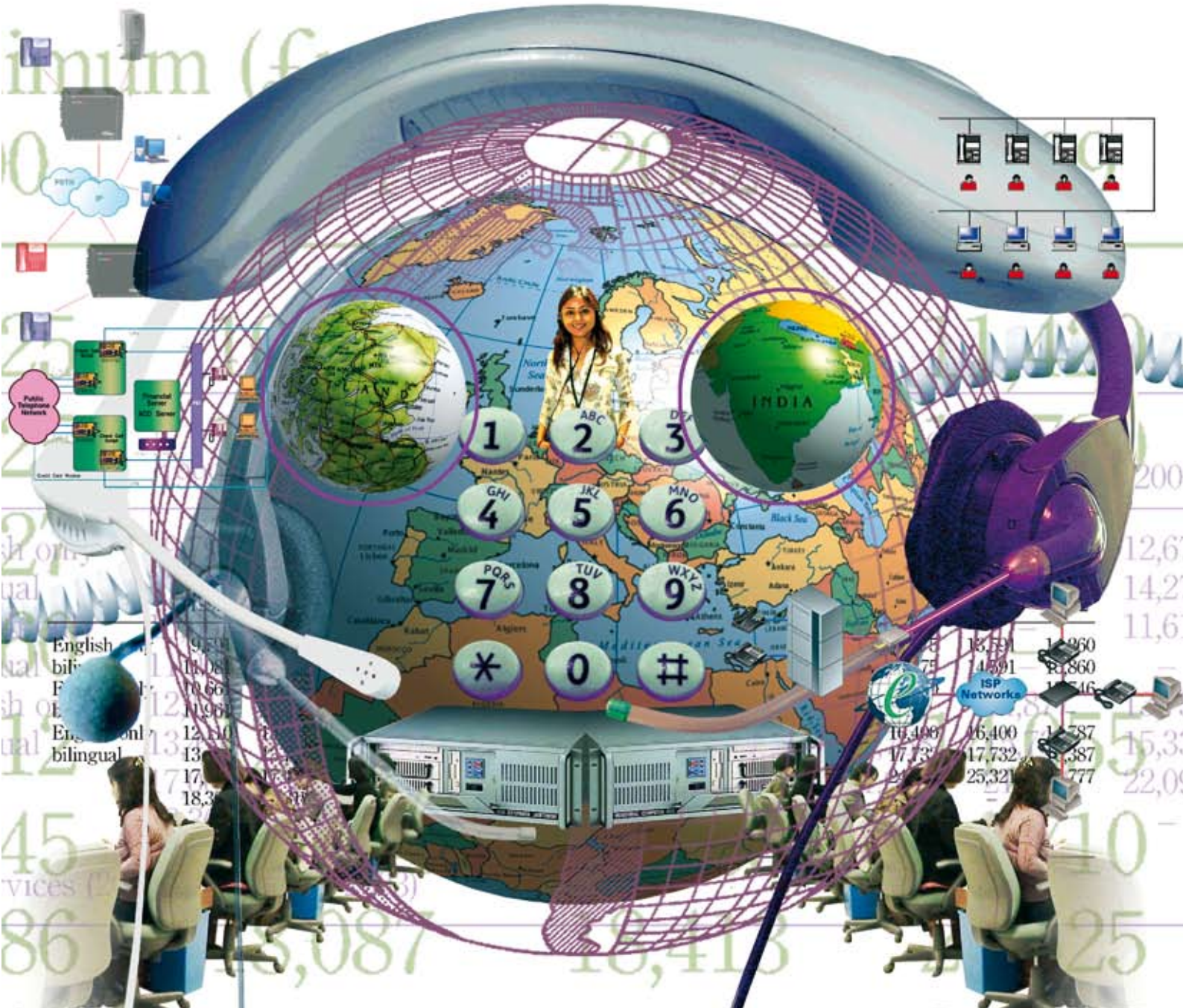




University of
Strathclyde
Business
School

PIONEER



DIALLING THE RIGHT NUMBERS

THE GROWTH OF INTERNATIONAL CALL CENTRES

**NEW SIOM INSTITUTE STRENGTHENING UAE LINKS
RESTAURANTS AND IT PLC AWARDS**

Primed and ready

► Welcome to the summer issue of *Pioneer*. As mentioned in the last edition, major changes have been afoot in Strathclyde Business School over winter and spring. I'm delighted that our new structure is now firmly in place and rising well to the challenges of our increasingly competitive marketplace.

Our newly formed International Division, headed by Professor Colin Eden, continues to thrive and secure us a strong presence in the Gulf (see report on page 3), and our Centre for Executive Education, under the direction of Dr Stephen Gibb, is set to formalise our management development offerings.

The Department of Management (formerly GSB) has some new additions to its academic team, and across the faculty a move towards a more unified SBS gathers pace.

