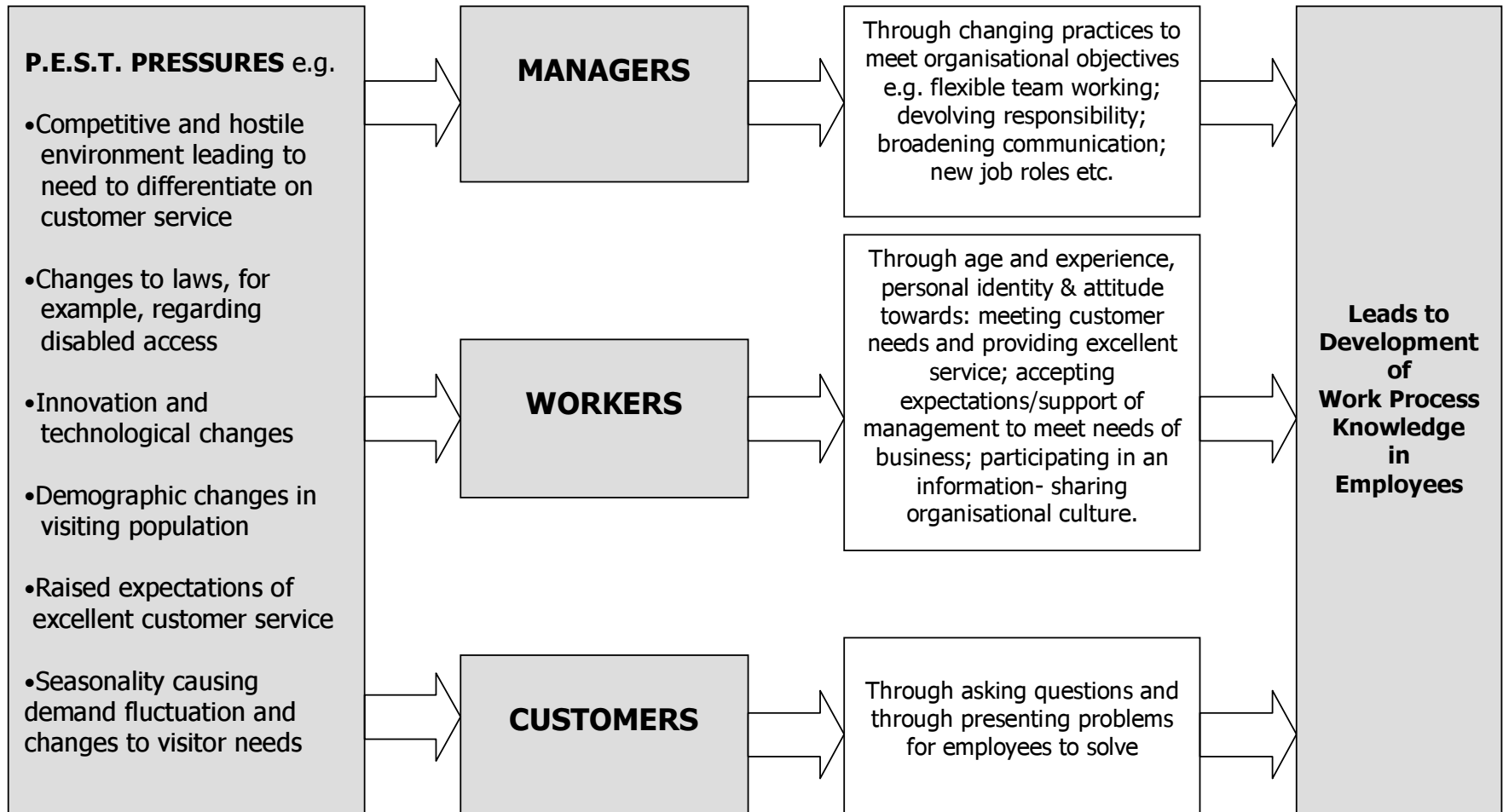
However, in the VAs studied, the end user was found to be a major and constant focus of the workers' day. The majority of employees who deal directly with the customer are compelled on a daily basis to be often minutely aware of what their customers want. This constant interaction compels employees to look at their own work process from the customers' viewpoint, which causes them very rapidly to gain a strategic overview of the site. This is because customers arriving on site for the first time may not be fully aware of the detail of the site and so they themselves have a strategic overview. They arrive with a general idea of what they want to achieve from the experience of the visit and come armed with questions that they expect employees to be able to answer to help them get the best out of their time there.

These questions might be fine detail about the site, for example, particular aspects of the history of the Castle, the Village or the House. However, it was found that visitor questions are just as likely to be about what is going on in different areas of the site or even how this site relates to similar sites or the local vicinity. For example, earlier in the findings chapter we saw how visitors often asked how the Castle compared to other castles or what other attractions could be visited in the area. Visitors also want to know what there is to do on site, what is going on in different areas of the site at different times or when are the best times of day to be at particular points. Is there a best order to see things in? The customers' strategic view includes aspects like comparing this site with other attractions they have visited before, what experience they expect to get from this site and how they expect employees to help them get the best out of their day.

