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Guru's goal is to keep people on the ball

Arsenal is one of many bodies being taught to see its personnel as assets, says **Martin Baker**

THE maxim that the greatest asset of a business is its people ranks up there with great management platitudes of our time - second only, perhaps, to some office-bound paper-pusher preaching that "the customer always comes first."

Staff morale, of course, tends to be inversely proportional to the vehemence with which the "greatest asset" mantra is chanted. In other words, the more people are supposed to be important, the more people neglect they usually suffer.

If people truly are assets, argues David Elliott, Monaco-based management guru and performance consultant, then the management of UK plc often fails not only to invest in its inventory but manages to forget the basic maintenance.



David Elliott: people person

Investment, maintenance, performance enhancement - simply getting the best out of people - is the management service that Elliott and his research partners, the US anthropologists, Cultural Dynamics, provide across an eclectic swathe of British industry.

Consider this for a diverse list of clients and briefs. Elliott was asked by Greenpeace "to aid understanding of the dynamics between people's values and political choice in the 2005 British Election".

He also received a brief from BMW - perhaps not Greenpeace's favourite company - "to guide creative executions of the brand".

Elliott has also helped senior staff at the National Trust "to understand the appeal of its various attractions", and has advised the think-tank Demos on the creation of "a whole new proposition in relation to the London 2012 Olympics targeting the entire British population".

The list stretches. He has looked at "[cultural] values-based design for pubs

and restaurants" for the pub group, Punch Taverns. The portfolio also includes research into international consumers' behaviour for computing giant, Hewlett-Packard, plus a brief to increase membership and strengthen the brand of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Then, of course, there's football. The top echelon of our national, inescapable game resumes on Saturday. A number of leading Premiership teams and players have made and continue to make use of Elliott's services. Among them are Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, Lyons and former Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier, and top international players such as England striker Michael Owen.

Ten years ago, Elliott, now in his mid-50s was a moderately successful Essex-based jeweller. He was living in a self-confessedly narrow world full of taboos and negativity. Then he took a course designed to help understand and boost self-esteem, and never looked back.

Within a few years the pupil was a mentor in the field, making enough money to swap Essex for the tax haven of Monaco, with an offering that is based "on a wide variety of human disciplines, techniques and methodologies utilised by many leading global business corporations, government bodies and elite high-performance teams, including the Pentagon's US Navy Seals, Arsenal FC and other successful Premiership football teams."

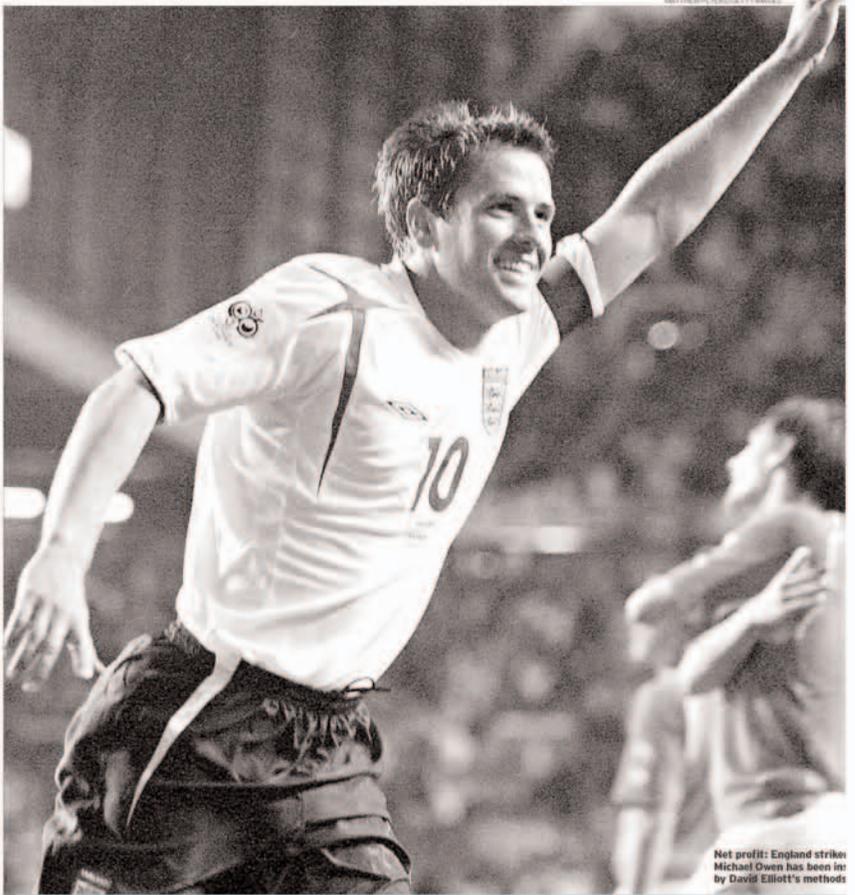
The objective, says Elliott is "to unlock and maximize [clients'] true potential and ability to radically improve performance and results, and sustain them through today's rapid changes to fulfill their missions, and meet their corporate outcomes and goals."

