

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

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The revolution is coming

People familiar with our research into leadership styles and national governments will not be surprised by the massive swing against George W Bush’s Republican party in the recent United States’ elections.

As we predicted, there is a growing disenchantment with right wing, universalist, individualist, behaviourist styles and we foresee this filtering through into organisation management styles over the next year or two.

Fashions, including competency based management and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), will diminish and will be replaced by more flexible working practices, flexible outcomes, flexible rewards and quality of life.

In some countries, staff have been working extremely long hours under sometimes quite harsh management only to find that while they have had their heads down, property prices have leapt beyond their reach and repayment interest rates have climbed. When the property market does crash, those who did buy houses will be left with negative equity.

As we have mentioned before, as companies have redefined staff loyalty from being measured in years of service to being measured solely by performance, so staff will redefine their loyalty to whether or not their employer provides the life style they want.

Our research has identified the cycles in these organisational leadership styles. In the 1950s there was Management by Objectives (MbO) which was hailed as the panacea for good management. This went out of fashion in the 1960s only to re-emerge as Key Result Areas (KRAs) in the 1980s. Out that went until being re-invented as KPIs in more recent years. Students of history will recognise that these periods were the only stretches since the second World War when the same Republican has completed two Presidential terms.

Each time these management methods emerge, they start life with the useful concept of the need to provide some objectivity with performance but then they fall into the same trap of only listing what is measurable and not listing what is meaningful because it is too subjective. They over-focus on quantity, ignore quality and then fade away until another generation

of human resources specialists re-invents them.

Age Discrimination

New legislation comes into the UK this season outlawing any form of age discrimination at work.

The coverage of this is worth absorbing. It affects recruitment and selection criteria, job advertisements, promotion opportunities, reward systems and retirement. It will be particularly relevant in areas of discipline and dismissal, job design and harassment.

The UK government is anticipating 20,000 claims in the first year of operation.

The drivers behind the legislation are the usual two – skills shortage and pensions crisis.

Territory and coffee mugs

On the microskills™ training programmes we often discuss how people can further their non-verbal interpersonal skills by watching how television interviewers manage territory or the space around them. The two variables that will affect how one person can raise or lower the esteem of the others are the ownership of the location and the existing relationship between them.

Several well known American interviewers use a coffee mug to increase or decrease the area of territory on their desks and so change the relationship with the interviewer. It is worth watching Larry King, David Letterman, Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien for this alone.

We also mention on the courses the clinically vicious style of the BBC's Jeremy Paxman. Volumes of his most famous interviews are now available on the BBC's website. Go to www.bbc.co.uk, select TV from the top menu, then BBC2 and then write Paxman in the search box. The website does not include the now famous interview with George Galloway, perhaps because Paxman lost! This can be found by putting 'Paxman + Galloway' into Google.

Security Precautions

Having had a 'chip and PIN' credit card cloned recently, despite it never leaving the owner's sight, we have been taking an interest in other scams to which we might be vulnerable.

With an increase in world terrorism, airlines are being asked by some governments to provide all manner of personal data about incoming passengers. These data are stored on the magnetic strip on both parts of the boarding card. A fraudster with the right decoding equipment can read the following information from the stub that usually gets discarded in the hotel waste bin: name, date of birth, nationality, passport number, credit card details. This is sufficient to track down the person's address and family details and get hold of their birth certificate so that the fraudster can open bank accounts and credit cards. Once someone's identity has been stolen it can be very difficult to get it back. The answer is to shred everything!

Much of the same information is stored in the magnetic strip of hotel key cards.

'Out of office' email replies can alert a 'phisher' that you are away on holiday. With a little research they can then track down your home address and burgle your house. It is best not to be too specific about why you are away or when you will return.

Interesting people

We are frequently amazed, and a little humbled, by the outside work interests of some of the participants on our training courses. Some of the most interesting include the participants who:

- handmade and sold grandfather clocks
- published books on underwater photography
- recorded and sold compact discs of music they played on church and school organs
- was a toastmaster at British royal banquets and also a master of ceremonies at professional boxing contests
- set up a charity for under-privileged Nepalese and Bhutan children.

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. In a recent Australian survey by Market Partners, the top job motivator was 'great work culture' listed by 43% of respondents. Second was 'a good manager' chosen by 18%. Only 2.5% of people cited money.

2. British Telecom is conducting research into the causes of stress in employees and how to prevent and minimise it.
3. The Australian Bureau of Statistics is projecting that 85% of all new jobs will be in the 40+ age group.
4. A survey of managers in Britain's top 100 companies by SpeedLeading.com found that they spend 36% of their time in meetings and that they only need to be there for 45% of the time.

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

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