A current major faculty endeavour, and across the university for that matter, is our next submission to the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008, later this year.

The RAE is a peer review exercise to evaluate the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. This assessment not only rates the standing of an institution in terms of its research quality, but dictates what funds it will receive from the UK higher education funding bodies.

To date, our own performance indicators suggest that we are doing very well, but, between now and October, our final submission is never far from my thoughts and those of my academic colleagues.

Finally, in line with our more unified approach, we attempt to present a wider picture of SBS in our e-newsletters and in this season's edition of *Pioneer*, so I do hope you enjoy what promises to be a very enjoyable read.

Professor Charles Harvey,
Dean of the University
of Strathclyde



PLC awards reflect real achievement

► Strathclyde Business School (SBS) ensured the success of the Scottish PLC Awards 2007, Scotland's leading corporate annual awards event, by setting the standards for participating companies.

The awards were launched by *Scottish Business Insider* magazine and PricewaterhouseCoopers in 1998,

and for the past seven years SBS academics have played a key role in setting the criteria for each award category and assessing eligible companies.

Co-ordinated by Christine Reid, SBS business information manager, the process is a complex, lengthy exercise involving around eight academics interviewing key staff from around 10 companies.

"The detailed research and analysis of all 70 Scottish plcs carried out enhances the overall credibility of the awards process," she said. "A wide range of evidence is studied each year as our role as Research Sponsor is to carry out a rigorous process of independent research."

At the awards dinner at the Glasgow Hilton in April, Professor Charles Harvey, the school's Dean, said: "Our commitment to these awards is

long-term. They are an excellent way for SBS to get even more involved with the local business community, and to further raise our profile in Scotland."

Speaking before the awards, Professor Susan Hart, Vice-Dean (Research), called for an open dialogue between the business school and business community. She commented on the characteristics of the winners, which had learning and innovation at their core. But, in response to recent calls for greater levels of competitiveness and growth, she added: "We have to ensure that the young people graduating with degrees in business and management business are educated in such a way as to ensure that they are right for business, and, equally, business has to be ready to accept the challenges that they will undoubtedly bring to any organisation dragging its heels in the practices of the last century."

Aggreko, the Glasgow-based generator hire specialist, won top billing in recognition of its success on the international stage, bagging both the Scotland plc of the Year award, and Mid-size cap plc of the Year.

Other prize winners included Moir Lockhead of First Group, named Scotland plc CEO of the year, and Royal Bank of Scotland won the Developing Your People award.



Susan Hart emphasised dialogue with business community

Strathclyde to become world leader in better business

► The University of Strathclyde has launched a leading institute to help businesses operate more efficiently and effectively.

The Strathclyde Institute of Operations Management – the first academic institute of its kind in the UK – will develop world-class research and teaching into the latest methods of end-to-end business management, including managing supply chains, outsourcing, managing technology, and distributing goods and services.

Staff, expertise and resources will be brought together from the internationally recognised Business School and Faculty of Engineering, and will offer specialised MSc programmes, short, open courses and bespoke training for industry clients.

Professor Umit Bititci, director of the institute, said: "Over the past decade, there have been significant changes in how operations are managed

in industry, commerce and the public sector.

"Strathclyde's Business School and its Faculty of Engineering have developed innovative responses to these changes. The institute will allow closer working across departments, including Management Science, Design, Manufacture and Engineering Management, to ensure we remain at the forefront of operations management research and teaching."

Plans are also under way for an enterprise management laboratory to give students access to the latest software used in operations management.

Ivan Tiefenbraun, CEO of leading international music systems company Linn Products, welcomed the new institute. He said: "For world-class performance in the manufacturing, service or public sector, integrated operations management expertise is essential. Strathclyde's new institute is a most welcome development."

School leads the way in UAE

► Strathclyde Business School is Europe's first university faculty to be awarded a licence to operate an MBA programme in the United Arab Emirates. It was scrutinised by the deans of three top US business schools as part of the process carried out by the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation.

Professor Andrew Hammett, the University of Strathclyde's principal and vice-chancellor, hosted an MBA graduation ceremony in Dubai in February, which coincided with celebrating the attainment of the licence.

The licence establishes the school as an educational institution officially recognised by the UAE government, a distinction held by only one other in Europe, the University of Sorbonne.

Strathclyde has run a part-time MBA programme in Dubai since 1995 and Abu Dhabi for the past

three years. The university has been at the forefront of developing business qualifications and is a world leader in forging commercial and industrial links.

Colin Eden, director of the business school's International Division, believes the recognition means better job prospects for the school's UAE students. The licence also allows Strathclyde to increase its operations in Abu Dhabi, which strictly regulates foreign operators. Professor Eden explained that the school has been focusing much attention on the Gulf region over the past four years, where it also has activities in Muscat, Bahrain and Oman.

