

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

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## **A truly “Feel good” story**

In 2002, a friend of ours, a pilot with Singapore Airlines, Captain Budi Soehardi, and his wife established an orphanage in West Timor after seeing the destruction of the civil war and natural disasters.

He used his salary and his holidays to build what was little more than a hut for four displaced children. There was no electricity and the only water had to be carried in buckets from two miles away.

Seven years on and the orphanage now has 47 children, electricity generators, they have discovered a nearby artesian well that provides them with constant water and they are already self sufficient in rice.

The vision is to provide stability and education for the children and lead them to gain job skills that will enable them to become self sufficient members of society. This year the oldest child enters medical school.

We are very supportive of this as it is so consistent with our values of helping children to help themselves through education.

In recognition of his work, Budi has just been nominated as a ‘Hero’ on CNN television. You can vote for him before 19 November on the CNN website and the winning hero will be given a grant of

US\$100,000 to continue their work. Visit: [www.cnn.com/heroes](http://www.cnn.com/heroes)

If you would like to know more about the Roslin orphanage or just need cheering up, go to: [www.roslinorphanage.org](http://www.roslinorphanage.org)

## **And a really dreadful one**

For many years we have campaigned against management styles that emphasise the measurable over the meaningful.

Whilst it is important to set staff objectives and to agree with them how those objectives can be measured, the more recent trend has been to set only those objectives that can be measured even though they might not be the main reason for the job existing. Some of the worst culprits of this practice have been found in call or contact centres where it is very easy to monitor a person’s quantitative output but much harder to assess the quality of their contribution.

The recent admission by France Telecom of twenty four suicides in the last eighteen months in their call centres holds testament to this. We have also experienced this first hand in banks and other telcos.

## ***Giving Information* and authority**

In the last edition we described how the *Giving Information* microskill™ differs from *Giving Opinion* as the former needs authority.

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There are several different forms of authority and they can come from different places. A common form is dress code and a uniformed person, or even someone wearing a jacket and tie with a name badge, can often be taken as an authority figure.

Sometimes, people are credited with an authority that they do not actually possess. In cultures where children are brought up to respect age, gender, job title and occupation, anything that an elderly, male senior doctor says is taken as fact.

Borrowed authority is when reference is made to a respected person, a published book, research or even a TV programme or newspaper article.

Often the sheer number of people agreeing about something makes it a fact, like the name of the day of the week or the colour of a banana.

What is worrying about *Giving Information* is that it is not always checked or verified to see how well supported it is. Some *Giving Opinion* can sound very convincing and can gain such a weight of support it becomes a fact.

A case in point is the use of the Internet, Wikipedia and Google. For an example, take a look at <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus> to discover some interesting 'facts' about a remarkable creature.

## **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. The mortality rate in British hospitals increased by 6% during the first week of August which is when newly qualified doctors take their first jobs.
2. Walmart is selling more branded goods than last year despite the economic recession.
3. The UK now spends more money on Internet advertising than on TV and newspaper adverts combined.
4. 'Happiness' is being put on the balance sheet in some company annual reports as it is being recognised as an asset in staff.
5. An average US adult spends 30 hours a week watching TV, both live and recorded.
6. A study of 3,000 school going Singaporean students shows that they spend 27 hours each week playing video games.

## **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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