All very impressive and corporate-sounding, but what does that mean on a personal level? Elliott, despite his latest role as an adviser to the International University of Monaco's (IUM) Centre for Entrepreneurship, eschews synthetic language.

He is an excellent communicator, and has been recruited to the IUM because of his insights into



Client: Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger



Net profit: England striker Michael Owen has been in by David Elliott's methods

Match the testimonies (answers at the end...)

It's easy to reach for the nearest available cliché and claim that Elliott's business is a thing of two halves - commerce and football. But the clients themselves definitely fail to see the join.

Below are testimonies from some of Elliott's clients - business people, academics, footballers and football managers. See if you can work out which person said what about the service and its applicability.

They were supplied by Gerard Houllier, manager of Olympique Lyonnais, formerly manager of Liverpool, and technical director of France; Ian Stewart, corporate relationships team manager, Barclays Bank; Martin Keown, former Arsenal and England footballer; Michael Yellop, sales and marketing director, Anglian Home Improvements Group; Thierry Henry, Arsenal and France footballer; Bill Lightfoot, associate dean overseeing MBAs at the International

employee motivation. Elliott speaks in a no-nonsense way to leaders, motivators and managers. His speciality is helping managers manage more effectively.

"Leadership is about having people willingly perform desirable behaviours relating to the constantly evolving business outcomes and the goals of the organisation," he says.

"When you have even a basic understanding of people's values, it takes a lot of the guesswork out of understanding what can be very complex situations, making it much easier to predict and influence future behaviour and get more from people."

One of his early breakthroughs was motivating a non-league team to achieve a draw in the FA Cup against Premiership opposition hundreds of places above it in the football hierarchy. He has since replicated this success with football players and managers at the

University of Monaco; Michael Owen, Newcastle United and England footballer

A David's work has helped me to improve my mental awareness, and the team to be more open with each other, which has had a positive effect on team spirit and results. Changing the topics each meeting caters for everyone's needs and can help anyone in any field.

B David Elliott has worked closely with our corporate teams, and his work has been indispensable in helping them to effectively understand, and manage, rapid changes... and maximise their true potential.

C David's motivational training workshops helped with the togetherness of the team and obviously my own progression. We are more

fighting as a team even when we are not playing well. The training always affects my results positively and I have more responsibility.

D As a manager, whether it is in sports or business - you sometimes need someone who can support you to better influence your team. I have worked with David Elliott for over two years now, and not only has he helped me raise the level of trust and self-esteem in my men, but has also highly contributed to prepare me to lead them to success.

E I would definitely recommend David's work because it is character-building and can help people from all walks of life, as well as sport, to raise their self-esteem, improve attitude and results.

F David Elliott is an amazing motivator of people with a toolkit of motivational skills that will sustain any team's success indefinitely, his depth of knowledge in this field is invaluable to anyone in a leadership role.

G With extensive experience across a broad range of industries, Mr Elliott works to help people and teams maximize their potential, and in turn, helps organizations fulfill their missions, meeting their goals. David also serves as an adviser helping to make sure that the programs and the delivery methodology remain cutting edge.

Answers:

Houllier (E); Keown (F); Lightfoot (A); Owen (G); Stewart (D); Henry (C); Yellop (B).

highest level. Elliott remembers one incident where he took a squad through the remaining 20 or so fixtures to be played. How many did the players expect to win? The answer came back as about a dozen with three or four draws.

"I said, 'alright, you expect to win or draw that number - which ones do you expect to lose, and why?' That really got them going."

Motivation and performance-enhancement in sport and business are generally reckoned to have many common elements, and Elliott uses his skills in both disciplines.

Both high-performance athletes and high-performance business people have a set of physical and psychological needs that they need to satisfy before they can aspire to be at their best," he says.

"However, many systems of high performance concentrate on the performance, not the motivation for the performance.

World-class performance can only be created by human beings either as individuals or as part of a team, therefore the only way world-class performance - not just occasional outstanding performance - can be sustained, is through the creation of an environment in which people can satisfy their internal psychological needs via insights derived from psychological profiling and a depth of cultural data."

Elliott combines the data with his own "motivational programmes and skill sets" to provide sustained high performance. His latest client, Cisco Systems, has hired him to design and implement a development programme for senior management executives.

Elliott's belief is ultimately that companies must invest in people and equip them to manage change as the only viable way to sustain long-term performance. He says: "Change is the

only given in our society today, apart from death and taxes. It is a constant.

With the threat of globalisation, and competition from emerging nations, economies and markets, our ability to effectively lead, manage and deliver change is the major challenge facing organisations today.

"People are the key determinants of the success of a company and the only long-term competitive advantage organisations have in real terms in meeting these challenges."

"With change occurring at a rate far greater than ever before our ability to maximize potential by equipping our people with the gravitas, interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills to function at higher and higher levels of capability and flexibility to work across ethnic and cultural borders is key to survival."

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