"It's a growing economy," he said. "Dubai accounts for something like 20 per cent of all the construction cranes in the world. Abu Dhabi is slower, but, in my view, pursuing a more considered growth plan."



The move is the latest in a series of firsts for the business school, which will launch new MSc programmes for the UAE in April next year, including one in entrepreneurship offered by the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, founded by Scottish multimillionaire Tom Hunter. It is anticipated that the programmes will raise total student enrolment in Dubai and Abu Dhabi from 300 to 400.

The school, which operates in 10 overseas centres, is keen to extend its international reach and is considering developing relationships with top business schools in Russia and India. It provides all the staff and materials required for courses, but shares premises with local universities and colleges.

and...

RIGHT WAVELENGTH

The university's Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship went on the air in January. It provided a base for Celtic Music Radio (CMR), a pilot initiative during Glasgow's Celtic Connections Music Festival. The station has applied to OFCOM for a full broadcast licence. If it is granted, the station may be used as part of teaching programmes at the Hunter Centre and the Department of Creative and Aesthetic Studies, which both have an interest in entrepreneurship in the creative industries.

GREEK ALUMNI

SBS's Greek partner, International Business Studies (IMS), has announced the formation of the Strathclyde Alumni Association in Greece and the first meeting took place in April. Membership is open not only to those who completed their Masters in Greece through IMS, but to all holders of Strathclyde degrees living in Greece.

CONFERENCE MILESTONE

Professor Paul Thompson was one of the speakers celebrating the 25th anniversary International Labour Process Conference in Amsterdam in April. Strathclyde's Department of Human Resource Management has hosted the conference twice. Next year Professor Sharon Bolton of the Department of Management will be one of the co-organisers when the event is held in Dublin.

MDP'S OZ LINKS

Strathclyde's Management Development Programme (MDP) for undergraduates, which has been running since 1999, was the model for the Business Edge programme introduced this year at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. Staff from both universities have been working together since 2004 in developing a curriculum for employability.

Bolton highlights human factors

► Professor Sharon Bolton (pictured right) joined the Department of Management in March. She has acquired an international reputation that is reflected not only in a string of academic publications, but in a number of articles in national and international journals and newspapers.

Professor Bolton's book, *Emotion Management in the Workplace*, provides insights into an aspect of organisational life that is often underestimated in terms of its importance.

Her latest book, *Searching for the Human in Human Resource Management* (with Dr Maeve Houlihan, University College Dublin), explores the limitations of binding relationships at work within tight economic boundaries. An emphasis on engaging with managers to develop reflective practice continues in her forthcoming edited collection book, *Dimensions of Dignity at Work*, which seeks to explore how



individuals derive value from their work and are valued by others.

Professor Bolton told *Pioneer*: "There is a vibrant research community at Strathclyde where I have received a very warm welcome. While research continues into areas such as employee engagement at work,

the human and organisational costs of outsourcing and the notion of promising rather than best practice management, I am currently investing my energies into establishing a Work and Society Research Network (see www.researchandsociety.com).

"The network is a developing international community of academics, policy-makers, businesses and employee organisations who are all interested in the material realities of work in the political economy and are committed to leading-edge, sociologically informed research which is reflective, offers critical insight and, ultimately, has use-value. Strathclyde University seems to be an ideal place to host such a community."

The arrival of Professor Bolton is the first in a series of appointments, in the Department of Management and across the faculty, that reinforce the research profile of Strathclyde and confirm it as a school that attracts the best academics.

From Scotland to Bangalore

PROFESSOR PHIL TAYLOR, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, LOOKS AT THE RISE OF CALL CENTRES – THE ‘NEW FACTORIES’

RESEARCHING THE CALL CENTRE IN SCOTLAND

► When we began our investigations in 1996 the significance of the call centre had yet to be fully acknowledged. Contrary to uninformed speculation that call centres would be here today and gone tomorrow, our earliest research findings established that the sector was set to grow massively in Scotland and across the UK.

In reports for Scottish Enterprise and the employers’ organisation, the Call Centre Association (with whom we worked closely), we charted the expansion of employment in Scotland from 16,000 in 1997 to 56,000 by 2003. Our latest estimate shows that more than 63,000 currently have jobs in the sector. Thus, we successfully demonstrated how call centres had become an important part of the so-called new economy as the service sector increasingly replaced the traditional industries that had defined Scotland.

The University of Strathclyde was an ideal platform from which to launch our research as Scotland was one of the key UK regions for call centre activity, and Glasgow – as the pre-eminent location – competed with other cities (Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester) for the title of ‘call centre capital’. Scotland was home to pioneering developments in the delivery of remote customer servicing, such as the creation of Direct Line, the first 24/7, 365-day, branchless insurance operation.

