

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE STANDARD *INVESTOR IN PEOPLE* FOR PRODUCTIVE EXCELLENCY

MARIA TERESA CLASADONTE^(*), AGATA MATARAZZO^(*)

Abstract

The rapid evolution of technological progress, the modifications of work organisation and the recognition of the strategic role of workers tend to request of institutions appropriate instruments in order to systematically face the problems concerning human resource training, the capability of taking on responsibility and continuous updating. Among these instruments the new British Standard *Investors in People* takes its rightful place, being the only standard of quality, recognised on a global level, relative to the systems of investigation, development and management of the personnel, which allows the rising of the level of good procedures to improve the performance of an organisation through the people who work in it. In its latest version, the standard is based on three key principles and presents a structure which is adaptable to any type of dimension of company situation, but it does not sufficiently define the procedures or guide lines necessary for the companies to reach this goal of recognition. This work offers an exhaustive and synthetic outline on the evolutionary and applicatory methods of *Investors in People* and it identifies innovative quantifiable indicators useful to companies to measure their performances in good procedures for the management of their human resources and therefore evolve towards managerial excellency.

Riassunto

La rapida evoluzione del progresso tecnologico, le modificazioni dell'organizzazione del lavoro e il riconoscimento del ruolo strategico dei lavoratori tendono a richiedere alle istituzioni strumenti adatti a fronteggiare in modo sistemico le problematiche inerenti la formazione delle risorse umane, la capacità di assumersi

^(*) Università degli Studi di Catania, Facoltà di Economia, Dipartimento di Economia e Territorio, Sezione di Scienze Merceologiche- Università degli Studi di Catania, C.so Italia 55- 95129- Catania-Italia, telefono: 095-7537921, e-mail: clasadon@unict.it; amatar@unict.it.

responsabilità e l'aggiornamento continuo. Tra questi strumenti si colloca in posizione di rilievo il nuovo Standard britannico Investors in People, l'unico standard di qualità, riconosciuto a livello mondiale, relativo ai sistemi di approfondimento, sviluppo e gestione del personale, che consente di alzare il livello delle buone prassi per migliorare la performance di una organizzazione attraverso le persone che operano al suo interno. Nella sua ultima versione, lo standard si basa su tre principi chiave e presenta una struttura adattabile a qualsiasi tipo o dimensione di realtà aziendale, ma è carente nella definizione di modalità o linee guida necessarie alle aziende per raggiungere tale riconoscimento tale scopo. Questo lavoro offre un quadro esauriente e sintetico sulle modalità evolutive ed applicative di Investors in People ed individua innovativi indicatori quantificabili utili alle aziende per misurare le loro performance in tema di buone prassi per la gestione delle proprie risorse umane ed evolvere così verso l'eccellenza gestionale.

Keywords: Human resource; Standard; Managerial excellency; Investors in People; Indicators.

Introduction

The rapid evolution of technological progress, the modifications of work organisation and the recognition of the strategic role of human resources tend to identify "human resource training" as the instrument most suited to strategically face the problems connected to modern productive systems, such as flexibility, adaptability, precision, the capability of taking on responsibility and continuous updating.

Even the ISO 9001:2000 rule on quality management, a fundamental instrument for managing strategic company plans and an important prerequisite for competing in the markets of the whole world, gives professional training a primary role for a real appreciation for the people in the company (1).

The standard, as a matter of fact, in particular in paragraph 6.2.2 referred to organisation, attaches a great importance to human capital, recognising its influence on the quality of the product/service and considering basic principles of the rule to be involvement and satisfaction of the personnel, competences and skills, continuous training and planning of careers, evaluation of the efficiency of instructive actions and training, the use of recognitions and incentives. Furthermore, the rule aims at making the personnel aware of the significance and of the importance of their tasks and

roles and of how these contribute to the achievement of goals of quality, strategically predefined by the *Mission* and the *Vision* of the Management.

The modern managerial tendencies, more and more based on models that see organisations as a network of "operative" processes, which convert the resources and the inputs received in the outputs necessary for the achievements of goals, and of "support" processes, which guarantee the acquisition, the use and the updating of the necessary resources, make companies more ready to recognise the importance of human resources and manage even the training as a process, focused on increasing, in time, the value of the human resources employed, and coherently planned and carried out for the organisational and managerial developments of the company (2-3).

