

## The Journey

A Case Story on Self-Assessment,  
Group Learning and Continuous Improvement

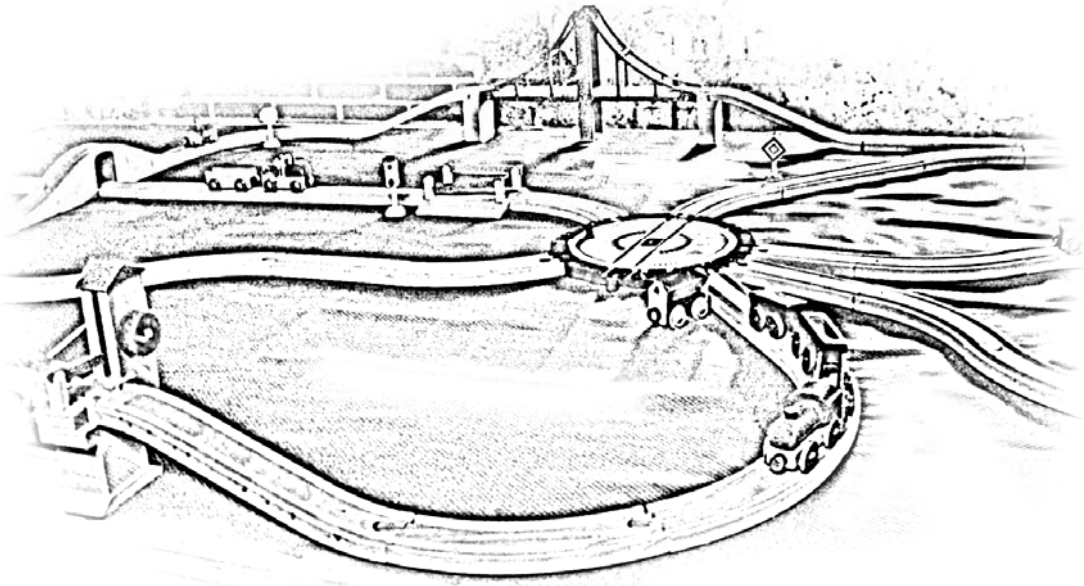
Frances Jørgensen





# THE JOURNEY

## A CASE STORY ON SELF-ASSESSMENT, GROUP LEARNING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



## **Editors**

Prof. Dr. Ross Chapman, University of Western Sydney  
Prof. Dr. Paul Hyland, Central Queensland University  
Dr. Matts Magnusson, Chalmers University of Technology

Jeannette Visser-Groeneveld (Publishing Coordinator/CINet Secretary)

## **Editorial board**

Prof. Emilio Bartezzaghi, Politecnico di Milano  
Prof. Dr. John Bessant, Cranfield University  
Prof. Dr. Harry Boer, Aalborg University  
Dr. Mariano Corso, Politecnico di Milano

Published by:  
Continuous Innovation Network  
[www.continuous-innovation.net](http://www.continuous-innovation.net)

© Frances Jørgensen, 2005

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without written permission of the CINet.

ISBN 90-77360-04-2

## The Continuous Innovation Network

The Continuous Innovation Network (CINet) is a global network that brings together researchers and industrialists working in the field of Continuous Innovation. CINet is a continuation of the European Continuous Improvement Network, started in 1993. In 2000, the mission of EuroCINet was reformulated and its name changed to CINet, a research network on Continuous Innovation. These changes facilitate the dissemination, not just within but beyond Europe, of a new way of thinking about the integrated management and organisation of day-to-day operations, improvement and learning, and innovation and change.

## The CINet PhD Network

CINet has developed a PhD network, which promotes research collaboration among PhD students and their institutions on topics of interest to CINet. In detail, the network objectives are as follows:

- To promote the development of research on continuous innovation and its applications to enhance companies' effectiveness and better use of human resources for more sustainable organisation of work.
- To facilitate research integration and mobility on a global level.
- To enhance research quality and, in particular, to promote synergy and collaboration on empirical research.
- To promote a better quality of PhD training and supervision.
- To promoting joint research programmes involving companies and academia offering the prospect of rigorous training and exposure of PhD students.

The CINet is unique for its focus on innovation management as well as for the specific vision that is shared by partner institutions concerning the role and potential contribution to innovation and improvement of human resources at all levels.

Characteristic for the CINet PhD network, relative to other PhD networks, is its strong emphasis on implementation and collaboration with industrial users. Students work in close collaboration with companies to analyse and solve management problems. Research designs involving in-depth empirical studies and action or clinical research are therefore encouraged. The PhD students involved in the CINet receive an intensive training to cope with concrete management issues. All the students who were so far rewarded a CINet-based PhD degree easily found their way to highly valued positions in industrial companies, in research institutes or as consultants.

