

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

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Connectedness

I was intrigued by the story of the French celebrity TV chef who inadvertently caused a rice famine in Pakistan.

The chef was promoting a new way of cooking frogs’ legs and this was so well received that it caused a huge demand for frogs. Apparently the best frogs for this dish come from Pakistan where they usefully eat the bugs that feed on newly growing rice.

Our world is becoming ever more interconnected on both a global and an individual scale and the idea of six degrees of separation, where each of us is only six contact people away from any other person, may not be far from the truth.

What can happen to somebody in one country in the morning can have a direct impact on another person in another place in another time zone.

Clearly it is nonsense for a manager to tell staff members to keep their personal issues at home and to not allow them to affect work. It is evident that poor treatment of staff at work could have a damaging effect on the success of their children at school.

An employee’s bad journey to work could cause a customer to have a rough day.

On the positive side a good action by one person can make an apparent stranger happier.

Our working and non-working lives are completely intertwined and connected to the lives of others. So organisations must take a holistic approach to the total management of their staff and not treat them as individuals working in isolation.

I’ll leave you to work out why an increase in the population of old ladies led to a bonanza honey harvest in one village.

Flexible working

After many years of lobbying our new ways of working™ service is increasingly in demand as governments and organisations recognise the importance of flexible working.

In the UK, Work Wise UK was established last year and a Quality Mark was launched as an initiative that allows organisations to gain recognition for the successful implementation of "smarter" working practices.

In Australia, Telework Australia has announced its new website as a portal for companies and individuals who want to learn more about flexible working.

In Singapore, the Employer Alliance is a network of corporations committed to the principle of work-life integration. The EA has just published a book of good practice, "Integration and Achieving Work-Life Balance".

Achieved and Ascribed Status

Achieved status is when someone is respected for what they have actually achieved in their lives. Ascribed status is respecting someone for their age, their occupation or their position in the hierarchy.

One of the trends noticeable in 'developed' countries is that more regard is placed on achieved than on ascribed status so that people are valued for performance rather than years of service.

So we are seeing performance related pay replacing annual service increments and a dilution of employment protection for longer serving staff.

Deference to senior managers is being replaced by informal means of address. Government ministers are getting younger and ageing parents are fending for themselves.

This can be upsetting for older staff who, after years of taking abuse from older managers, find that they are now being bypassed for promotions themselves and that their new boss is half their age.

With an ageing workforce it won't be long before we have staff reporting to their grandchildren!

Giving instructions

We have been looking at how microskills™ can be used to give people orders in different ways.

The most direct method is by *GOe*, *Giving External Opinions*, by imposing on the other person what you think should be done – "I think you should finish that report today."

A less direct way is by *GOi*, *Giving Internal Opinions*, by expressing a point of view – "I think it would be good to have the report finished today."

An even softer approach is by *Asking* – "What do you think about finishing the report today?"

Of course, somebody with authority would be *Giving Information* rather than *Giving Opinion* when they say, "The report will be finished today".

For more information about microskills™ and the applications, please email: info@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. UK organisations that employ ex-offenders are four times more

likely to report a positive experience than a negative one.

2. 39% of bloggers admitted to revealing sensitive details about their employers that could be classed as damaging.

3. Sleep deprivation is affecting the majority of British workers as 97% claim to be getting less than the recommended eight hours of sleep each night of the working week. (They could be working long hours or spending too much time down the pub.)

4. More than 16,000 BBC employees will undergo mandatory training in editorial integrity in the wake of revelations about faked phone-in competitions.

5. A survey of HR Directors reveals that 88% believe that the future workforce will be less loyal than past generations. Yet only 20% say that they have sufficient initiatives in place to address the issue.

6. A survey from recruitment consultants Monster has revealed that up to two thirds of British workers are prepared to lie on their CV to land the right job.

7. By April 2009 six million British workers will benefit from up to eight statutory extra days annual holiday, up from the current 20 days to 28.

8. A study of 1,000 UK employees found that almost a third of all workers clashed with their colleagues on a regular basis, even though 60% of respondents believed such clashes to be unhealthy. Those most likely to engage in conflict are 16-24 year-

olds, in sectors such as human resources, travel and finance. While more than half of workers shy away from disputes, one in five believes that it can push people to do a better job.

Battle at Kruger

We were sent a link to a riveting video on You Tube called 'Battle at Kruger'.

It is an opportunist film taken by a tourist on safari in South Africa. It lasts about eight minutes and you must see it to the end.

It is a useful metaphor for those people who feel that they are being eaten alive every day that they go to work.

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:
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