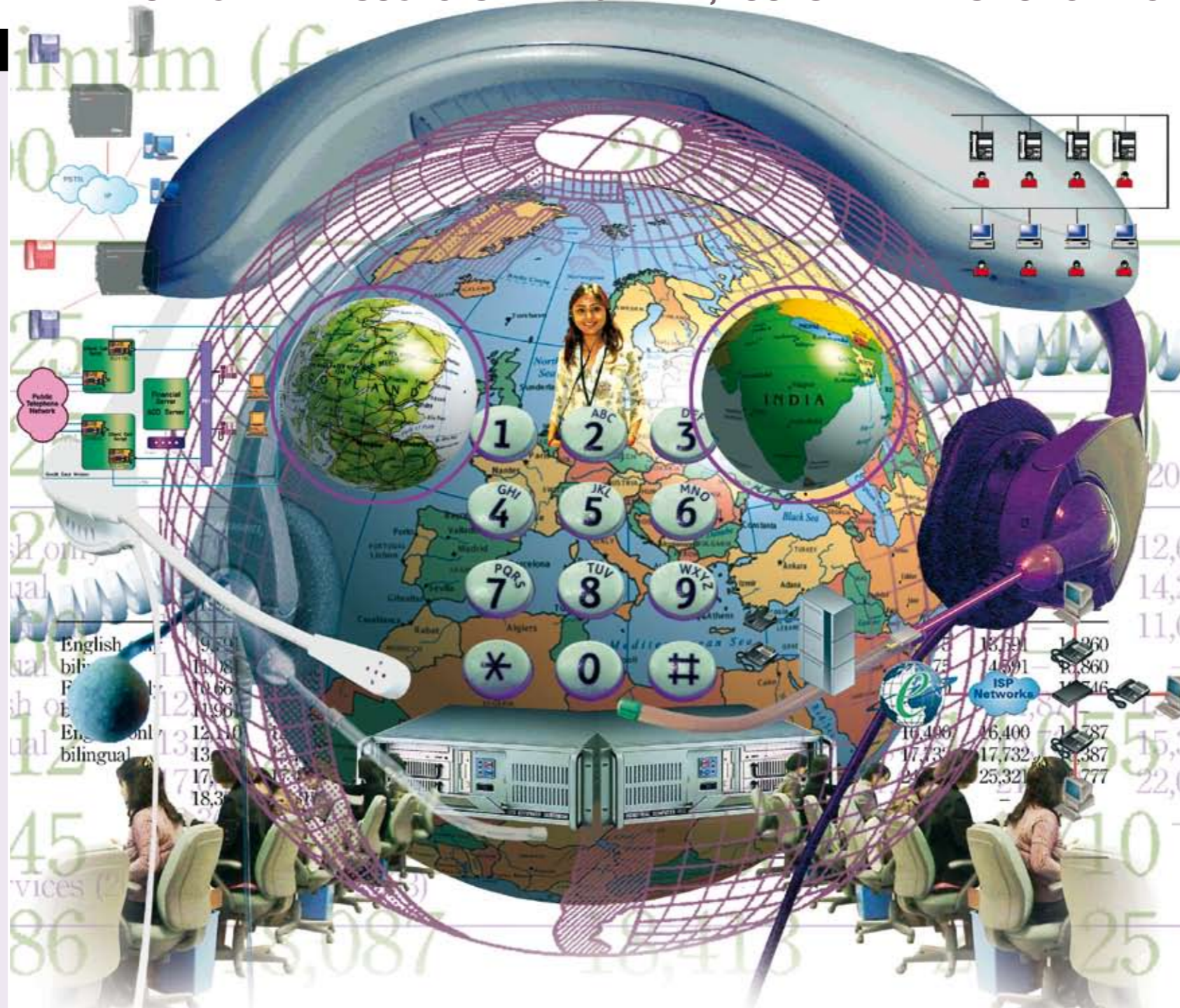
In analysing the reasons why companies chose to locate in Scotland, we found that relatively low costs (labour and facilities) and high skills (including language capabilities and customer servicing competencies), combined with the proactive role of enterprise bodies in attracting inward investment through incentives and infrastructural support, were key factors. In addition, because of the importance of financial services to Scotland’s economy the largest number of call centres was to be found in this sector.

Given our disciplinary background in industrial relations, our studies were particularly focused on the nature of work organisation and employment conditions. We analysed how technological developments in information and communication technologies had facilitated the emergence of the call centre.

For us, though, the defining characteristic lay in the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system that routed calls through headphones to available agents working at computer terminals within call centres. From the perspective of employees this often led to pressurised task performance. Managements who implemented a battery of quantitative targets often prioritised achieving sufficient call volumes. Workers we interviewed likened the pacing of work to having “an assembly line in the head”.