Employees who are customer-focussed try to deliver what visitors want. Consequently, employees in VAs learn very quickly that what visitors to their site want is for all staff members to have an overview of the site (and beyond) and be able to advise them how to make the most of their visit, whatever that entails. To be able to deliver good customer service, it is essential that employees have a well-developed overview of everything that goes on in the organisation and how it all inter-relates. In turn, employees with the 'right attitude' push themselves to meet and deliver these expectations. It is thus argued that the closely integrated nature of the employee-customer relationship in this context has a profound effect on workers' work process knowledge and leads to a core conclusion of this thesis: that the visitors themselves are pushing employees to develop work process knowledge very rapidly.

Figure 5 on the next page is a simple model identifying these three main drivers of work process knowledge. The first column indicates that all businesses, and indeed workers and customers, are subject to external pressures that influence the way they behave. These are often described by the acronym PEST (see abbreviations, p.viii). A few of the main pressures have been listed in this box, although this is not an exhaustive list. This model recognises that the changing customer profile and their expectations of service excellence undoubtedly exert a pressure on managers indirectly, so the customer appears as an external pressure, to which organisations have responded by changing their structures and moving towards flexible working practices. Managerial decisions, in turn, exert a pressure on workers, although, as has been previously discussed, individual or groups of workers also drive their own WPK development. However, as this model shows, and has been previously explained, the customer also has a direct affect on the development of workers' WPK through the questions they ask and the problems they pose for employees to solve.

Figure 5: Drivers of Work Process Knowledge

P.E.S.T. PRESSURES e.g.		

P.E.S.T. PRESSURES e.g.

• Competitive and hostile environment leading to need to differentiate on customer service

• Changes to laws, for example, regarding disabled access

• Innovation and technological changes

• Demographic changes in visiting population

• Raised expectations of excellent customer service

• Seasonality causing demand fluctuation and changes to visitor needs

MANAGERS

WORKERS

CUSTOMERS

Through changing practices to meet organisational objectives e.g. flexible team working; devolving responsibility; broadening communication; new job roles etc.

Through age and experience, personal identity & attitude towards: meeting customer needs and providing excellent service; accepting expectations/support of management to meet needs of business; participating in an information- sharing organisational culture.

Through asking questions and through presenting problems for employees to solve

Leads to Development of Work Process Knowledge in Employees

Extending WPK Beyond Organisational Boundaries

The drive of the customer has a further noticeable affect on the nature of the WPK of employees in this context. Fischer and Boreham (2004) have recognised that WPK is typically constructed by employees during problem solving in the performance of their work and suggest this usually takes place in 'non-standard situations'. However, this study has found that work process knowledge is being constructed on an almost continual daily basis. The intense focus on customer service means that employees must respond to a kaleidoscope of variable situations that customers present every day and consequently the unusual becomes the usual. An employee does not know what situation or question the next customer will present and they have to be ready for anything. In each encounter with customers, the 'non-standard' thus becomes standard.

Visitors ask questions about the internal work process or systems, for example, times of events, what is going on in other departments, how often the boat trips leave, what types of wedding ceremonies are possible, and they are often asked of workers whose job role may not extend into this area. Therefore, as has already been established, the customer is driving employees to stretch their knowledge to understand what is going on within all areas of the organisation.
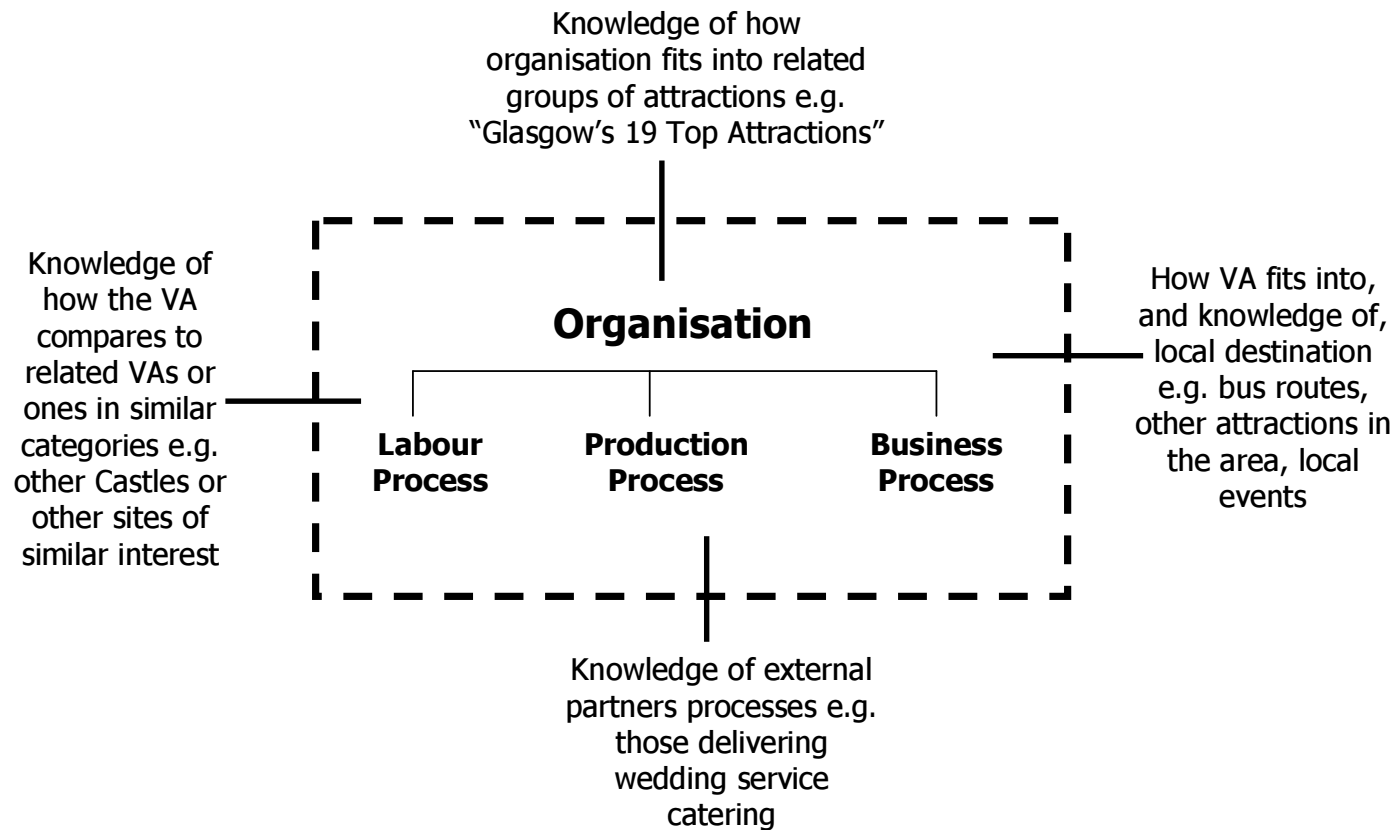
However, what is particularly of interest is the way in which the customer is also driving workers to have knowledge that extends beyond the boundaries of the organisation because of the nature of the questions asked. For example, visitors to the Castle frequently ask how this castle relates to other castles in Scotland. Other questions visitors to all sites typically ask are details of the local destination, other attractions, directions etc, all of which require a knowledge that incorporates such diverse aspects as geography, history and transport networks. Employees whose WPK is well developed and extends beyond the boundaries of the organisation are

