John Seddon is an occupational psychologist, researcher, professor, management thinker and leading global authority on change, specialising in the service industry. He is the managing director of Vanguard, a consultancy company he formed in 1985 and the inventor of ‘The Vanguard Method’. Vanguard Consulting Ltd has franchisees in Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Croatia and The Netherlands.

Vanguard helps service organisations change from a conventional command-and-control design to a systems design, using a proprietary method – The Vanguard Method.

John’s prominence grew following attacks on current British management thinking including: the belief in economies of scale, quality standards such as ISO9000 and much of public sector reform including ‘deliverology’, the use of targets, inspection and centralised control of local services. The Daily Telegraph described him as a “reluctant management guru”, with a background in occupational psychology.

He adapted the Toyota Production System and the work of W. Edwards Deming and Taiichi Ohno into a methodology called ‘The Vanguard Method’ for improving performance in service industries. He is critical of target-based management, and of basing decisions on economies of scale, rather than ‘economies of flow’.

John Seddon has published five books. In his 2008 book, Systems Thinking in the Public Sector, he provided a criticism of the UK Government reform programme and advocated its replacement by systems thinking.

John won the first Management Innovation Prize for ‘Reinventing Leadership’ in October 2010.
Publications


Seddon J 2014 ‘The Whitehall Effect: How Whitehall became the enemy of great public services and what we can do about it’ Triarchy Press: Axminster

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- O'Donovan B 2014 ‘Editorial for Special Issue of SPAR: The Vanguard Method in a Systems Thinking Context’
- Dunnion J and O'Donovan B 2014 ‘Systems Thinking and Higher Education: The Vanguard Method’
- Gibson J and O'Donovan B 2014 ‘The Vanguard Method as Applied to the Design and Management of English and Welsh Children’s Services Departments’
- Wilson R 2014 ‘Living the Life You Choose: The Introduction of the Vanguard Method into an Organisation Providing Support to People with Learning Disabilities’
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