Employee experiences of this unique working environment were further investigated in a major project funded by the UK Government through its Economic and Social Research Council’s Future of Work Programme. Although centred in the University of Strathclyde, this ambitious study was conducted by a multi-disciplinary research team that included Peter Bain and me and academics from three other Scottish universities.

A book based on this project, titled *The Meaning of Work in the Twenty First Century*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in March.



INDIA CALLING TO THE FARAWAY TOWNS

From 2002 press speculation grew that the UK call centre industry would be decimated by migration to India. This was prompted by decisions taken by the Prudential to relocate 850 jobs to Mumbai and by HSBC to offshore 4,500 jobs in total to India and to other Far Eastern destinations. There followed similar decisions by many household company names such as BT, Lloyds/TSB, Norwich Union and Barclays. The emergence of the global call centre compelled Peter and I to add a new dimension to our studies, forcing us to examine developments in the Asian sub-continent. Altogether we made nine research trips to India.

We completed two path-breaking studies in 2003 and 2006 into the offshoring of call centres and business processes, examining the practices and intentions of companies in Scotland/UK and investigating the industry as it was emerging in India.

We found that there were powerful forces driving offshoring, notably significant overall cost savings of around 40-50 per cent, deriving largely from a labour cost differential of 70-80 per cent. India emerged as overwhelmingly the most important destination country for business processes, and customer services also, because of the skills of its English-speaking graduate workforce. In addition, government at national and state levels was working hard to create an environment attractive to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

At the same time we identified several significant factors that can be seen as inhibiting relocation. Prominent amongst these were issues relating to recruiting, training and retaining employees. Labour turnover – running at around 75 per cent per annum overall – is perhaps the single most important difficulty facing the industry. Many of the problems facing the Indian call centre industry are the result of very rapid growth, which has caused the labour market in the major locations of Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Delhi (Noida and Gurgaon) to overheat. As the industry has come to employ almost half a million people costs have risen, forcing Indian suppliers and foreign companies to establish facilities in what are called second or third tier cities.

The evidence from UK/Scottish companies also showed that low costs alone were not sufficient reason to offshore services. Many companies decided to keep services at home for reasons of quality and to avoid customer dissatisfaction. Prominent Scottish banks, RBS and HBOS, publicly declared their opposition to offshoring. Challenging conventional wisdom we argued that, although the Indian industry was set to grow and offshoring would increase, the industry in Scotland would continue to grow.

Since 2003 Peter and I have disseminated the findings from these projects to around 50 different conferences and seminars.

One of our research objectives has been to identify ways in which working conditions can be improved for those employed in call centres. On recent trips to India Peter and I met with people involved in forming an organisation (now called UNITES Professionals) to represent the interests of Indian call centre employees. Those closest to Peter agreed it would be appropriate if a fund were established in his name to support these activities. For information, or to make a donation, please email me at philip.taylor@strath.ac.uk



In memory of my colleague Peter Bain

This article is written in large part as a tribute to my friend and close colleague in the Department of Human Resource Management, Peter Bain, who died after a short illness on 25 March.

Peter was associated with the University of Strathclyde for almost a quarter of a century, firstly as a mature undergraduate and then Masters student and following his studies

was employed as a Research Fellow, lecturer and finally senior lecturer in the Department of Human Resource Management. For more than a decade Peter and I collaborated on numerous

projects researching the call centre, which generated many academic publications and countless reports and briefings for government, industry and trade unions.

Illustration by Miles Cole

QUESTION TIME



Irene Aitkenhead Taylor is Strathclyde Business School's careers and corporate liaison manager

What was your background before this job?

Twelve years in the BBC after university, latterly as a drama production/location manager, before my full-time MBA at SBC 1994-95. After my MBA, I went on to work for a small multimedia company as production and account manager before being head-hunted by Strathclyde Careers Service to help with MBAs.

Any unfulfilled ambitions?

I have had quite a lot to do with entrepreneurship support initiatives at Strathclyde and I work with a small company as a non-executive director for strategy and business development. My long-term goal is to devote more time to this.

Do Strathclyde students generally have a clear idea of what they want to do after they get their qualification?

It depends, but the short answer is no! Many think that the MBA will be a passport to a certain type of job, and, with the right skills and experience pre-MBA, it can certainly be a passport to a good corporate career. But many need guidance, or just a sounding board, to develop their strategy for the highly competitive MBA job market – especially overseas students – and that's where we come in.

How do you rate the current job market for MBAs and postgraduate business students?

Much more dynamic and in a growth phase again after a serious slump from about 2002 onwards.

What's the most important advice you give people?

Invest the time and energy to do some serious self-evaluation and gain a clear understanding of what you have to offer the prevailing job market – and in what sector – before you even think about making applications. And use all the resources available.



