



NiNE FACTORS  
of  
PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

# 9Factors CASE STUDY

## The Client

### West Bromwich Building Society

#### The Organisation

The West Bromwich has been a mutual Building Society for over 150 years and today, it employs around 800 people in 48 branches. The Society has enjoyed unprecedented success, delivering 8 years of successive record breaking financial results and is the UK's 9th largest Building Society, with assets of over £6 billion.

Against this backdrop of commercial success in a highly competitive market, West Bromwich has been differentiated by its clear focus on a 'people' values driven culture being at the heart of everything it does. To quote Andrew Messenger (speaking at the 2002 Midlands Excellence Awards Winners' conference),

'The three secrets of our success lie in people, people and people. People our customers, people our staff and people our communities.

#### The need for 'hard facts' about people

In recognising the essential role of people, culture and values, Paul Turner, (General Manager, People) was clear the organisation needed reliable measures, which could be used to track and analyse performance in key areas. This data would be used to inform decisions about priorities, actions to deliver improved performance and over time, provide reliable trend information to ensure that the values and culture really did link to business performance and support the strategic direction of the Society. The data needed to provide a sound basis for making major decisions around the HR strategy and a means of providing reports to the business about the results and successes year on year.

#### Hemsley Fraser's 9 Factors™

After a careful evaluation of the various survey and diagnostic tools on the market, Paul chose Hemsley Fraser's 9 Factors™. The benefits of 9 Factors™ are:

- Robust and proven measures around the key drivers of employee commitment
- Clear links between 'world-class' leadership practices, culture and values
- Fast, easy completion of the survey tool – which leads to exceptionally high response rates and hence, reliable data
- Information which provides clear guidance about what decisions and actions can be taken to improve performance in key areas
- Benchmarking capability, which enabled West Brom to track its performance in the 9Factors™ against a proven body of evidence, which describes the picture of a high performing, healthy organisation

#### Implementation and Results

9Factors™ was first piloted in 1998 in the Business Process Department and this was extended in 1999 to include the IT division. The IT division's performance improved on key performance indicators such as customer service ratings, reduced systems downtime, reduced staff turnover and sickness down from 9 to 4 days average.

In 2000 the survey was rolled across the organisation. The Society's Manager of People Excellence, Nicola Hope, was tasked with the responsibility of developing organisation wide processes for the delivery of improvements and a formalised process and structure was put in place to manage and prioritise improvements across the Society based on issues highlighted by 9 Factors™. Nicola believes that the key to success in delivering real improvements has been ownership. "In the Society the survey process is not seen as the job of the HR team, but as the responsibility of every manager". The survey was further integrated into the HR strategy as Paul worked on aligning the 'world-class' leadership practices defined within 9 Factors™ to the Society's leadership competency framework, 360 diagnostic and associated training and coaching programmes. Leadership Coaching was established as the primary leadership/management style and a crucial driver of culture. Through Turner's work on an organisational coaching PhD research programme the West Brom benefitted from an action research approach. 9 Factors™ was also mapped against the Society's values and behaviours to provide full insight into which areas of the organisation were fully aligned.

9 Factors progressed from being a survey tool to being integral to the way in which the Society measured the health of the organisation and aligned this to its balanced scorecard. The analysis and interpretation of the data provided a sound basis for ensuring that leadership development priorities were focused on progressing towards being a high performing organisation.

