Spotlight on the NOA's Corporate Accreditation Programme

The Outsourcing Yearbook caught up with **Kerry Hallard**, CEO of the NOA to learn more on the Association's latest programme for improving performance in outsourcing

OSYB: Why has the NOA developed a corporate accreditation programme?

KH: We have spent the best part of two years developing our corporate accreditation programme as a part of our ongoing campaign to professionalise the outsourcing industry. Our accreditation programme complements our existing portfolio of qualifications for outsourcing professionals.
Users of outsourcing services frequently ask us: are they working to outsourcing best practice? How do they know if their service providers are guiding them to best effect? Are there any shortfalls in the management of their outsourcings that could be improved to deliver better results?
Although there are some emerging standards in outsourcing, all of which the NOA has been involved with, these have needed to be broad reaching and are generally non–prescriptive, as such the NOA has developed its accreditation programme to sit above these emerging standards and which is focused on the maturity of an organisation's processes across all stages of the outsourcing lifecycle model.

OSYB: Why would a company want to undertake the NOA's accreditation programme?

KH: Benefits are manifold, but predominantly, users of outsourcing services will: gain understanding as to how well they compare to industry best practice; go on a journey of improvement towards outsourcing best practice, which will yield increased value in terms of cost savings and/or service

improvements, etc.; gain recognition for their outsourcing competency and maturity; assure stakeholders of their commitment to the delivery of best practice, to include the Board, shareholders and customers.

OSYB: What is accredited?

KH: The NOA's accreditation programme has been developed to be flexible to cater to the huge variety of company requirements. As such, the accreditation can be the company-wide approach to outsourcing, that of a division, for a particular business function or for a standalone outsourcing project. As our accreditation programme is based on our Lifecycle Model, companies can also choose to be partially accredited for their practices in just one stage of the Lifecycle Model, for a couple of stages, or achieve full accreditation for all four stages!

OSYB: What's involved in undertaking an NOA Accreditation?

KH: The first stage of the accreditation process is to complete our Outsourcing Lifecycle Assessment Level 1, which is hosted online and is free of charge for members. A fifteen minute questionnaire will quickly assess your outsourcing maturity level, measured against the NOA's own best practice standards (there's a secret algorithm embedded within). The resulting report will give the user an overall maturity report, as well as highlight specific areas for development.
    After completing this stage, companies can choose to reflect

on their performance and develop their own journey of improvement or alternatively embark upon a programme towards NOA accreditation.

OSYB: So what's involved in the journey to NOA Accreditation?

KH: There are 3 main stages to NOA corporate accreditation. Put simply these are:

1. *Accreditation Readiness Assessment*
2. *Performance Improvement Programme*
3. *NOA Accreditation Audit*

Accreditation Readiness Assessment
Companies or divisions keen to embark upon NOA Accreditation need to sign up to NOA's accreditation programme. Upon enrolment, each company will be given three things:

1. The first stage is to assign a project manager to lead this accreditation programme for the company, who will be responsible for involving all necessary participants at the different stages of the programme. The project manager will be given an information pack and access to a webinar detailing the accreditation programme, how the NOA will assess and training on how to use the software.

2. Working with your project manager, the NOA will help set the company up on the Outsourcing Maturity Assessment software platform and assign appropriate controls across the designated users. The software collates and contrasts views of different individuals/teams, and even the views of suppliers if so desired, across level 2 of the Outsourcing Maturity Assessment to deliver a solid and objective picture of company-wide performance. By highlighting areas of weakness, the platform facilitates deep dives to help the company understand where it needs to improve performance. The software can be configured to the specific needs of the client company, by refining and tailoring the questionnaires accordingly.

3. The NOA, or a NOA accreditation partner, will host a one-day workshop with the company to assess performance and what needs to be done to work towards achieving NOA accreditation.

Performance Improvement Programme
The Accreditation Readiness Assessment process will provide a detailed report on performance against NOA's standards. Armed

with this information, the client company may choose any of a number of routes forward, to include but not limited to:
• Embarking upon a journey of improvement themselves
• Working with an NOA accreditation partner, or partner of their own choice, on a journey of best practice improvements to be accreditation ready
• Immediately undertake the accreditation Audit
Client companies will need to continue to use the software to assess performance, though after the initial period of three months, there is a quarterly license fee to continue to use the software.