Taste of success:
young entrepreneur
Fraser Doherty

Fraser's jam sessions turn into a real business

► Talk about starting how you mean to go on.

Eighteen-year-old Strathclyde business and accountancy undergraduate Fraser Doherty was only 14 when he started making jam from his grandmother's recipes and sold it to friends and neighbours. In less than four years he was producing up to 1,000 jars a week from his parents' home in the Davidson's Mains suburb of Edinburgh, with an appealing range of jam including kiwi fruit, lime and ginger preserve and lemon marmalade.

But he has had to move his Doherty Preserves production to a small factory in Hertfordshire to keep pace with demand, since signing a contract to produce 120,000 jars for Waitrose. The range, to be called SuperJam, is expected to sell for £1.49 a jar in 130 stores.

Fraser said: "If things continue to go so well, I plan to take on extra staff, and I'd love to have the product in other supermarket chains, too. I'm hoping that SuperJam will help encourage a new generation of jam fans."

Fraser got interested in jams after his grandmother taught him a recipe for marmalade that had been handed down through generations of the family. With her help he began to devise his own unusual jams, selling them door-to-door in Edinburgh, and also supplying delicatessens, farmers' markets and Hibernian Football Club.

By the time he was 15 in 2004, he so impressed a panel of business experts that he was presented with an

Enterprising Young Brit award by Gordon Brown.

Traditional jams are not exactly healthy eating, being as much as 80 per cent sugar, but Fraser has developed an alternative, using grape juice instead of artificial sweeteners or sugar.

"I wanted to make jam in as healthy a way as possible," he said. "Traditional jam is quite unhealthy. It is boiled in huge pans so it has no nutritional value, whereas my jam is much more healthy."

"It was quite daunting to change a product that has been made the same way for hundreds of years, but I wanted to put a completely new perspective on jam."

Waitrose preserve buyer Michael Simpson-Jones said: "Fraser has managed to take a product with a slightly stuffy, old-fashioned image and completely reinvent it, giving it a young and more up-to-date image."

The Easter vacation from university found Fraser on a two-week visit to London, touring Waitrose branches, telling customers about his products and handing out samples.

Fraser's father, Robert, is relieved to see the end of 'in-house' production.

"For a long time now, Fraser took over our kitchen to experiment with new recipes and to make up his jam orders," he said. "When he was in the kitchen, none of us could get in, unless we were prepared to help. Even guests ended up getting roped into putting labels on the jars."

fuzzy words

GET DEFUZZED WITH OUR EIGHTH STROLL THROUGH THE JARGON ALPHABET

Assmosis: The process by which some people seem to absorb success and advancement by kissing up to the boss rather than working hard.

Blamestorming: Sitting around in a group, discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed, and who was responsible.

404: Someone who's clueless. From the internet error message '404 Not Found,' meaning that the requested web page could not be found.

Appetising prospects

► Menus on computers and in restaurants loom large in Navdeep Basi's life. He has been cooking up quite a business in IT and hospitality since completing his MBA at Strathclyde in 1994/95.

After his MBA he ran the UK arm of a large Middle East-based clothing company that manufactured more than 30 million garments per year. But Navdeep was also interested in Indian restaurants, like many people who eat out in Scotland. His family has been in the restaurant trade since the early 1980s.

While in the garment industry he had decided to take steps to set up his own restaurant business.

"I started up with a concept that's unique for Scotland. I wanted to bring real Indian food here, instead of the mixed cuisine approach we already had," said Navdeep.

"So I launched The Dhabba, which opened in November 2002. It's a 100-seater restaurant in the Merchant City area, not far from the university, and it specialises in north Indian food. It took off straight away, because it was so different from everything else in Glasgow. We built it from scratch and we didn't do much advertising when it opened, but relied on word of mouth and reviews from critics.

Less than two years later, Navdeep opened a sister restaurant in the area. Called Dakhin, it was the first authentic south Indian restaurant in Scotland.

Completing a hat-trick this year is Navdeep's latest opening: the Merchant City Gate Restaurant, featuring fusion tapas from the Pacific Rim, prepared by a lively trio of chefs – an Indian, a

Filipino and a Scot. Like its two predecessors, it is aiming for the middle market, and Navdeep hopes to follow with more outlets.

Corporate customers are welcomed by all the restaurants, and Navdeep also has a catering company operating in Glasgow.

Meanwhile, he has been utilising the IT and web talents generated throughout his academic and working life by setting up a company called Bespoke IT Solutions, which offers online marketing expertise, web design and software. The clients include a range of blue chip companies and SMEs.

Last year, Navdeep acquired an IT company called Integrated POS Solutions Ltd, which provides software for the hospitality market.

Navdeep's catering company, Bapu Hospitality, is based in Wellington Street, Glasgow, and in total his group employs 60 people.