better able to handle these customer interactions. Many workers bring a lot of this general knowledge with them. However, several of the VAs provide new workers with the answers to 'frequently asked questions'. Consequently, management give a clear message to workers that this wider level of knowledge is an expected part of the job role and this drives workers to widen their knowledge accordingly.

Figure 6 on the next page is a model showing how a worker's knowledge in this industry has to extend beyond the boundaries of the organisation. Boreham (2004c) has shown that work process knowledge incorporates a systems-level understanding of the organisation, including the labour, production and business processes, which are indicated within the box. However, this research has found that in VAs, workers must have not only a systems-level understanding of their own organisation but also must understand how their organisation fits into the wider system of tourism in Scotland. Therefore, the organisational boundaries have been represented as a dotted line to indicate that the boundaries are semi-permeable. The lines stretching through the dotted line show the four main ways in which knowledge requirements in this industry have been found to reach beyond the organisation's boundaries.

Three of these knowledge requirements have already been discussed. However, the fourth extension on the lower half of this model represents the way in which 'external partners' push WPK beyond the boundaries of the organisation. The need to expand revenue streams has introduced external partners into the organisational mix for many VAs.

Figure 6: Extending WPK Beyond the Boundaries of the Organisation

Knowledge of how
organisation fits into related
groups of attractions e.g.
"Glasgow's 19 Top Attractions"

Knowledge of
how the VA
compares to
related VAs or
ones in similar
categories e.g.
other Castles or
other sites of
similar interest

Organisation

**Labour
Process**

**Production
Process**

**Business
Process**

How VA fits into,
and knowledge of,
local destination
e.g. bus routes,
other attractions in
the area, local
events

Knowledge of external
partners processes e.g.
those delivering
wedding service
catering

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These partners are in effect, suppliers, however the term 'supplier' suggests that the relationship is one-way, whereas the term 'partner' suggests a reciprocal link; an understanding of the work process in both directions. As the findings in chapter 3 demonstrated (cf.p.229), having an external partner who provides service on behalf of the organisation requires an understanding by VA employees of the work processes of the external partner, so preparation can be made for them in advance. Conversely, the external partner requires knowledge of the VA to be able to set up and deliver the service in a way that fits in with the VAs' work processes and cultural values. As has been previously mentioned, the visitor views all elements of the service in a holistic way. They will not necessarily regard the service they receive from the wedding caterer as being from a separate organisation, so they will expect the same level of service as they would expect from the VA. If the service delivered by the partner is poor, then it reflects badly on the overall experience and compromises the reputation of the VA. Consequently, the necessity to understand the needs of this external partner, and the need of the external partner to understand the requirements of the VA, drives the WPK of both partners to extend beyond their own organisational boundaries, if they are to deliver a seamless service.