Moreover, in a current point of view of integrated management, the organisation should make sure that all the employees are adequately aware of the importance of respecting the policies on quality, the environment, safety, social responsibility and of the significance that each role holds in achieving the satisfaction of a client, in protecting the environment, in reducing the occurrence of accidents at work and in creating a collaborative work environment without discriminations of any kind.

In this complete vision of company organisation, just the adoption of a System of Quality through the Standard ISO 9001:2000 might not be sufficient to plan an efficient Human Resources Management Strategy, in which the training can play a central role in generating company value. To obtain the highest efficacy in personnel management it is therefore necessary to integrate, in the voluntary policies of quality management, innovative instruments of verified efficacy specifically oriented towards human resources as some systems/models that promote and influence the policies for human resource management, and are placed as a support for the training processes through the identification of opportune best practices. Among these instruments the English Standard *Investors in People* takes a significant place, in that it is the only standard, recognised on a global level, which puts the people who operate within the organisations in first place, recognising the importance of human capital.

The *Standard Investors in People* (IiP), aimed at uniting the formative offer and the needs of the companies and at attesting an efficient investment in training in favour of the personnel, is one of the most important initiatives of the British government directed towards encouraging updating, continuous training and company support towards human resources.

THE STANDARD INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The rule pertinent to the standard was produced in 1990 by the National Training Task Force, in co-partnership with the main companies of the United Kingdom, associations of entrepreneurs and unions, such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Institute of Personnel and Development (IPD), and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), and with the support of the Employment Department. The standard was officially introduced on 16 October 1991, but its structure had already been drafted in 1985, when the *Confederation of British Industry* established 10 principles regarding the development of the *training*, subsequently developed by *Investors in People* (4), which highlighted the responsibility with which the training should be carried out, the necessity to divulge the resources assigned to the training, the goals to set to elevate the levels of experience and qualification in order to connect them to those of the business, the procedures with which the *business plans* should have reflected the importance of people, flexibility, inclination towards change, prospective vision, etc. In 1993 the government set up a new non departmental office, *Investors in People UK*, identifying it with the function to take on the responsibility of maintaining the Standard (5). The original outline of the standard, which was presented as structured with 23 indicators, remained nearly unaltered in the first revision of 1995, after which, having spread its positive effects, began to set up the process of internationalisation.

The use of a language considered complex and the little adaptability to the small and average companies were the main criticism stated against the rule, which brought on the drafting of the second revision, published in the autumn of 1999 and officially launched in April 2000.

The implementation of the standard, in its new version, was presented as more flexible, more focused on the development of a culture of training and assuring an evaluation on what an organisation managed to achieve with the standard, rather than on how it achieved it. The adoption and the formalisation of specific procedures and the principles of the standard (Commitment-Planning-Action-Evaluation) were maintained, but the original 23 indicators were reduced to 12. The changes were not only quantitative, but also qualitative, in that the new version placed a greater stress on the collection of proof and of declarations focused on cultural elements, such as trust, understanding, support, etc (6).

The following of changes and news one after the other did not stop and while the organisations recognised with *Investor in People* in 2002 continued to increase, in reply to the request of numerous employers of organisations recognised with the standard, *Investors in People UK* launched the *Profile*. The latter, structured on the same contents of Standard IiP, constitutes an optional service for organisations already recognised, which intend to measure up to the standard itself and at the same time compare the respective performances to other organisations recognised as *Investors in People*. In November 2004, after an extensive period of on-the-field consultation oriented towards finding out the necessities noticed by employers and workers, the new version of the Standard was launched; this continued to coexist with the previous version until 31 December 2005.

The principles considered in the version of the standard of 2005, described in the following paragraph, are the same as in the previous version, but their expression evolved also keeping in mind the economic-company changes (7). In the latest version, besides the reduction of indicators (10 instead of 12), a greater emphasis is placed on the improvement and the revision of plans of employee development, a new indicator is introduced to encourage the organisation to further involve the personnel, on all levels, in decision-making, and greater importance is attached to *leadership and management*.

