

# EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

## Rail Infrastructure Management



### ON TRACK FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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How great would it be to enable everyone in your organisation to make better, safer and more informed operational decisions? It could lead to improvements across the board, from improving work efficiency to reducing costs and, importantly for a hazardous industry like rail, risk. But I'm preaching to the converted – nobody would choose to forego these benefits. The question is how we best achieve it.

The key to achieving these decisions is Operational Excellence. If you work in rail you could be forgiven for mentally checking out at this point; Operational Excellence is not a 'thing' in this industry, right? Actually, you may be surprised by how close you are to it. There are many core components of an Operational Excellence framework in every rail organisation.

#### **What is Operational Excellence?**

One issue that faces the rail industry when tackling Operational Excellence (OE) is a lack of clear definition – it means different things to different people. In 2016, Petrotechnics' Operational Excellence Index found that 98% of respondents "agree strongly or somewhat" with this definition:



*“OE is the pursuit of world-class performance. It requires everyone, from the boardroom to the frontline, to consistently make the most effective operational decisions, based on an integrated view of operational reality, based on risk, cost and productivity”.*

If OE is the proactive management of risk, productivity and cost, this is something you have already started to engage with. Do you base your maintenance strategy on risk, do you refer to KPIs and dashboards and do you have initiatives in place to protect work safety? I’m willing to bet it’s an integral part of your job to make sure costs are as low as they can be? These are essentially components of Operational Excellence.

Components are problematic. Components create silos, and reinforce them. Across an organisation you can have a planning department creating perfect work plans, maintenance teams responding smartly and safely to emerging work and HSE writing thorough policies. In isolation these components are optimised but building or maintaining a rail network does not happen in isolation. At the point of execution, everything comes together and without a line of sight into other silos, clashes occur and plans jar.

### **Making It Real In Rail**

Increased visibility is a concept that the rail industry is already bought into and one which is the key to getting on track to Operational Excellence. Visibility provides insight into the drivers, priorities and plans of each silo. More importantly it is all brought together to give a single view of the operational reality. This unlocks effective proactive management of the entire operation.

So how do we access this visibility? Technology. A platform technology solution can take all the information currently stored in people’s heads, on various pieces of paper and in multiple spreadsheets and systems and pull it into one place. Bringing this previously segregated data together finally gives every decision maker an integrated, shared view of the entire operational reality – in real time.

Operational Excellence is not about marginal changes. It’s a new way of thinking and working, that needs to be underpinned by a new kind of technology. With this in place, the best decisions can be made quickly because you know exactly what’s happening, when and where.



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Her experience has spanned the entire marketing discipline, from corporate communications to product marketing and graphic design. This experience has been across various sectors including oil and gas and life sciences. Jenna graduated from the University of St Andrews in 2008 with an MA in Business Management.