

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

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The revolution has arrived

So the credit crunch has arrived and the next year or two will prove to be very difficult for millions of people across the world.

For months we have been predicting that a revolution would happen caused by too much blind devotion to universalism and individualism. The crash was inevitable as the same ingredients were apparent this time as caused financial chaos towards the end of the 1920s, 1950s and 1980s.

In each of the above decades, individuals in most developed countries were set targets and were appraised, rewarded and punished against these targets. This time the targets were called Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Previously they have been called Management by Objectives (MbO) and Key Result Areas (KRAs).

Whilst the principles of setting targets have merit, in every case the measurement has overtaken the meaningful. The quantity has replaced the quality. Quantity is easier to set as a standard and easier to monitor. So, after a while, it is seen to be more important than the more abstract quality.

Every year the targets become higher and harder to achieve. The rewards or punishments then become greater or more severe.

The top few percent of performers receive obscene bonuses. The bottom few percent are given three months to shape up or ship out.

In the 1987 movie, Wall Street, the main character avers that “Greed is good”.

In the case of the credit crunch, finance staff have been set higher and higher sales targets and selling mortgages to people who have little chance of being able to pay them back. Banks have been packaging the debt and selling it on and, like the parlour game, when the music stops someone is left without a chair.

The results this time are even more catastrophic than last with the banks refusing to trust each other.

The only positive aspect of this whole disaster is that there will be a move away from quantity management towards meaningful quality in terms of products, services and relationships.

But beware, in twenty or thirty years time – it will all happen again!

Protectionism and the credit crunch

Understandably job security is a major concern in the current crisis. Those without jobs could well be envious or resentful of those with.

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A possible consequence is a rise in intolerance towards people from different cultures and races.

Already some countries are tightening their criteria for immigration and there is an increase in membership of some of the extreme political parties in Europe.

Now is a time to reflect on the gains from multiculturalism.

Teleworking and the credit crunch

It's disappointing that some companies are limiting the amount of teleworking because of the credit crunch when they should be doing exactly the opposite. If staff can operate from home for a few days a week, it will cut overheads rather than increase them.

From the individual's point of view, though, if there are to be redundancies it is probably best to be visible in the office so management can see how indispensable you are.

CERN and microskills™

When the Large Hadron Collider was commissioned at CERN in Switzerland recently, there were concerns that a black hole could be produced that would have devastating effects on the whole universe.

Despite constant questioning, the scientists resolutely refused to say that this was impossible.

Of course, students of microskills™ will know that you cannot *Give Information (GI)* about anything to do with the future. To say, "I'm going shopping next weekend" is

Giving Opinion (GO) on what you think you will be doing next weekend. To say, "I am planning to go shopping next weekend", would be *Giving Information* as it is a fact that shopping is your plan.

In the case of CERN, only time travellers could have used *Giving Information* as they will have seen into the future to see if black holes were formed.

Depression and choice

A recent study has shown that a cause of depression can be too much choice. When there are more than six or eight options to choose from, feelings of frustration rather than satisfaction creep in.

This applies to shopping and restaurant menus as much as washing machine programmes.

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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