In this respect, a strong connection was made with Clases and Werner's (2004) study of an automobile manufacturer and one of its 'just in time' suppliers (cf.p.41). They similarly identified that the external supplier, or partner, moved beyond a point where they were simply co-operating, but had become part of the work process. In some ways, there are differences between these two industries. In Clases and Werner's study, the work process involves the manufacture of actual goods, whereas, in the VA context, external partners are used to deliver service on their behalf. The car manufacturer and partner relationship also involves greater investment in plant and machinery, whereas the service nature of the relationship of the VA partners makes it much easier to adapt to any problems. This flexibility

accelerates the building of expertise and makes dovetailing between the two organisations much easier to attain in VAs. However, the same basic principles to the relationship apply to both industries:

- The supplier becomes responsible for delivering part of the overall product and consequently must share (or align themselves with) similar values and quality standards as the main organisation;

- Trust is a key feature of the relationship with external partners;

- Communication is the key to understanding and building these relationships;

- The relationship with an external partner extends knowledge beyond organisational boundaries.

Extrapolating from this conclusion, I began to question that if external partners have been found to be drivers of work process knowledge in other industries, then perhaps other types of customers may also drive WPK in other industries. To examine this concept involves considering the definition of 'a customer'.

For most of the discussion to this point, the term 'customer' has referred to the visitor to the attraction, i.e. the end user or final consumer of the product. However, four distinct categories of 'customer' were observed within the VAs, each of them drivers of WPK in a different way. These four categories are defined as:

1. The end user customer;

2. The intermediate or intermediary client;

3. The internal customer; and

4. The external or internal partner.

The 'end user' is the customer who visits the VA, and the way in which their interaction with front-line employees drives WPK has already been discussed in some detail. However, a second category of customer, as was mentioned in section four of the findings chapter (cf.p.211), was the 'intermediate or intermediary' client. Intermediate clients are those who operate on behalf of the end user, i.e. they are intermediaries in the chain of distribution between the service or product provider and the end user. In VAs, intermediaries include coach companies, schools and businesses that liaise with the VA to organise things like corporate functions or regular visits of coach parties. Contact within the VA is often with specialised booking or events staff rather than front-of-house employees. However, these customers also ask questions and pose problems for employees to solve. The types of problems and questions may be different and may affect different groups of workers in the organisation, but they still drive WPK development within the organisation.

An 'internal customer' is defined as one internal department providing a service to another internal department within the same organisation. It is common in the business world to find one internal department being viewed as a customer of the other, especially where they are not part of an integrated team. An example of how this type of customer drives WPK is drawn from the Village, where the booking department is completely separate from the departments who deliver the service. Employees in this department are not part of the integrated customer service team. Nor is the department running the ride. Consequently, when the booking department makes reservations for the ride, they are providing a service for the other department. If we consider the example of the time the booking department caused major problems for the ride employees by booking 17 wheelchairs at one time, it becomes evident that where one department serves another department in a customer-style relationship, WPK must be created as a result, in both departments. The knowledge of the work process needs of other

departments, and how one department interacts and has a knock-on effect in other departments, is a fundamental component of WPK.

The final category is that of 'partners'. These may be internal or external suppliers, which belong to a different company, but which provide service on behalf of the organisation. As has been previously mentioned, this work has adopted the view that a supplier is considered to become a partner when the supplier is responsible for delivering part of the overall product rather than simply raw materials. This makes the relationship very similar to the internal customer, where one department serves another to deliver the overall service. However, in the case of a partner, one organisation serves another to deliver the overall service. Examples of these types of relationships are the café supplier at Science Centre or the wedding caterer at the Canal. As has been shown throughout the findings, when communication channels open and an understanding of the work processes of the two organisations is built, then the WPK of both sides of the partnership is expanded.

In the VA industry, the customer in all of the above forms was very apparent as a main driver of WPK. However, the 'end user' customers were undoubtedly the most prolific. Table 8 (cf.p.120), shows a rough customer to employee ratio in each VA. This is an extremely crude tool, as obviously not every member of staff is exposed to every visitor; some may encounter and interact with far more, some far fewer. However, the main point to draw from this is that in the VA industry, opportunities for employees to meet and interact with end user customers is far greater than the average worker in a car or shampoo factory will encounter. Because of the manufacturing and engineering focus of previous studies, the customer as a driver of WPK has subsequently been overlooked. It is the sheer number of visitors to VAs that has now brought this relationship to light, as it has such a noticeable effect on WPK in VA employees.

However, if the notion of the customer is stretched to include all the types that exist in an organisation, where one person, department or partner serves another, then I theorise that 'the customer' must be a driver of WPK in a great number of industries. Even in organisations where there is no interaction with the end user, other levels of customers may exist. It is, of course, arguable that the effect on WPK in other industries may be more in terms of quality than in quantity. However, different types of customers have impact on different levels of the organisation. The internal customer is just as much a customer as an external one, and may indeed have more influence on another departments' work process than external customers. This reinforces the premise that wherever 'the customer' has an effect on the work process, through asking questions or posing problems, then they drive the development of WPK.