From its first launch up to now the Standard *Investors in People* has been adopted, in the United Kingdom alone, by more than 30,000 organisations, involving about 10,000,000 people representing about 27% of the English work force (8). The success that the aforementioned numbers want to imply, as well as the growing internationalisation of the standard are, anyhow, the outcome of several factors. If in the United Kingdom *Investors in People* is a real national strategy, and therefore is sustained and widely publicised by several agencies, directly or indirectly responsible for its spread, the adoption of the standard on behalf of the numerous organisations is not only the result of perspicacious promotional activity and of a continuous updating of its structure, but it is also a reply to numerous positive aspects that the certification brings to the individual organisation. In fact, where well applied in company management, the standard provides an exhaustive description to improve business results, productivity and competitiveness through a planned approach directed towards connecting and communicating the business goals and preparing the people to achieve

the aforementioned goals (9).

What must be highlighted is that the Standard, even in the latest version, exhaustively points out the *best practices* relative to the management and development of the personnel to improve the productivity of the organisation, but it does not sufficiently define the procedures or guide lines necessary for reaching this goal.

Therefore the goal of this work, besides providing an exhaustive and synthetic description of the applicative procedures in any company situation of *Investors in People*, is to point out innovative quantifiable indicators (sub-indicators) useful both to the companies for measuring their performance in good procedures for human resource management and therefore evolve towards managerial excellency, and to the external evaluators for appropriately verifying and quantifying the adoption of the performance indicators necessary for achieving the recognition of *Investor in People* and obtaining the Standard logo.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE STANDARD AND THE INDICATORS

In order to obtain the title of *Investor in People*, an organisation must demonstrate to efficiently carry out the training and the development of its personnel, involving them in the decisions of the company (10). To every company committed to implementing the Standard, in order to meet the needs of the individual company situations, full autonomy is given to choose the more suitable ways and instruments for fulfilling what is required for its achievement.

The Standard presents a structure adaptable to any type or dimension of company situation, it is based on 3 principles (**Plan, Do, Review**) and 10 indicators that are based on the culture of continuous improvement and it presents itself as a systematic and cyclic process (Figure 1), such as:

- **Plan:** develop strategies to improve the performance of the organisation;
- **Do:** take the initiative to improve the performance of the organisation;
- **Review:** evaluate the impact on the performance of the organisation.

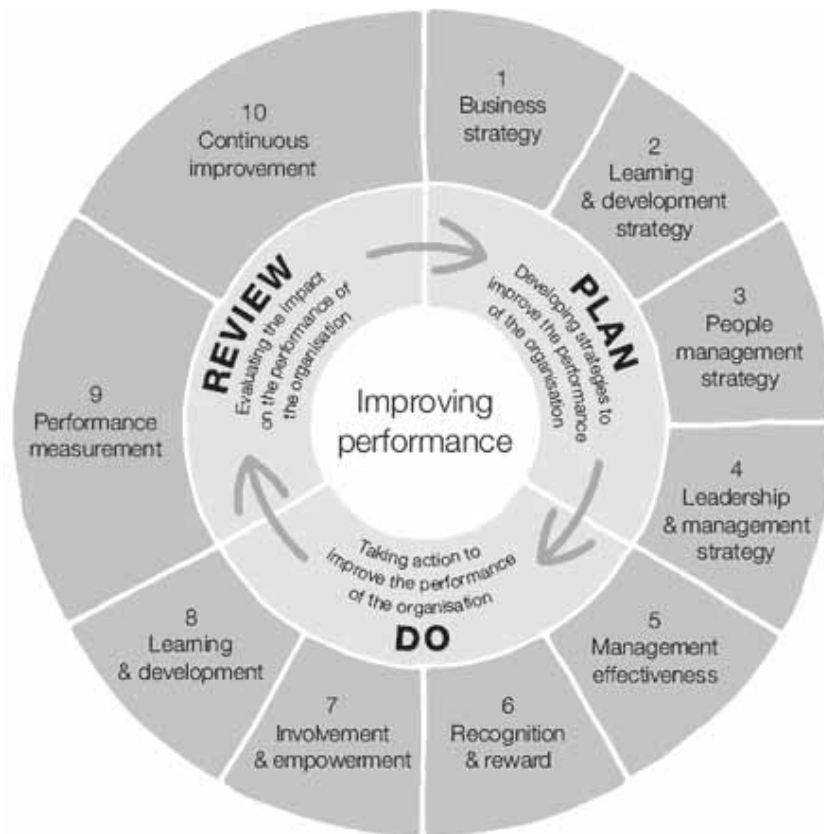


Fig. 1 - The Standard Investors in People

Source: <http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Standard/Introducing/Pages/Whatis.aspx>