"The MBA has made a big difference to me," said Navdeep. "Decisions have to be justified and the risk element in business is very important to understand.

"While I was studying, I didn't have any enterprises running. I enjoyed taking a year out to get on with the MBA, look at things from a theoretical point of view and meet other people doing MBAs. That was a major part of the experience – probably just as important as the academic element. I met some really good people."

IT and web services

**Integrated POS Solutions Ltd, Centrepoint,
135 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 2XD
Tel: +44 (0)141 229 0239
Website: www.ipsaloha.com**

**Bespoke IT Solutions, Centrepoint,
135 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 2XD.
Tel: +44 (0)141 229 0344
Website: www.bespokeitsolutions.com**

The Dhabba

In India a *dhabba* is a traditional wayside restaurant, but over the years deluxe *dhabbas* have opened in city centres and five-star hotels. The Dhabba in Glasgow won *The List* magazine's award for best newcomer restaurant in 2003/4. Among many enthusiastic reviews for it is Barry Shelby's in *The Guardian*, which said: "If we're lucky, this could become the model for 21st century UK curry houses."

**The Dhabba, 44 Candleriggs, Glasgow G1 1LE
Tel: +44 (0) 141 553 1249
Website: www.thedhabba.com**

Dakhin

Following its sister restaurant's success, Dakhin took *The List* magazine's award for best newcomer restaurant in 2005/6. The two restaurants won an EastScotland Cultural Cuisine Award in May this year. Earlier, Allan Brown wrote in the *Sunday Times*: "The food in Dakhin comes minus the usual slicks of oil and unnatural colouring. The feel is of something nimbler and more complex, carefully presented in a charming space. Dakhin really is something special. Go immediately."

**Dakhin, First Floor, 89 Candleriggs,
Glasgow G1 1NP
Tel: +44 (0)141 553 2585
Website: www.dakhin.com**

Merchant City Gate

Merchant City Gate is a bar/restaurant with a capacity for around 300 customers. Its small 50-seat restaurant specialises in food from the Asia and Pacific region in a tapas style. Traditional lunch, brunch and dinner menus are also available in the main bar area.

**Merchant City Gate,
62 Trongate, Glasgow, G1 5EP.
Tel: +44 (0)141 548 1330.
Website: www.merchantcitygate.com**

Bapu Hospitality

Bapu Hospitality is a catering company specialising in authentic Indian food. Menus can be designed to suit budgets and tastes. The business is an organic extension of the two restaurants, The Dhabba and Dakhin, which have both received numerous awards and exceptional critical acclaim.

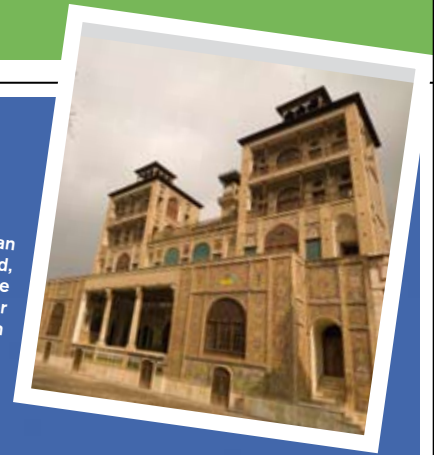
Chefs employed by the three operations have been trained in five-star hotels. The head chef Jamuna Datt Tewari has previously been personally responsible for catering for India's prime minister and president.

**Bapu Hospitality, Centrepoint, 3rd Floor,
135 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 2XD
Tel: +44 (0) 141 229 0239
Website: www.bapuhospitality.com**



"I STARTED UP WITH A CONCEPT THAT'S UNIQUE FOR SCOTLAND. I WANTED TO BRING REAL INDIAN FOOD HERE, INSTEAD OF THE MIXED CUISINE APPROACH WE ALREADY HAD." NAVDEEP BASI

Weak advertising fails to promote Iran's tourism potential



The Golestan Palace and, below, the Zayنده river in Iran

► Iran has enormous potential for attracting tourists that has remained untapped because of weak advertising and lack of information available, according to Kevin O’Gorman of Strathclyde’s Hospitality and Tourism Management department. At the International Conference on Tourism in Islamic Countries, held in Tehran in March, Kevin discussed the factors considered by tourists when deciding where to travel.

He and his co-author Dr Richard Prentice believe Iran has an enormous potential for attracting tourists. The majority of European and western tourists who come to Muslim and eastern countries are seeking new and profound experiences – in some cases the religious values that are fast disappearing from some western countries.

Kevin believes Islamic countries should focus their attention on the part of their tourism product that highlights their unique culture. According to him, Iran’s archaeology, cultural heritage, traditions and diversity of nature are the main factors that attract foreigners to visit.

