

Welcome to the latest edition of the microskills™ network for participants of microskills™ training around the world.

In this edition: **Happy New Year  
Values  
In-shoring  
Outliers**

## **Happy New Year**

For the past couple of years, our predictions for the twelve months ahead have been gloomy and, sadly, correct.

This time we are a little more optimistic – but only a little bit!

Following the usual pattern after a financial crisis, employment problems tend to kick in a few months later and we are still seeing redundancies, shorter working weeks, no pay leave and pay freezes. This will probably continue for the rest of this year.

Shops and airlines are reporting a higher volume of sales than previously but at lower yields and lower profit margins.

The more cash rich companies are riding the storm and taking the opportunity to upgrade their staff and their services so that they can capitalise when the improvements occur.

The less forward looking and cash poor organisations are cutting head count and lowering service standards. This will lead to a downward spiral where they fail to retain or attract customers.

Be prepared for a spate of take overs and asset strippings in a range of industries from banks, retailers, airlines, football clubs and even universities.

## **Values**

The businesses that do emerge successfully from the recession will have updated their corporate values to reflect the new economy. It won't be easy as some staff have taken a right battering for the last year or two.

The new watchwords will be:

*Pride:* staff feeling good about their organisation, its products, its services and its people.

*Connectedness:* removing any 'silo' mentality where staff know only their own area of work and little about what happens in other parts of the company. Recognising the impact that a single change in one department can have on the entire business.

*Curiosity:* positively encouraging staff to find out more about anything and everything that affects the business, the industry and the market place even in the most indirect and seemingly remote ways.

*Respect:* staff recognising each other and all stakeholders for what they add to their job and their life experience. Taking the time to find out more about colleagues and customers.

*Agility:* spotting opportunities (and threats) early and being prepared and able to deal with them quickly and nimbly.

Needless to say, these are the same values that we try to aspire to in our own company!

# microskills™

## **In-shoring**

The latest figures in the UK are showing that British companies are beginning to reverse the fad of off-shoring. For the past decade or longer it has been accepted wisdom to relocate manufacturing to China and services to India. More recently China is being replaced by Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia.

Now the practice is to bring it back home. The reasons given are 'quality and costs' and there could be some validity in this. Certainly with the UK currency being so weak and with an increase in local unemployment in both manufacturing and service industries, the opportunities are there.

## **Outliers**

The latest book by the author of 'Tipping Point' and 'Blink' is another fascinating read.

Taking the same approach of some skewed perceptions with the research to support them, Malcolm Gladwell investigates more issues that are entirely consistent with our work with cultural differences, microskills™ and problem ownership™.

For example, he asserts that with some airlines it is safer if the First Officer and not the Captain flies the sector. On the flight deck there should always be at least two pilots. The left hand seat is occupied by the Captain whilst the First Officer takes the right. At all times the Captain is in overall command but the First Officer will frequently do the actual flying. The role of the non-flying pilot (PNF) is to monitor every action of the pilot flying (PF) and to call out if anything is wrong or overlooked.

When the First Officer is PNF this could mean telling a more senior colleague, usually in age as well as hierarchy, that they have made a mistake – something that can be very difficult for people from more 'ascribed status' cultures who are raised to respect seniority and not to question elders.

The correct PNF behaviour should be assertive, using the *Giving Information* microskill™, "Captain, I heard Air Traffic Control give a level of two-nine-zero (29,000 feet) and you have entered two-five-zero (25,000 feet). I'll check with ATC."

Some junior First Officers in the PNF role can find this extremely difficult to say and would favour the more deferential *Asking* microskill™, "Captain, did ATC say 'two-five-zero or two-nine-zero?', hoping that the Captain would take the hint. If the PF doesn't pick up the subtlety the consequences could be catastrophic.

## **Experiences, comments and questions**

We always like to hear from readers with any views and experiences they have either for publication or for reply off-line.

microskills™, problem ownership™ and Supportive Manager™ are part of a stable of methods used by the Tim Russell Group to train staff around the world in interpersonal skills. User organisations come from finance, travel, hospitality, retail, manufacturing, government, education, health services and telecoms. Applications range from customer service to management development, team-building to support skills, negotiations to managing meetings interviewing to selling.

## **For more information**

Contact us at:

[info@TimRussellGroup.com](mailto:info@TimRussellGroup.com)