Every single indicator verifies the understanding and the achievement of the principle on behalf of the *top manager*, of the *managers* and of the employees and it becomes, therefore, the object of the evaluation to which every organisation that wants to obtain the recognition *Investor in People* is subject (11). However, good practices require time to be implemented and developed, they demand a continuous commitment and not all the aspects that are involved manifest effects in a brief period and can be easily and opportunely measured. One of the flaws of the standard *Investor in People* is, as mentioned before, the lack of clear indicators of the company performances that are quantifiable and correlatable to improvements consequent of the application of the standard; a careful quantification and

evaluation of the performance, in our opinion, would, instead, result in an important instrument for human resource management, especially in relation to the goals of encouragement of the collaborators' *commitment*, flexibility and strategic integration of the processes relative to personnel management (12). To get around this important aspect in the present study, we have innovatively singled out subcriteria/sub-indicators derived from a careful exam of the indicators required by the standard, which can be conveniently utilised both in the phase of implementation to appropriately quantify the adoption of the performance indicators provided by the Standard that can offer the companies that implement *Investor in People* an efficient system of evaluation of the feedback on employee training, which can act as a stimulus to the motivation of human resources, and become an important managerial instrument, directed towards affecting the organisational results expected by the individual subjects and, in further analysis, improving the overall results of the company and aiming at excellency (13).

To better highlight the sub-indicators that are singled out and underline their correlation to the 3 principles and to the 10 indicators contained in the Standard, the table shown below (Table 1) has been drawn up. In the first column of the table the 3 key principles of the Standard are presented and they are correlated to the 10 indicators, second column, each of which takes into consideration a specific subject; in the third column there are the proposed sub-indicators connected to each indicator from which they have been derived. It is possible to see that these sub-indicators are easy to read and can be utilised by companies both to verify the actual achievement of the indicators and to quantify, with appropriate scales, the performances of an organisation and to single out adequate strategies in order to reach excellency in management of internal human resources.

TABLE 1

**PRINCIPLES, INDICATORS AND SUB-INDICATORS OF THE
STANDARD INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**

PRINCIPLES	INDICATORS	SUB-INDICATORS
<p align="center">PLAN</p> <p>Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation .</p>	<p align="center">1) Business Strategy</p> <p align="center">(clearly define and understand the strategy specifying plans and goals) (14)</p>	<p>1 – evaluate plans , goals and procedures with which to reach it;</p> <p>2 – analyse the state of the personnel's knowledge on the plans, goals and procedures planned;</p> <p>3 – verify the presence of <i>vision</i> for performance improvement and that the goals have been understood ;</p> <p>4- show how the personnel had the opportunity to contribute with their own ideas.</p>
	<p align="center">2) Learning & development strategy</p> <p align="center">(plan training and development in order to reach company goals)</p>	<p>1 - evaluate the personnel's skills necessary for the <i>business plan</i> ;</p> <p>2 - analyse development and training activities necessary for the employees to accomplish the goals ;</p> <p>3- quantify the resources destined to accomplish the goals;</p> <p>4- measure the effectiveness of the training .</p>
	<p align="center">3) People management strategy</p> <p align="center">(define strategies for personnel management and for promoting equal opportunities in the development of human resources)</p>	<p>1- measure the involvement of the personnel ;</p> <p>2- quantify the improvement of the personnel's performance .</p>
	<p align="center">4) Leadership & management strategy</p>	<p>1- evaluate definition of managers' activities for leading, managing and developing the personnel ;</p>