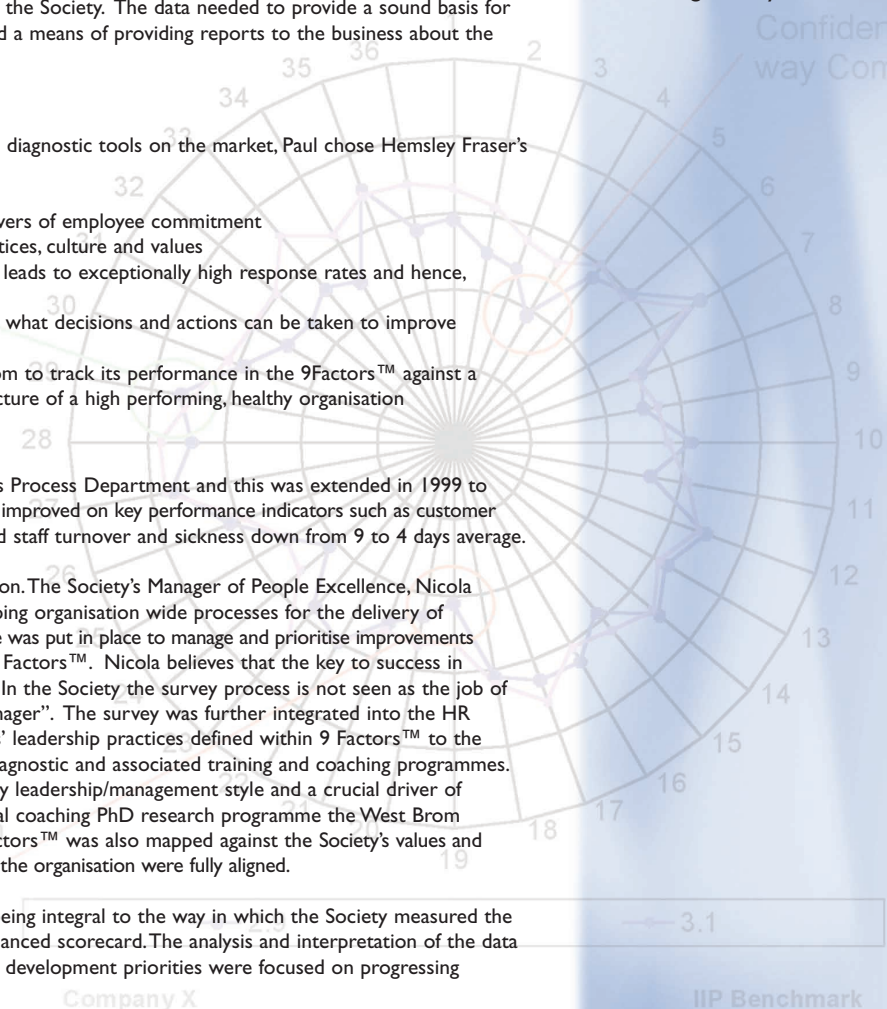


#### Paul Turner

General Manager, People  
West Bromwich  
Building Society

#### Nicola Hope

Manager of People Excellence  
West Bromwich  
Building Society





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## Client Results

West Brom's sustained business performance is striking:

- 8 years of record breaking profits
- Growth rates ranked in the top 5 and on a rolling 5 year basis, West Brom is the number 1 for growth with high growth providing the platform for profitability
- Exceptionally high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty
- A set of 'people' results which are acknowledged to be 'world class' by many external benchmarks and awards
- A culture which has been deliberately designed and managed to ensure that West Brom can respond to the pace of change in the marketplace and sustain its growth and profitability

## Awards and Recognition

Significant progress has also been made in developing people policies and practices, and the consequent improvement in performance, was recognised when the West Brom's Human Resources team collected two outstanding awards from the prestigious magazine, Personnel Today.

The first award was presented to the Society after judges decided that the West Brom offered the Best HR Strategy in line with Business Needs. They said:

"The use of metrics to validate progress was particularly impressive. This is much more than a short term initiative the plan has the ability to mature and change but is based on a clear understanding of how HR Strategy can help the business deliver its objectives"

**Terry Morgan, CEO, Tubelines**

And then, despite intense pressure from major companies such as KPMG, Jaguar and Land Rover and B&Q, the West Brom team went on to collect a second trophy, being declared Overall Winner of the Personnel Today Awards 2004. This is the first time a Building Society has won this award.

The judges, who included representatives from British Airways and Npower, gave this description of the West Bromwich Building Society:

"The overall winner was an exceptional team effort. Building true alignment between business and the HR strategy is a real Holy Grail"

This has been achieved by assembling a formidable force of people who share one overriding aim – to progress the Society even more for the benefit of members. That can be seen in the sweep of awards won by the Society – over 60 in the just 5 years, spanning the fields of business excellence, best practice in diversity and equal opportunities, staff development and value-for-money products. Furthermore, they have twice appeared in Times "Top 100 Best Companies to work for" during this period. In 2005 the Society was awarded finalist status in the UK Business Excellence Awards.

## The client's view of 9 Factors™

Paul Turner comments 'I believe that West Bromich has become a leading edge organisation in demonstrating the powerful links between people, leadership, culture and business performance. Hemsley Fraser's 9 Factors™ diagnostic tool has provided my team with invaluable information to inform and prioritise our work to integrate the HR strategy with the overall strategy of the business. The data is structured in a way which makes it easy to interpret and get to grips with key people issues and to pinpoint areas of both high performance and areas where we can make quantifiable improvements.

9 Factors™ itself has proved to be remarkably accurate across all functional areas of the business and as we are working in fast changing and ever more competitive market conditions, its overall picture of an adaptive and dynamic organisation continues to hold true.

As we have used the 9 Factors™ diagnostic since 1998, we have seen its benefits in driving ever higher levels of performance across the whole organisation. Furthermore, we now have the trend data, which demonstrates that this has directly supported our business results. I envisage that we will continue to use 9 Factors™ as a reliable source of internal and external benchmark data in support of our HR and business strategy.

I would recommend it to any organisation which is committed to ensuring that its people are a source of long term value and competitive advantage. By acting on the findings and insights from 9 Factors™, the business results and rewards will follow'.

## And finally...

In March 2004, Paul Turner, General Manager (People), West Bromwich Building Society, was named by the International Business Awards as the 'Best International HR Executive'.