Similarly, just as the drive of the customer has been underestimated, I argue that how the customer interacts with the organisation to push knowledge beyond its boundaries has been also underestimated. Figure 6 showed that the questions that were asked, and the relationship with partners, had pushed the knowledge of VA workers to extend in four different directions. It has already been noted that interaction with an external partner had pushed WPK beyond organisational boundaries in another very different sector (cf.p.41). The other three directions where VA knowledge extends beyond the organisational boundaries have all been driven by the questions asked by customers. At first glance, the multiplicity of questions visitors asked seemed very broad. However, the range of questions, although diverse, nonetheless is usually grouped in areas that are all closely related or relevant to the individual VA.

Therefore, this led to the conclusion that the range of knowledge that employees require is driven by what interests the customer. In the VA industry, this means that the questions are related to the customer experience of the attraction.

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However, in other industries, although the range might be different, the need for workers to extend their knowledge beyond organisational boundaries may still be present. The two main driver drivers of WPK previously recognised, those of the organisation and the individual, are to be found in very similar forms in the VA industry. Consequently, a key implication of this work is that the corollary is true; that this third driver of WPK, that of the customer, also exists in other organisations.

Defining the Vital Aspects of WPK in VAs

Returning to Kruse's original definition (cf.p.20), this study can now validate those findings, as WPK in the VA industry undoubtedly requires:

- An understanding of work roles in parts of the organisation other than the employee's own;

- An awareness of the interdependency of the activities in different departments, including characteristics of the system as a whole; and

- Participation in a workplace culture that provides a service to colleagues in support of a high quality of service to the actual customer.

It is difficult to confirm this long after the original study, but easy to conceive of, that the mention of 'providing a service to colleagues' might well have been making some reference to the concept of internal customers that has been developed in this thesis.

This leads to a summary of what this study concludes to be the vital aspects of work process knowledge within the context of the visitor attraction sector. These have some overlap with Fischer's (in 2001, p.152; 2005, p.374; 2002, pp.162-163) list of vital aspects of WPK relating to the industrial sector, which are:

- How the company works; this includes work processes within the framework of a company's work organisation;

- The concrete consequences that can be derived from specific actions,

- The specific peculiarities of material and equipment; and

- The mechanics, energy and chemistry of the industrial processes.

The vital aspects of WPK in the VA would differ slightly from the above characterisation, although the first two aspects listed above could be retained as being wholly pertinent. "The specific peculiarities of material and equipment" is less relevant in this context, although not completely discounted, as materials and equipment are used. However, this has much less significance than "The specific peculiarities of the process relating to the attraction's USP". For example, each attraction has a unique aspect that differentiates it from other attractions, which have an affect on the work process. In the case of the Village, this would be their particular history; at the Canal, it would be their unique canal mechanism, or would include the art-related interest of the House i.e. that particular aspect of knowledge that is specific to the attraction.

The "special aspects of mechanical, energy and chemical processes" must also be discounted in this context, as they play little part in the WPK knowledge of VAs. Instead, this would be replaced by reference to the special aspects of how knowledge in this context extends beyond the boundaries of the organisation to include knowledge of the local area, the micro environment in which the organisation operates, the external partners and associations to which they belong and how their attraction relates to these and the destination area around it.

Thus, this work concludes that the vital aspects of WPK in the VA context include:

- How the company works; this includes work processes within the framework of a company's work organisation;

- The concrete consequences that can be derived from specific actions;

- The specific peculiarities of the process relating to the attraction's USP i.e. those particular aspects of knowledge that are specific to the attraction;

- How the attraction inter-relates with internal and external partners and the associations to which they belong; and

- Knowledge of the local area, the microenvironment in which the organisation operates and how the attraction relates to the rest of the destination.

Implications of this Work

There are undoubtedly several outcomes that will emerge from the findings of this research. Firstly, and most importantly, this work contributes substantially to the existing body of both WPK and VA literatures, with the insights made here mutually benefiting both fields of study. However, it has also been an important consideration that the findings of this work serve of some practical use to the industry sector from which they arise. Consequently, this final section of the discussion will begin by examining the implications arising from this work, which relate directly to the VA industry.

This thesis clearly establishes that work process knowledge is the standard skill, the foundation, on which good customer service is based and is the theory underpinning what makes staff better employees. This knowledge has potentially significant consequences for the VA industry and an essential aim of this work is to disseminate these findings to VA practitioners. With the support of People 1st in providing workshops to interact with employers, this process is already well under way. People 1st, and this author, believe that if VA managers can be made aware

that WPK is the vital missing ingredient in their customer service strategies, then they can use this theoretical framework as a management tool. The WPK framework identified in this thesis potentially provides managers with a toolkit of the factors that promote and accelerate development of WPK, what can hinder its development and additional influencing factors. Through applying such a theoretical toolkit, in-house customer service training can become more effective, and raise the effectiveness of other training. This is because, if workers are shown the importance of work process knowledge, they will undoubtedly recognise its relevance and usefulness to their work. In understanding that WPK is key to delivering customer service, workers become empowered to develop it actively for themselves.