NOA Accreditation Audit
When the company is ready, the NOA will go in and undertake the Audit process. In preparation of the Audit the NOA will review performance recorded in the software programme and will request specific evidence in advance. The audit itself will ordinarily take one day on site, interviewing different team members and requesting different evidence from each, but this varies depending on the scope for the accreditation audit. Within one week of the audit taking place the NOA will announce the level of accreditation achieved: Competent or Excellent (there is another level: Foundation, which is not an accredited level).

Companies will be given detailed feedback as to why they achieved the level they did and recommendations of what needs to be done to achieve the next level. Companies can continue to move up the accreditation level over time if they so wish.

OSYB: How long does accreditation take?

KH: The time the process takes really depends on the company's alignment to best practice. Some companies will be ready to go straight to accreditation audit and achieve it within 3 months, others may need to go on a significant journey of improvement.

The Accreditation is valid for three years when companies are invited to undertake an accreditation refreshment programme.

OSYB: What's coming up next for the Accreditation programme?

KH: We have been pleasantly

surprised by interest in accreditation from suppliers, as such we are reworking the embedded templates and the processes to work for the accreditation of suppliers. Watch this space. During the preparation for accreditation, the data input by all users will be aggregated and analysed anonymously to form an industry wide picture of performance against best practice. Sectoral analysis will be published periodically by the NOA to drive industry performance.

If you are interested in corporate or project accreditation please contact the NOA to receive a free link to the initial Outsourcing Lifecycle Assessment, or to arrange a call about the full process.

If you are a consultant or advisory and are interested in becoming a NOA Accreditation Partner, please contact Chris Halward at chrish@noa.co.uk.

NOA's Lifecycle model. Companies can be accredited on just one stage of the Lifecycle model or the full outsourcing lifecycle model.
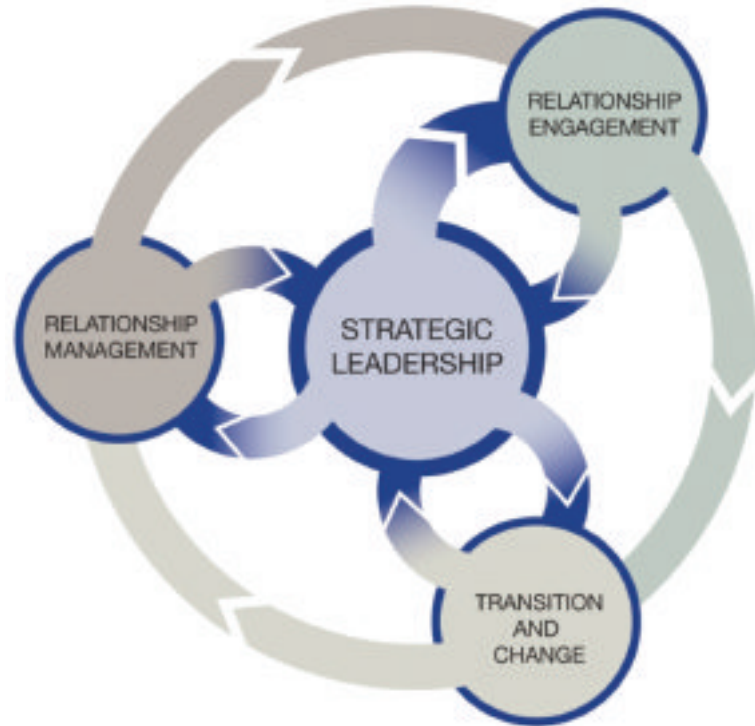
Your Assessment

Stage 1 - SL Strategic Leadership

SL-01 Executive sponsorship recognition of drivers and constraints	Inadequate	Informal	Consistent	Adaptable	Optimised
SL01-01 Create a Senior Leadership Team to sponsor the initiative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SL01-02 Appoint key stakeholders to form an Executive Strategy Team to ensure alignment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SL01-03 Determine prioritise and agree with Executive Strategy Team the drivers for outsourcing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SL01-04 Study understand and agree with the Executive Strategy Team the organisational constraints and their impact on the capability of the organisation to outsource	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SL-02 High level strategy and governance framework	Inadequate	Informal	Consistent	Adaptable	Optimised
SL02-01 Determine the high level strategy for outsourcing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