



# THE KINGDOM WAS LOST

## course guide

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➤ **Fact and Fiction**

All the characters and events in **The kingdom was lost** are entirely fictional. Any similarity to real people, products or organisations is coincidental.

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A stylized graphic of a mountain range in shades of blue and white, serving as a background for the table of contents.

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# ABOUT THE PACK

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Purpose

This training pack is designed to show people the critical importance of attention to detail in their everyday work.

Excellent performance has always depended on getting the little things right first time. In today's organisations this is everybody's responsibility, no matter who they are, what they do or how long they have been around. In a fast moving world we can no longer rely on the boss or bureaucratic systems to check our work. We must do that for ourselves every day, in everything we do, large or small.

The purpose of **The kingdom was lost** is to help people recognise their responsibility for the quality of their work and show them how to act upon it. It will make them think twice before saying:

*"I can't be bothered"*

*"No-one will notice if I don't do that"*

*"It's only a minor detail"*

*"Just this once won't matter"*

*"It's not my job to do that".*

### Audience

Because attention to detail is everybody's responsibility the pack can be used at all levels in any organisation, whether in the public or private sector.

As an organisation's performance is the result of cooperative effort between individuals and teams, there are advantages in using the pack with groups containing a cross section of seniority and function. Discussion of the contribution which different individuals and functions make will prevent anyone thinking that this is nothing to do with them, perhaps because they are too junior or never come in contact with customers.



The half-day workshop detailed in this guide is designed for a group of eight to twelve people.

## Objectives

Use of **The kingdom was lost** will enable individuals to:

- **Understand the importance of attention to detail in their everyday work**
- **Recognise the contribution which everyone must make if their organisation is to achieve the levels of performance needed to survive and prosper**
- **Understand how to deliver high quality work by applying the 3 As - Attitude, Awareness and Action**
- **Apply the lessons from The kingdom was lost to their own circumstances at work and produce an Action Plan (Handout 2)**

## Using the pack

You can use the pack:

- **To run a stand-alone, half day session**  
**You will find details of how to do this in the remainder of this course guide.**
- **To run an intensive, ninety minute session**  
**The quick guide will tell you how to do this.**
- **To inject the important lessons about individuals' responsibility for attention to detail into programmes such as:**
  - **Induction.** It is very important for new employees to know why, what and how they are expected to contribute to their organisation's performance from their first day in the job
  - **Quality.** Quality systems are important and helpful, but they exist to support individual responsibility for quality, not replace it. Unless everyone accepts and acts upon that responsibility, quality will not be achieved.



- **Customer service.** It is essential for those who are not in direct contact with customers to recognise that their attention to the details of their day to day work will have an effect, for good or ill, on the end results delivered to the customer
- **Planning/project management.** The use of **The kingdom was lost** on such programmes will help to balance the emphasis on systems, structures and formal planning tools
- **Empowerment.** Whether aimed at individuals or teams, empowerment is all about encouraging and helping people to take more responsibility at work. **The kingdom was lost** demonstrates what that means - getting work right first time, being alert for problems and opportunities for improvement, speaking up when they think things are going wrong, taking initiative
- **Teamwork.** A good team is more than the sum of its parts. Effective team workers share responsibility for their team's performance and use their different strengths to support each other's efforts. You can use **The kingdom was lost** to explore what this implies for teams in your organisation



## KEY MESSAGES

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### Attention to detail

Excellent performance depends on getting the details of our work right - and right first time.

➤ **Individuals' responsibility for performance**

**Everybody has a responsibility for the quality of their own work - junior people as well as senior, new recruits and old stagers, front line staff and back room people -everybody.**

➤ **How individuals make excellent performance happen**

**Accepting responsibility is an essential first step, but building on that commitment takes:**

- **Attitude.** The characters in **The kingdom was lost** display attitudes to their work which range from arrogance to diffidence and from carelessness to gross irresponsibility. Though few people would deny responsibility for getting the details right first time, many simply lack the correct positive attitude to make it happen
- **Awareness.** We must all be clear about the particular contributions we can make to excellent performance. We must also recognise our strengths and weaknesses and find ways to build on the former and compensate for the latter
- **Action.** Responsibility, commitment, attitude, knowledge, are all mere words. Unless they spur us to take action they are of little use



## CONTENTS OF THE PACK

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### Video

- **The kingdom was lost (20 mins)**  
The story of how a simple typing error started a train of events which led to a huge, prestigious architectural project for the Millennium going disastrously wrong.
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### Course guide

- **About the pack**  
An overview of the contents of the pack.
  - **Workshop session plan**  
Detailed instructions for the half-day workshop.
  - **Resources**  
Handouts and Presentation 'slides/OHPs (Microsoft PowerPoint).
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### Quick guide

- **Notes for running a short course**  
Designed to be used when time for preparation and training is limited.



## SYNOPSIS OF THE VIDEO

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### Case study

The distinguished architect Stephen Sunbeam wins a competition for the design of a major building to celebrate the Millennium. His imaginative idea is for a giant arena in the shape of a human ear to be built in a London park.

The Ear will be capable of holding 100,000 people, access by tube, coach, taxi and car will all be underground and the audience will be transported to their seats by a system of high speed lifts.

Unfortunately, just as Sunbeam's PA, Sally, is typing that part of the design brief for the consulting engineer, David Wishart, which specifies the capacity of the lifts, they are interrupted by the delivery of a letter. Sunbeam is distracted by the message it contains: he is to be knighted. Sally cannot take her eyes off the handsome cyclist who has delivered it. The result is that the figure that goes into the brief is 10,000 people per hour instead of 100,000.

From here things go from bad to worse. Time pressure (and over-confidence) prevent Sunbeam from proofreading the brief. Wishart and his team fail to spot the error before passing the brief to Paul Kumar, the subcontractor who will design the lift system. He does not receive the brief when he should because, due to an error in Wishart's office, it goes to the wrong address. Even when it is rushed to him it still does not arrive in time because the courier, not understanding the urgency, allows himself to be sent off in the opposite direction on another job. A young trainee engineer, Janice, does spot the error. But she is unsure of herself and, although she tries to contact Paul Kumar by phone, she does not persist and her initiative comes to nothing because of the inability of a junior office worker to take a proper message.



Throughout the whole process everybody works away diligently at their own little bits without much sign of their thinking about where these fit into the whole. The process looks logical and systematic. There are properly structured meetings. Documents are signed off at appropriate points in the project. But still that missing zero does not come to light.

Finally, George Hall, the head of the company building the Ear, confronts the now knighted Sir Stephen about the mistake. But Sunbeam brushes him aside and Hall, thinking that it is sufficient to cover his own back by recording their conversation, goes ahead with construction.

Only when the building of the access system to the Ear is too far advanced to be rectified in time for the Millennium do the senior people - Sunbeam, Wishart, Kumar and Hall - realise what has happened. Their mutual recriminations do none of them any good. They must all bear the responsibility for this public disaster. The kingdom is lost.



## WORKSHOP TIMETABLE

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This is a suggested outline timetable for a half-day workshop. You can adapt it to your own requirements.

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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
<b>Video: The kingdom was lost</b>	<b>20 mins</b>
<b>How mistakes are made</b>	<b>40 mins</b>
<b>Break</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
<b>How people make excellent performance happen</b>	<b>90 mins</b>
<b>Review</b>	<b>15 mins</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 hours</b>

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