In addition, there are further consequences arising from the close association with People 1st throughout this study. Firstly, it is the intention of People 1st increasingly to incorporate WPK into the development of future NOS. This process has already begun, as input from this study has recently been fed into the development of new NOS for Events. In addition, People 1st intend to use a 'WPK framework' as the basis of developing a new training strategy for this sector. As unitisation increases in the way qualifications and training programmes are compiled, it becomes important to recognise that WPK is the framework that unites them. In future, training programmes will not be compiled in isolation but with WPK in mind. Modes of training and assessment delivery will also be influenced by the findings of this study. Trainers and verifiers are to be trained to spot WPK as part of the evidence requirements in areas where practical competency is required. For example, where evidence is required to show practical competence, such as in problem solving, a worker must exhibit sufficient evidence of WPK to be considered competent. These measures will go a long way towards improving the customer service culture of not only individual visitor attractions but might ultimately enhance our country's service reputation.

However, there are also important considerations arising from this work with regard to shaping future studies in the field of WPK. The growing value of service industries to the Scottish (and wider) economy, combined with the lack of previous study of WPK in this area, make further investigation of a wider range of service sector industries of crucial importance, to establish if these findings are mirrored elsewhere. If, as is proposed in this thesis, WPK is an essential component in the delivery of customer service, then it is vital to gain a more thorough understanding of its affects in various service contexts. It is also important, from a practical point of view, to understand if increasing the work process knowledge of staff in a customer service focussed organisation has any significant effects on measurable aspects of an organisation's revenue or customer satisfaction surveys.

However, from a wider perspective, a more fundamentally important implication arising from this study relates to the identification of the customer as a key driver of WPK development in the workplace. Previous studies have already documented the impact of organisational factors, such as organic structures, working practices, multi-functional team-working etc., and the role and attitude of the individual worker, as dual drivers of WPK. Yet, the importance of the customer as a third key driver of workplace learning has only now become apparent from this study of an industry, where its specific characteristics serve to intensify the employee-customer relationship. It is the very intensity of this relationship in the VA industry, where the customer is such an integral part of the work process, which has made this connection so clear. In VAs, the demands and requirements of increasingly service-aware customers are compelling employees to develop WPK not only extremely quickly, but also to extend their knowledge well beyond the usual labour, production and business process boundaries of the organisation, to provide the quality of service expected.

However, these findings also undoubtedly have major implications for many industries, not solely customer service based industries but any organisation where internal, intermediate and external customers have an influence on the work process. Evidence was provided to show that the 'end user' customer in a visitor attraction has a large impact on WPK development because of sheer numbers and the immediacy in the customer-employee exchange. However, what is also apparent is that intermediate clients (such as the coach company) or the internal customer or partner (i.e. one department or another company providing a service for another), although smaller in numbers, also undoubtedly exert a large influence on workers WPK at various levels within the organisation. It has already been observed in Clases and Werner's study that interaction with an external partner had driven the requirement for WPK to extend beyond the boundaries of that organisation as well. It is important to discover whether internal or external customers are similarly key drivers of WPK and are driving knowledge beyond the boundaries of other organisations. As the importance of customer service becomes of growing concern to all businesses, the ways in which customers (whether end user, internal, intermediary or external) affect employees' learning in the workplace become an essential area for further investigation.

Thus, we arrive back at the core conclusion of this thesis, which is that all types of customers are important drivers of WPK. It is suggested that although in some industries this relationship may be less defined and more subtle than in this case, wherever a customer has an influence on the work process, WPK will be affected as a result. Consequently, I propose that this study's recognition of the customer as a hitherto unrecognised third 'key driver' of work process knowledge, represents a major breakthrough in advancing understanding in the theory of work process knowledge.

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Appendix 1: Email Recruiting for Questionnaire Completion

Dear _____

As you are the Director of Development and Marketing for the _____, it has been suggested that you might be the best person to speak to about this.

I am contacting you on behalf of People 1st, the Sector Skills Council for Hospitality and Tourism who are currently in the process of developing Occupational Standards for an area of the industry where none currently exist, namely 'visitors attractions'.

People 1st wish to recruit key people in leading visitor attractions from across Scotland with a view to gaining information about what are the different job roles and what skills and knowledge are required in this sector of the industry so that skills training can be mapped, developed and accredited. The long-term aim is to encourage training, professionalism and progression within the industry.

In the near future, we shall be distributing questionnaires to begin eliciting this information and as a leading visitor attraction in Scotland, we hope that we can count on your support.

The questionnaire can be completed by a) by email b) phone interview c) face to face interview d) by post.

My questions at present are:

1. Are you the key person who would posses this information within your organisation?
2. Would you be willing to complete a questionnaire?
3. If so, which method would be most convenient for you?
4. If you are not the key person, would you please advise who would be so that we can contact them?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

On behalf of People 1st, Sector Skills Council for Hospitality and Tourism

Shuna Marr
University of Stirling
Institute of Education
Pathfoot
Stirling FK9 4LA
Email s.a.marr@stir.ac.uk
Tel: 079 298 29813 (mobile)
Tel: 0141 583 1416

Appendix 2: Email Sent with link to Online Questionnaire

Dear

You have been identified by your organisation as the key person best informed to answer a few questions about your particular visitor attraction.

People 1st, the Sector Skills Council for Hospitality and Tourism, are currently in the process of developing National Occupational Standards for Visitor Attractions.

Your involvement in this process is crucial if we are to understand fully the needs of the visitor attraction industry.

