MAKING INFORMATION SYSTEMS WORK

Also by Trevor Bentley

Information, Communication and the Paperwork Explosion

Making Cost Control Work

Report Writing in Business

Making Information Systems Work

Trevor J. Bentley

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To Clive, Neil and Jonathan

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Preface

I have spent the best part of my working life in the information industry. As an accountant, I have spent years providing information for managers who did not really want it. As a manager, I have spent years receiving information I did not really want and having to retrieve what I needed. As a systems designer, I have encountered all the problems which occur in the void between the information provider and the information user. I have tried to solve these problems and from time to time I have been rewarded with the occasional success.

What I have learned has been learned the hard way. No one told me what to look out for. As I slowly waded my way through the jungle of misguided good intentions and broken promises, I discovered a marvellous tool which helped me to sweep away the undergrowth. That tool was common sense and it has served me well ever since.

This book is about common sense and how it can be applied to the problem of providing information for decision making. I have learned a great deal during my years of grappling with the problem, and I have tried to set out what I have learned in the hope that you will benefit from my experience.

I must not let this opportunity pass without thanking those countless people I have met who have contributed to my experience and who have shown me what should not be done, when it should not be done and how it should not be done. Without them there would be no problems for me to solve.

I would also like to thank Nigel Tipping, Rick Juniper and John Robinson, who have patiently applied my ideas and rejected those which did not work. They fortunately accepted one or two ideas which they found useful. Their criticism is always a great spur to me and thankfully most of it is constructive. Finally I must thank Sue Wigley for the painful transcription of my handwriting into a readable form. Though she must have suffered she never complained.

I hope that you, the reader, find all this effort worthwhile and, if you also enjoy reading the book, then I shall be satisfied.

T.J.B.