

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

In this edition:

Where's the idealism?
***Giving Information* and authority**
problem redefinition™
new ways of working™ 'Facts'
Pandemics and telework

Where's the idealism?

"It was twenty years ago today, Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play." Well, it was sixty two actually but it is forty years since Woodstock.

There are so many similarities to today, talk of landing men on the moon, unpopular wars and rock bands that are still mainly two guitars, drum and bass.

What is missing is the idealism, the 'can do' spirit, the sense of being at the beginning of something new and worthwhile.

Perhaps we are all just too busy being busy and don't have the time to dream.

Hendrix lives!

***Giving Information* and authority**

We have been asked to explain in more detail the difference between the *Giving Opinion* and the *Giving Information* microskills™ and the role of authority.

Giving Opinion only becomes *Giving Information* when it is authenticated by someone or something that is recognised as having authority in the area.

As more is discovered about the world in which we live, so research is showing that what was previously considered factual has

been relegated to opinions that have turned out to be wrong.

The earth used to be flat, stomach ulcers were caused by stress and the moon was made of cheese.

So what is authority and where does it come from? We'll cover that in the next edition!

problem redefinition™

problem redefinition™ is one of the tools taught on some of our microskills™ training programmes.

It is a decision making system that avoids becoming bogged down with too much analysis of the symptoms and the causes of the problem. As with problem ownership™, it is future oriented, optimistic and avoids blames. It is also logical and prevents emotion clouding the issue and creating despondency.

Its strength lies in always defining a problem beginning with the words, "How to....". This carries the immediate assumption that all problems are soluble. It is just a case of working out the mechanisms to solve them.

Having come up with one definition, the problem holder rapidly generates alternative redefinitions until one appears that can be implemented satisfactorily now.

microskills™

For example, your car breaks down when you are on the way to a meeting. Remember, as with *problem ownership™*, this is a situation, not a problem. The first problem definition might be “How to get to the meeting on time.” Within seconds of the incident, some quick and creative redefinitions could be:

- how to re-arrange the meeting
- how to get someone else to go
- how to hold the meeting on the phone
- how to get the car fixed
- how to leave the car and get a taxi
- etc etc

Having produced a hatful of redefinitions, the problem holder now has merely to knock away the words “How to ...” and some very possible courses of action become apparent.

If there are several people around they can often help by generating more “How to’s” but, as problems only ever have one owner, they can only make suggestions.

For more information about *microskills™*, the decision making techniques of *problem ownership™* and *problem redefinition™*, as well as their applications, please email: microskills@TimRussellGroup.com

new ways of working™ 'Facts'

A popular feature of the *microskills™* network is taken from our *new ways of working™* consultancy. Each edition contains some 'facts' and statistics picked up from various sources around the world. (No guarantee is given on the accuracy of these.) Whilst they are mainly from UK research, they might have relevance in other countries.

1. Almost half of professional women and men around the

world believe they are not sufficiently challenged by their employers, although they are confident about their skills and capabilities. Despite this situation, slightly less than half regularly ask their supervisor for new challenges. These are the findings of a recent survey conducted by Accenture of 3,600 professionals from around the world.

2. Tesco, the UK's number one food retailer, now employs nearly 55,000 workers over the age of 50. That's one in five, including the CEO.
3. The British Army has launched an online games programme for would-be recruits to find out if they have the skills to be soldiers.
4. HR has been voted the least trusted department in business, with more than a quarter of employees expressing mistrust in the profession. According to a survey of 5,114 employees by leadership consultancy Endaba, almost half of staff do not trust their senior managers or CEOs and two thirds believe senior managers do not care how staff perceive them.
5. The minister for employment relations, Pat McFadden, has rejected a 48-hour week for the UK, labelling it a "bad deal for Britain". The UK has resisted pressure from Europe to remove the right to opt out of the 48-hour week Working Time Directive. Despite ongoing debate at the EU Conciliation Committee in Brussels over the issue, the UK has held firm against the amendment, which would mean the opt-out to a maximum 48-hour working week would be phased in within the next three years.

microskills™

6. A quarter of employers would be less likely to employ or promote a staff member who has bad teeth, although one in four HR managers think staff do not value dental benefits and 63% believe they would be expensive to administer.

Pandemics and teleworking

It has long been considered good practice to have back up computer files stored remotely from the main base in case of various disasters. Well, the latest scare about flu pandemics raises the interesting issue of whether staff should be employed remotely. With more countries finally installing wide enough broadband, this is yet another reason for investigating teleworking.

Experiences, comments and questions

We always like to hear from members 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.

new ways of working™ is the consultancy service to work with organisations on how they will be operating in areas of staff management in the future.

For more information

Contact us at:

info@TimRussellGroup.com