His presentation covered three models, starting with one to explain how tourists select what destination to visit.

The model put forward by Dr Prentice was designed to challenge a tendency in contemporary destination marketing to emphasise SSPs (standardised selling points) rather than USPs (unique, or at least unusual, selling points).

USPs are differentiated into UUSPs (unique utility selling points) UESPs (unique experiential selling points) USSPs (unique symbolic selling points). These summarise aspects of generic imagery and product beliefs that affect destination differentiation.

Another model focused on choices by potential tourists.

How can destination managers put these ideas into operation in their marketing and product development? Kevin and Dr Prentice created a matrix based on a SWOT analysis and combined with the expansion of USPs.

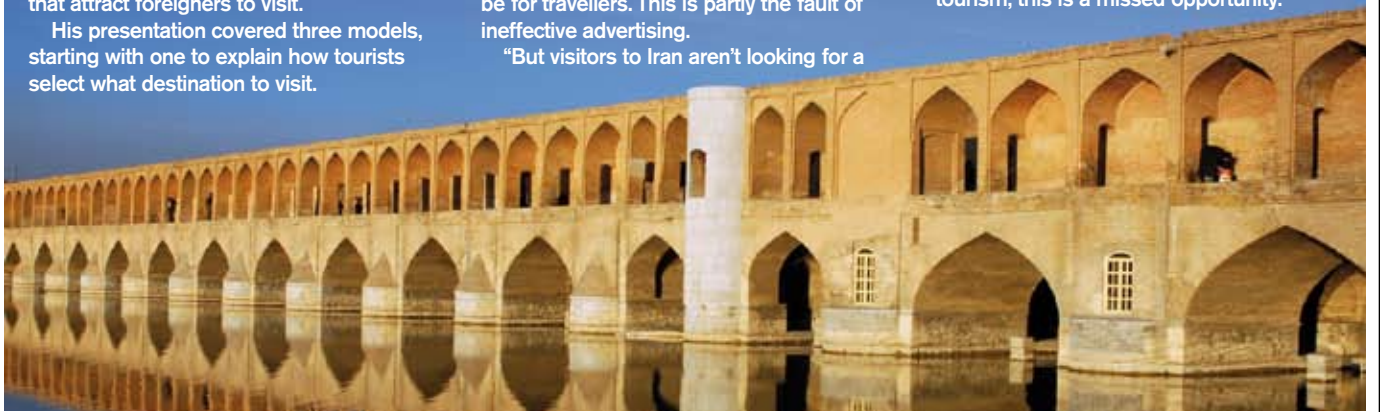
According to Kevin, despite all Iran’s tourist attractions, the majority of Europeans are not familiar with the country and have little idea of how rewarding it can be for travellers. This is partly the fault of ineffective advertising.

“But visitors to Iran aren’t looking for a

European-style beach holiday; they are coming to explore the cultural heritage and soak up the wonderful culture. Their choice is based on knowledge, credibility, familiarity and ultimately how they feel about the destination.”

Each country needs to take three main approaches for attracting and satisfying its tourists: proper introduction of its tourism attractions through brochures and the internet; showing tourists what the atmosphere is like; and underlining traditional, historical and cultural values.

Evaluating Iran’s tourism resources and infrastructure, Kevin said: “Visiting Pasargadae and the tomb of Cyrus the Great was always one of my great travel dreams. But when I went to his tomb, although I was enchanted by its magnificence, there were no other sources of information or retail, not even a café. Considering how important retail is in tourism, this is a missed opportunity.”



Collaboration is the key to success

► A workshop entitled How can UK manufacturers move into higher value markets? and organised by Dr Jill MacBryde, Kepa Mendibil and Dr Steve Paton (pictured below) was hosted by Strathclyde University on April 25. It was a joint initiative held as part of the Manufacturing



Futures project and in association with the newly launched Strathclyde Institute of Operations Management (SIOM).

The event was attended by representatives from academia, industry and government with

speakers from Scottish Enterprise, the universities of Strathclyde, Cranfield and Cambridge and representation from many industry sectors, including large-scale multinationals such as BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce and British Telecom, plus more local SMEs.

In recent years, with the decline of the UK’s manufacturing sector, there has been emerging agreement that UK manufacturers have to move into higher value markets. The workshop explored how this could be achieved most effectively.

Several areas were covered, with focus groups discussing the role of people, process and inter-organisational collaboration, and the findings

are now being analysed. An interesting theme, which was emphasised by attendees from both industry and government, was that stronger links between industry and academia were needed. At present many companies are unaware of the services that can be offered by academia, or even how to build a useful relationship with a university, with most relationships existing at an individual rather than an institutional level. Government could play a stronger role by incentivising universities to collaborate more strongly with industry, rather than emphasising the current agenda, which seems to favour pure research and publication.