idea behind this was to demonstrate that self-assessment was simple, not time consuming and that it is worth doing.

John Sharpe insisted on the fact that the top team should perform the self-assessment:

> The shared understanding and commitment gained by the top team from doing the Self Assessment themselves is an essential ingredient for real understanding of the process and its benefits. The commitment gained from 'doing it oneself' greatly increases the chance of long term success.

The simple checklist approach consists of a number of questions that have to be answered. Ten questions were identified for each enabler criterion part of the model. For each question there is a need to record some evidence. A typical question would be 'Do the leaders act as role models? Give three examples'.

A score out of ten points is given for each question and the total for all ten questions calculated. A weighting is then applied to the total for all the questions to give the criterion score.

For the results a list of measures is given together for each criterion with a simple scoring system. For each result listed, if there is no data, then the score will be 0. If a result shows a positive trend over a three-year period, plus a target and external comparison, then the score will be 10. For each result criterion the average score is calculated across the measures, and in a similar fashion to the enablers, a weighting is applied to arrive at the number of points.

As a simple scoring system is used there is only limited alignment between the self-assessment score achieved and that which would be obtained through an external assessment. In addition to the score, the self-assessment leads to lists of strengths and areas for improvement (AFIs) being identified for each criterion part, plus the top three Strengths and AFIs overall. An improvement plan is generated from the analysis.

The HPCE board assessment was conducted by consolidating the output from the unit assessments and agreeing a score, plus strengths and AFIs. The first opportunities for improvement were quite major and included both enabler and results issues.

On the enabler side the need for a policy deployment approach was identified and so 'Strategy into Action' was introduced. This was based on an approach used in Unilever Australia and the transfer of the approach to HPCE is an early example of 'external' learning. At the same time, although not as a direct consequence of self-assessment, a new strategy formulation approach based on the 'Hax methodology' was introduced. The timely introduction of this approach enhanced the benefit from self-assessment over the following years, as it provided direction and reinforced the value of self-assessment.

In 1996 Unilever already had many soundly based practices in place. Examples included the 'Integrated Approach', which combines objective setting, development planning and remuneration, and the approach to product development, which has been benchmarked on several occasions. However, many of the major strategic improvements for HPCE stemmed from the first self-assessment. Improvements were identified in the areas of communication, process management and goal deployment, which led to the 'Strategy into Action' approach being deployed. Self-assessment also identified gaps in the results areas such as employee