We invite you to click onto the hyperlink below to take you directly to a questionnaire, which we have posted online so that it can be completed at a time and location that best suits you.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=4095994094

There are only 7 short questions and we anticipate that the questionnaire will take approximately five minutes to complete. However, partially completed responses can be saved for later completion if you don't wish to complete it all at once.

The survey will be available between 21 April and 06 May.

The findings will be used to gain information about the different job roles, skills and knowledge required in the visitor attraction sector so that skills training can be mapped, developed and accredited.

The long-term aim is to encourage training, professionalism and progression within the industry.

If you experience any difficulties when completing the questionnaire or if you require any further details about this survey, please contact:

Kate Tetley
Vocational Learning Manager
People 1st
28 Castle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3HT

Tel: 0131 624 4040
Email: kate.tetley@people1st.co.uk
website: www.people1st.co.uk

Kind regards, On behalf of People 1st

Shuna Marr (Mrs)

Doctoral Research Student
University of Stirling
Pathfoot
Stirling FK9 4LA

Email s.a.marr@stir.ac.uk
Tel: 079 298 29813 (mobile)

Appendix 3: Paper Version of Questionnaire and Accompanying Letter

people 1st

(On People 1st headed paper)

Kate Tetley
Vocational Learning Manager
People 1st
28 Castle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3HT

Tel: 0131 624 4040
Email: kate.tetley@people1st.co.uk
website: www.people1st.co.uk

Date

Recipient's address

Dear <insert person's name here>

Visitor Attraction Survey

People 1st, are currently in the process of developing National Occupational Standards for Visitor Attractions. Your involvement in this process is crucial if we are to understand fully the needs of the visitor attraction industry.

You have been identified by your organisation as the key person best informed to answer a few questions about your particular visitor attraction.

We invite you to complete a short questionnaire, which you will find attached.

There are only 7 short questions and we anticipate that the questionnaire will take approximately five minutes to complete.

We would be grateful to receive your completed questionnaire before 01 May.

The findings will be used to gain information about the different job roles, skills and knowledge required in the visitor attraction sector so that skills training can be mapped, developed and accredited.

The long-term aim is to encourage training, professionalism and progression within the industry.

If you require any further details about this survey, please contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely

Kate Tetley
etc

people1st

Visitor Attractions Survey

1. Introduction

People 1st are keen to gain an understanding of the dynamics and skill requirements of the visitor attractions industry including how the industry works, who the key players are, what the occupations are and what the job and skill requirements are.

The findings will contribute to development of the National Occupational Standards for the industry. These standards are a measure of competency required to perform any task. They are the basis of learning and qualifications programmes.

We have identified that there is widespread multi-tasking in the industry and therefore the current learning and qualification programmes do not match your requirements. The industry will depend increasingly upon a flexible and motivated workforce. Development of that workforce requires relevant, flexible and highly accessible learning provision.

Your involvement in this process is crucial if we are to understand fully the needs of the visitor attraction industry.

This survey should take less than five minutes to complete.

Please follow the instructions on each page.

Thank you for your help. Your response is appreciated.

2. Your business

In this section we would like to know some details about your organisation and yourself.

1   **What is the name of your organisation?** Please write the name of your visitor attraction in this box:

2   **What is the size of your organisation?** Please tick which of the following applies:

Less than 50 employees ☐   Between 50-250 employees ☐   More than 200 employees ☐

3   **What is your name and job title?** Please write your name and job title in this box so that we can confirm that the person completing this questionnaire is the same person to whom we addressed it. We wish to confirm that we have the correct key contact:

4   **What are your contact details?** Please write your address, telephone number and email address if you have one, in this box. Again, this is to confirm that we have your correct contact details:

5   **In which of the following areas is your business involved?** Please tick all that apply. If you are involved in one or more additional activities, please write these in the box provided:

☐ Theme Park

☐ Retail

☐ Hospitality and events

☐ Interpretation

☐ Sporting activities

☐ Educational activities

☐ Heritage or cultural work

☐ Animal or bird park

☐ Art and/or performance

☐ Food & drink and other manufacturing e.g. glass, textile, pottery etc

☐ Others (please specify):

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6   Which one of the activities mentioned in question 5 (including any 'other's that you wrote in) would you identify as your **core activity**? Please select ONE and write it in this box:

7   Do you have any staff who work across a number of different retail areas within your visitor attraction?

Yes ☐   No ☐

For example, staff who alternately work in retail, hospitality and interpretation.

If yes, please list in the box below examples of when this would occur your business i.e. the range of different areas someone might work across.

Thank you for completing this survey. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Please return this questionnaire in the stamped, addressed envelope provided to:

Kate Tetley
Vocational Learning Manager
People 1st
28 Castle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3HT

by the 01 May 2005.

Thank you.

Appendix 4: Follow up Email to Recruit for Key Informant Interviews

Dear _____

Re: People 1st Visitor Attraction Survey Response

Many thanks indeed for your recent response to our online survey. We were very interested in the examples you gave for evidence of multi-skilling and cross boundary working within ___<name of attraction>_____ .

So much so, that Kate Tetley and I would like to visit your site in person and talk more to you about your business. We would be very interested to discuss the different tasks staff might perform within the visitor attraction section of _<name of site>__ and find out more about them. It would also be useful to observe staff going about their normal duties, if this were possible. We would not anticipate taking up more than an hour or so of your time.