	(clearly define and understand the necessary skills of managers for efficiently leading, managing and developing the personnel)	2 - evaluate the importance of leadership.
<p style="text-align: center;">DO</p> <p>Taking action to improve the performance of organisation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5) Management effectiveness</p> <p>(analyse how effective managers are in leading, managing and developing the personnel) (15).</p>	<p>1 – evaluate managers’ activities for leading and managing the personnel, as well as in providing employees with constructive feedback about the work they have done;</p> <p>2 – let the personnel analyse the effectiveness of managers in supporting and providing them of the necessary feedback to improve and strengthen their performance.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">6) Recognition & reward</p> <p>(recognise and reward the personnel’s contribution in the organisation)</p>	<p>1- evaluate managers’ activities for recognising, rewarding employees’ individual performances and team activities .</p> <p>2- let the personnel quantify their contribution and how the manager recognised and rewarded it.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">7) Involvement & empowerment</p> <p>(involve the personnel in the decision process to encourage them and make them feel responsible and a part of the team) (16)</p>	<p>1- evaluate managers’ activities for involving employees in the decision process and in the taking on of responsibility</p> <p>2- analyse how involved the personnel feel in decisions pertaining to their roles and how they are encouraged to take on responsibility for decisions that can influence the results of a company .</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">8) Learning & development</p> <p>(recognise how capable the personnel is of effectively learning and developing)</p>	<p>1- evaluate the capabilities of the organisation to understand the needs of the personnel in terms of development of both base and specific skills and knowledge .</p> <p>2- quantify managers’ skills to satisfy employees’ training</p>

		and development requests, through activities suited to allow the personnel to adequately carry out their work. 3- evaluate activities for personnel development through analyses of much they learnt and how this contributed to their work .
<p>REVIEW</p> <p>Evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation</p>	<p>9) Performance measurement</p> <p>(evaluate how the investment on the personnel improves the performance of the organisation)</p>	<p>1- let the managers identify, evaluate and quantify the returns obtained as a result of the investments made in personnel training and development activities ;</p> <p>2- evaluate this information for future strategies .</p> <p>3- let the personnel evaluate how the received training has improved their work performance, that of the team and of the whole organisation, even with examples, where possible.</p>
	<p>10) Continuous improvement</p> <p>(predict and carry out continuous improvements in order to optimally manage and develop the personnel) (17)</p>	<p>1- managers must explain and quantify how the investments on the personnel have improved their habits in leading and supporting their employees' work growth .</p> <p>2- employees must confirm the improvements highlighted above and quantitatively evaluate them .</p>

Source: Elaboration of the data

THE INVESTIGATION AND THE RECOGNITION INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

The Standard *Investors in People*, like other qualitative standards (ex. ISO 9001:2000), places itself within a voluntary structure and its implementation is chosen to take place by the organisations interested in setting in motion and carrying out the corresponding process. This is managed by *Investors in People UK*, which supervises the process of achieving

and crediting of the *Standard*, taking place through an evaluation carried out by a third party.

We must underline the applicability of the Standard in any sector, private or public, and in any type of organisation, despite the size and the economic category to which it belongs. In succession, there is a synthetic explanation of the procedure necessary for the achievement of the *Standard* in the United Kingdom and outside of the UK, where the investigation of the Standard can be carried out by the agencies authorised by *Investors in People UK*, after having purchased the license for the *Standard*. In Figure 2 we highlighted the steps, the fundamental obligations and the tasks that the applying company must accomplish for the achievement of the Standard *Investors in People*.

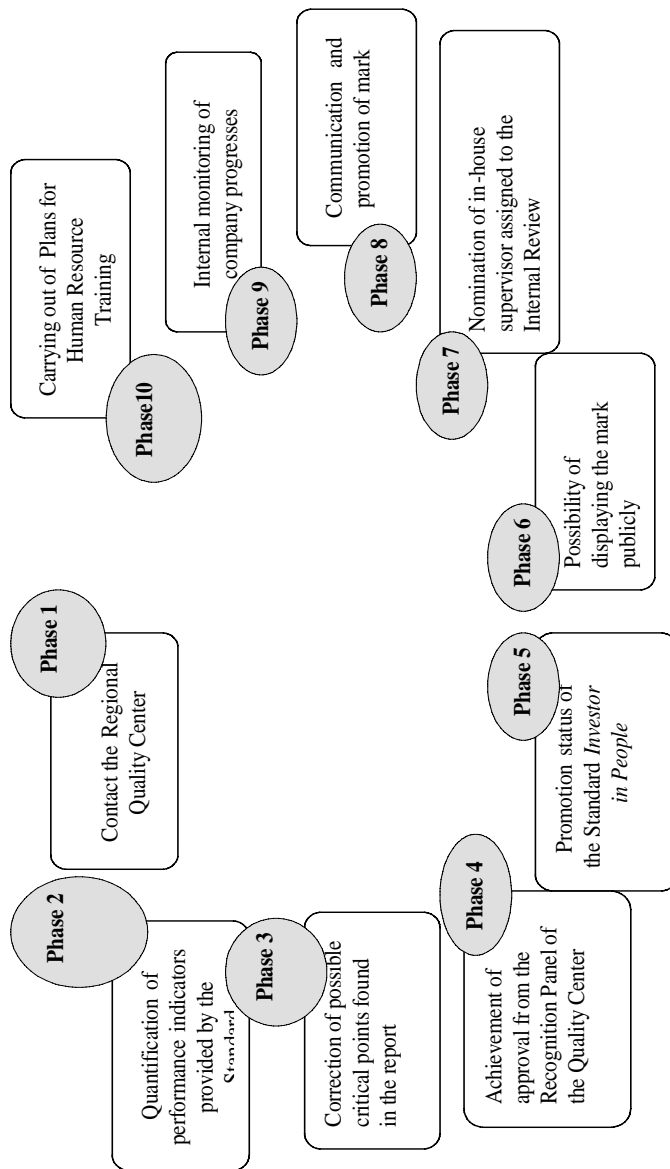
Contacting the Regional Quality Centre - An organisation that intends on implementing the Standard for the first time must first contact the nearest *Regional Quality Centre* and present a special request of investigation, in which it must point out all the necessary information (type of company, number of employees, roles, work hours, etc.) to the consultant who will have to carry out the investigation.