Previously published in this series:

- GIESKES, J.F.B., *Closing the research cycle, verifying the underlying assumptions of the CIMA model on stimulating learning in product innovation processes*, 2003. (nr. 2003-1, ISBN 90-77360-01-8).
- RONCHI, S., *The effects of the internet adoption in customer-supplier relationships. The markets - vertical alliances divergence and the emergence of collaborative markets*, 2003. (nr. 2003-2, ISBN 90-77360-02-6).
- PAVESI, S., *Enabling knowledge processes in innovative environments. ICT as a trigger for changes in knowledge management*, 2004. (nr. 2005-3, ISBN 90-77360-03-4)

**THE JOURNEY:  
A CASE STORY ON SELF-ASSESSMENT, GROUP LEARNING  
AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Frances Jørgensen

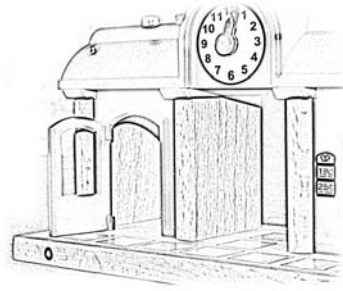
Center for Industrial Production  
Aalborg University  
Fibigerstræde 16  
9220 Aalborg  
Denmark  
[frances@iproduct.aau.dk](mailto:frances@iproduct.aau.dk)



## Table of contents

A Foot in the Door.....	10
The Presentation .....	11
First Impressions.....	13
All Aboard!.....	13
Beyond the Presentation.....	16
The View from the Top.....	17
A Team at the Top .....	18
Where It All Starts .....	19
Pride .....	21
The Grand Tour.....	21
Picture Perfect .....	23
The Black Sheep.....	23
The Middle Child .....	28
On the Floor.....	29
Inconsistencies: Already? .....	33
The Knowledge Center.....	33
What a Shame .....	38
No Shows .....	39
What a Start!.....	40
Going through the Motions .....	42
It's all about Money .....	42
Ready or Not...Here We Go.....	44
The Guinea Pigs.....	45
Expectations .....	45
Weekend Nursery School.....	46
Self-Directed .....	47
Opposites .....	47
Idling .....	48
Coming up to Speed.....	48
On the Side Lines.....	50
Talking Outside Meetings.....	50

See No Evil.....	51
Mums the Word.....	52
Strike Two, Strike Three.....	52
Last hope.....	54
Now We're Talking.....	54
Psychotherapy.....	57
Bumpy Roads Ahead.....	57
Can I say I don't know?.....	60
Crossed Signals?.....	61
Informing.....	63
Getting Directions.....	63
Easy Going.....	66
Full Speed Ahead!.....	67
Building Allied Forces.....	69
Fueling Up for the Second Lap.....	69
Me on my Soapbox.....	71
Gloss It Over.....	71
Going in Circles.....	74
Low Season Learning.....	74
Roadblocks.....	76
Laying the Cards Out on the Table.....	76
Wrapping up Lose Ends.....	78
Apathy.....	80



## A Foot in the Door

To say I was both excited and nervous about presenting the project plan I'd been working on for almost a year to a company would be a major understatement. There was a lot on the line here. Even though I believed the plan was really good, it had to be put into action if it were to lead to a Ph.D. degree.

I was a consultant for several years before starting my Ph.D., so this was definitely not the first time I'd prepared a presentation for members of top management. But this was my first time to visit a Danish company and it was the first time I was taking the lead. In consulting, the company makes that first call, which means they are the ones with the problem so they are the ones asking for help. As a researcher with a project plan in hand, I had to be able to convince the powers-that-be that I could offer something they needed. In other words, the first meeting in the company would involve a sales pitch!

On the positive side, I should admit that this wasn't a totally "cold" sales call. There are surely lots of ways for a researcher to come in contact with a company in order to conduct research. In my case, a senior researcher from my department knew the director of a production facility who just might be interested.

The company is well known and had been written up in the papers many times over the years. Most importantly, they were known for their work with shop floor team development and had implemented a continuous improvement program several years ago. Per, the director of production at the company, was contacted and sounded quite enthused. A date was then set for the big presentation.

I decided to send a short description of the project to Per about a week before we were scheduled to meet, so that he would have a few more details about the project than he'd got on the phone with the senior researcher. The trick with the description was to include enough information about what I wanted to do, why it was something worth doing, and how I planned to do it to keep him interested, but not to sound so academic that it would turn him off to the project. In my experience, this is a fine line because mere mention of the word research can make some managers want to turn and go the other direction.

Apparently round one of the sale's challenge was successful. I received a reply from Per within just a few days. He wrote that the project plan had been sent to the other members of the "production's top management team" and that seven of them would be at the presentation I had planned with my major research advisor, Frank.