We would like to visit on _____<dates>____ in the afternoon, if either of these dates are convenient for you, perhaps between <times> ? If not, then perhaps you could suggest a suitable alternative date and/or time.

I shall follow up this email with a telephone call on <date> in the morning to check if we can confirm these arrangements, if I don't hear from you before.

I look forward to meeting you soon.

Kind regards, on behalf of People 1st

Shuna Marr (Mrs)

Doctoral Research Student
University of Stirling
Institute of Education
Pathfoot
Stirling FK9 4LA
Tel: 079 298 29813
email: s.a.marr@stir.ac.uk

And on behalf of

Kate Tetley
Vocational Learning Manager
People 1st
28 Castle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3HT

Tel: 0131 624 4040
Email: kate.tetley@people1st.co.uk
website: www.people1st.co.uk

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Key Informant Interviews

Question areas for Field Visits (Areas we've agreed to explore during Visitor Attraction visits discussions):

Discussion will be dynamic but should explore each of the following areas:

Departments – what departments they have – how they interact with one another

ICT – how it is used in the business and in communication

Recruitment – types, selection criteria (necessary qualifications, qualities, attitude?)

Training – types, in-house/external, formal/informal, certificated?, is there progression from one training course to another? What skills is it teaching? (specific skills or just confidence)

Multiskilling – types of activities, between which areas, how homogenous are their skills or is there a main specialism and 'covering' other areas? (i.e. not as well developed in all areas)

Competence - How long does it take someone to become competent? Level of competence expected?

Skills - appraisal and measurement of skills (is this done formally? do they follow up training by checking its effectiveness?)

Responsibility – how much responsibility to deal with problems would an employee have? How much autonomy to make decisions or use their own initiative?

Knowledge – how is knowledge distributed throughout the system? (notice boards, meetings within and between departments)

How much knowledge of any particular area would any one employee need to have? (knock-on affect between departments)

Contracted departments – are any areas of the business contracted out (cleaning, catering etc)

Communication – systems in place/used, between which levels, info update sessions,

Social Interaction process – between employees, between employees /management and between employee/customer (internal customers/suppliers)

Quality - Do they have quality initiative IiP, quality circles, ISO9000 – has this had an impact on the way they work?

Administration – how much administration is done by a general assistant?

External Interaction – how do they interact with other businesses/external customers etc in their field e.g. network with suppliers / tourist board, ASVA, Food Inspectors / Health & Safety etc

Appendix 6: Example of Email Recruiting Sites for Shadowing Expert Worker

Dear _____

Hello again. At our last meeting in July, when you kindly gave me an interview about the types and jobs at <u>\<Name of attraction\></u> you said that you wouldn't mind me contacting you again about further research for my PhD.

In that respect, I wonder if it would be possible to come along and shadow one of your team members for a day, to try and ascertain what work process knowledge is needed for their job?

This would simply involve shadowing him/her, observing them going about their duties and chatting casually with them about their job when circumstances allow. Obviously I realise you would have to get their consent for me doing this, but I promise I wouldn't get in the way! I would try to be as unobtrusive as possible.

I would like to shadow for one shift, or at least most of one. It would be most useful to get an experienced staff member who may be working in several different areas during the day (for example in the shop/reception/ guided tour etc), for example a duty manager. In this way, I'd get a broad picture of what their job entailed.

I'm not sure if before Christmas would be a busy time for you – I could come any day on or between the 7th – 16th December. However, if December is not suitable then practically any day in January would be ok for me (barring 11. 17 and 26 at the moment).

If none of these dates suits, then perhaps you may wish to suggest an alternative.

Kind regards
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Appendix 7: Example of Email Recruiting Sites for Shadowing Teams

Dear _____

I hope that your restructuring work on the café is all done and dusted now and looking lovely? I have left contacting you for a week or two after its anticipated completion and let Easter go by. Hopefully, things will have now settled down to their usual speed.

The reason I am contacting you is to ask if I can impose on your hospitality one final time? I mentioned at our last meeting that there was one final stage of development for the new methodology and I am now at that stage.

The form the research will take is pretty much the same as the last time – a day of shadowing different members of staff going about their duties and talking to them when I get an opportunity. However, this time my questioning will be more specifically about the types of problems they deal with in their job and how they solve them. This is getting to the heart of their development of work process knowledge.

I don't anticipate that I would need to be with any one member of staff for more than half an hour to an hour. However, I would like to have access to at least one member of staff in each department. If possible, it would be good to tape record the conversations, but not essential if anyone objects.

Once this final stage is done, Kate Tetley and I are intending to pilot the completed methodology on some new attractions. The final version will be much more compact and streamlined that what you have patiently submitted to – however, it is only through working through these stages that I was able to develop the final version. In that respect, I really appreciate your help. And People 1st do too – because it will enhance the functional analysis process and make future qualifications more relevant to employers and employees.

I do therefore hope that you will be able to help me this one last time.

If you are amenable, perhaps one of the following dates might suit you. If not, then perhaps you could suggest an alternative date?

<list of dates given>

Kindest regards
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