Quantification of the performance indicators provided by the Standard - The consultant evaluates the procedures with which the company implements the *Standard*, analysing and examining the actual presence of the 10 indicators and of the corresponding sub-criteria and draws up a specific report. In the initial phase of the investigation the indications for the evaluation are gathered through interviews to a representative sample of employees, managers, as well as top managers.

Correction of the possible critical points found in the report - If the consultant notices contradictions, flaws or aspects to develop, the company will have to make necessary changes that will, obviously, have to be oriented towards satisfying what is required by the standard; the consultant will provide the company detailed *feedback* for planning further developments, establishing the necessary timetable to continue the investigation.

Achievement of approval from the Recognition Panel of the Quality Centre - Only when the critical points are fixed, carrying out the opportune changes and accomplishing the standard, will the organisation obtain recognition as *Investors In People*. This recognition is given by a *Recognition Panel* (8), a group of experts belonging to *Quality Centre*, whose function is to carry out an objective check on what the evaluator stated in respect to what is requested by the Standard; this is to further gua-

rantee the integrity and the credibility of the Standard. The organisation will not be able to promote its status of *Investor in People* until it is given confirmation by the *Recognition Panel*, which is also responsible for the maintenance of the recognition and has the power, once the opinion of the consultant is heard, to take away the recognition from the company.



Source: personal elaboration

Fig. 2: Phases for the achievement of the standard on behalf of the organisation

The duration of the entire process of investigation and implementation can vary between 6 and over 18 months, depending on the dimensions of the organisation, the previous presence of prerequisites required by the standard and the necessary changes to obtain it. On average, however, a company obtains recognition within a year from the beginning of the investigation.

Once the recognition is obtained, the organisation is authorised to publicly display the logo of the Standard, and will be subject to a subsequent evaluation within 3 years of the crediting.

Being a process that companies voluntarily undergo, in any case, the possibility to withdraw from the programme without any sanctions, both before and after having obtained the recognition as *Investor in People* is recognised (18).

Once the IiP recognition is obtained the organisation can nominate an in-house supervisor who, opportunely trained by the *Quality Centre*, is assigned to the *Internal Review*, a process of internal revision of the Standard oriented towards transmitting more the concepts of the Standard in company culture and "preparing" for a subsequent investigation (19).

To the companies recognised as *Investor in People* a logo is supplied, appropriate to the type of implementation carried out, that can be used publicly to demonstrate the recognition (8). In Figure 3 there are the three versions of the logo that can be obtained, each of which is directed towards specific purposes or services and precisely:



Fig. 3 - The Standard Investors in People logo in its three versions.

Source: <http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Standard/Implementing/Pages/Brandingguidelines.aspx>

A) It is the mark that denotes the Standard Investors in People and promotes the product; this logo can be utilised by all the organisations that promote the Standard;

B) It is the mark that proves that an organisation has been credited and recognised having implemented the Standard; this logo is utilised, therefore, to make the crediting known by the company and can be utilised only by the companies that have obtained the recognition.

C) It is the mark that, instead, represents Investors in People UK, and can only be used by this agency, to indicate corresponding publications or other material produced by it.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE AND SUBINDICATORS TO TEND TOWARDS EXCELLENCY

The use of the Standard *Investor in People* in proactive organisations that wish to go beyond the simple voluntary certification of the quality variable and integrate human resource management in the strategic company policies, surely brings remarkable benefits among which we can highlight:

- **Improvement of the patrimonial value of the productivity and profitability** as proven by the research data "*Investors in People Impact Assessment 2004*"(20).

- **Reduction of costs and wastes** in that the correct personnel training improves competences, guarantees a more efficient material resource management, reducing waste and inefficiencies.

- **Competence development and turnover rate reduction**: through the re-evaluation of the competences that have been singled out and the revision of job descriptions, single aspirations are satisfied, according to the logic "the right person in the right place", increasing even the level of the personnel's loyalty and obtaining at the same time corresponding performance returns (21).

- **Motivation improvement**: the *Standard* places a particular stress on involving personnel in the life of the organisation, its taking responsibility, as well as the recognition of an individual's contribution, aspects that notoriously affect an employee's motivation (22). In the companies certified with the standard, the personnel, feeling more motivated, therefore is more inclined towards change, has a clear conception of his tasks and leaves the workplace with less frequency.

- **Quality development**: a trained and competent personnel allows the optimisation of the entire work process, from the planning to the realisation of the product; the adoption of *Investors in People*, that like other standards of quality is based on the principle of continuous improvement,

therefore contributes to improve even the results of the programmes for quality and produces a remarkable added value to the ISO 9001:2000 and to all the other initiatives of total quality (23).

- **Customer satisfaction:** an organisation committed to supporting its internal resources automatically, as has been highlighted, creates a higher motivation and greater knowledge in them; in such situations the individuals that are employed are therefore able to provide a more efficient and effective service, to reply to clients needs and satisfy the corresponding demands and necessities.

- **Competitive advantages through innovations:** the Standard develops a competitive attitude more oriented towards innovation, professional updating and use of new technologies measured by improving the performance.

- **Public recognition and social responsibility:** the achievement of the status of *Investor in People* allows an organisation to improve its image both to clients and the hypothetical new candidates for hiring. The former, in fact, know that a company certified IIP is a company that rigorously invests in its personnel assuring its competence and professionalism and, consequently, offers a better quality of its services-products. The latter, on the other hand, feel more assured because they sense that their talent and potential will be rewarded.

Besides the aforementioned advantages *Investors in People*, as an instrument of Strategic Human Resources Management, it presents itself as an instrument of support to structure the change in an organisation that looks forward to a culture of continuous improvement. The use of *IiP*, in fact, requires improvements in company communication, a better analysis and evaluation of the training needs and thus better human resource management (24). Furthermore, the individual employee's perception of the organisation improves thanks to the approach of the standard focused on and directed towards his involvement in the decision process and his taking on responsibility, as he is recognised as an active part of the company.

It must be remembered, however, that the standard is predominantly an instrument oriented towards knowledge and competence development; its positive effects on productivity are, therefore, a result of a wide range of action. Between *Investors in People* and the performance of the organisation there is an indirect and not automatic connexion, in that the standard is an instrument of the Human Resources Function that contributes to making it the strategic partner of the organisation.

The efficiency of the standard is thus strongly connected to the

modus operandi used to achieve it and therefore to the efficiency with which the mission of the organisation is put into practice. The use of the performance sub-indicators proposed in the present work would allow the measurement of the managers capability to lead and understand the needs of the personnel, the efficiency of the processes used for the singling out of skills, of knowledge management, of motivation improvement and etc, objectively and tangibly producing the actual concretisation of the Instrument (25). To obtain the highlighted benefits it is not enough, in fact, to formally obtain the recognition *Investors in People*, but it is necessary that, within the company, there be a real inclination towards change, starting from the top, as better highlighted in the last version of the standard that, unlike in the past, turns more attention to *leadership*, training and management skills.

The objective evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the obtained results with the adoption of the Instrument, requested also by the crediting process, would even allow the pointing out of possible critical points on which to appropriately intervene, reimplementing the actions and in this way priming the virtuous process of continuous improvement and productive excellency.

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