
To start this month - comment from a couple of our members:

1 of 2 - Comments from our members

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Appendix 1

attached

2 of 2 - Induction and training (conclusion of Marcel Le Roux's first article)

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Appendix 2

attached

And now something different

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Appendix 3

attached

Thought for the month:

When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. Conan Doyal - Sherlock Holmes.

If you substitute the last word - truth - with "right solution", it sounds rather apt for our research on Decision Making.

Our next issue should be out **late June / early July**.

But we still need **your** contributions on any subject related to our sphere of research. So please keep those letters coming in.

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Appendices

1 of 2 - Comments from our members:

Pauline Bird has sent a follow up to our feature last month on the FSA – and Steve Fowler has drawn attention to an item from an American professor on organisational culture:-

1) Pauline Bird responds to my feature last month on the FSA and *Northern Rock*. The bold lettering is mine, and I make no apologies for making this amendment.

“ The credit crunch and Northern Rock crises have similar features in that the banks and FSA appear to assess risk via solvency requirements and using computer modelling, and so long as there is an apparent robust process in place, assume that risk is managed. However, **any process is only as robust as the people using it**, and flaws in such a system (see Societe General) tend to flow from people and more specifically (as you observe later) the reward system which encourages people at all levels to disregard what the risk management reporting is telling them because it affects their bonus in the short term.”

Pauline is Senior Manager, BR Technical and Risk Management, at BDO Stoy Hayward LLP and is running the team organising our SIG Workshop at the Forum on 17th September – there will be more next month about this event.

2) Steve Fowler writes drawing my attention to an article in “Public Risk” the magazine of PRIMA (Public Risk Management Association of USA), by Dr. Andrew J. Edelman, a professor at University of Phoenix, who defines Organisational Culture as “the sum total of customs, actions, attitudes and ideas that permeate a given workplace”.

For our current purposes, I would have a go at partly redefining this as “ideas, some of which become actions, depending on customs and attitudes in a given workplace”.

Imagine you were a fly on the wall in a pub outside almost any workplace - workers gather together after a days hard slog, you would hear a lot of unfulfilled ideas and assessments on the management’s ability to run the business - many of them probably amusing, but not worth a lot due to prejudices and not knowing the bigger picture, but others which might well have considerable merit. We will look at effective expression of ideas and communication upwards, without fear of reprisal, later on - in fact there will be a feature on this linked with the bonus problems that Pauline mentions above in the Autumn.

2 of 2 - Induction and training (conclusion of Marcal Le Roux’s first article)

You must ensure that the learner has learnt. With skill, that is not too difficult to assess but where it is knowledge and the trainer asks “okay – got that?” the answer is invariably “yes”. Learners should be given the opportunity to ask if they understand, but it is the trainer’s responsibility to ensure the learner has learned therefore always “test” that you have understood. Quizzes, “tell me what you’ve got to do”, “how many copies are required and to whom are they distributed?” and “show me at the end of each subject” are all ways of checking the learner has learnt.

The initial introduction should be signed off at its completion and the record filed in the individual’s personnel file. However, working practices and machinery / equipment rarely remains static for long. Where there are changes to be introduced forethought and planning, including consultation, with the workforce affected, will pay dividends.

It is also essential to consider the selection of the individual who is to have his/her role expanded or who is to be promoted. The fact that someone is a good mechanic, machinist, salesman etc. does not mean that he/she would make a good supervisor or manager. Care must be taken in the selection of an individual for promotion to ensure the best chance of success because what happens if it goes wrong? What do you do with the individual? Sack them? Not only have you then lost your supervisor but you have lost a good employee.

Properly planned and executed training for new starts and ongoing changes/promotions, will lead to shorter time to a higher quality performance, hence lower costs: less "waste", reduced rates of labour turnover; improved recruiting, greater willingness to retrain, and higher morale amongst the workforce.

Editorial Comment

Thank you for this contribution, Marcel. Some very valid points, in particular people saying that they understand and the one about good supervisors and managers – but a word of caution:

I would add that it is important that people are trained in the right things. For decision makers, that includes considering fully the effects of consequences of their actions. Also, especially in the sales field, it is very difficult to appoint a "good manager" over someone who has attained high achieving new business figures – there must be some trade off here and this again is something that we ought to look at in conjunction with communication of ideas the bonus issues.

We look forward to Marcel's next article "Absenteeism" later in the year

And now something different (Appendix 3).

I had to smile when I read the interview with Stephen Carver in May **InfoRM**. There is a lovely picture of a grandfather figure reading to two little girls, with the caption: "Teaching begins with stories." Within the article the writer states he started storytelling techniques about ten years ago to deal with a particularly difficult client.

1066 and all that

I would take this technique a stage further – a lot can be learned from reading good quality fiction. Authors have to do immense research on their subject and the message so often comes across much better than in those dreary old text books! Stephen Carver goes on to quote the scenario of William the Conqueror triumphing over King Harold of England in 1066. An outstanding historical novelist of the Norman period is Elizabeth Chadwick. I can commend her recent novel "A Place Beyond Courage", which tells the life of John Marshall. This follows on from an earlier novel on the life of his son, the great William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke and Regent of England.

At the end of the book, Elizabeth Chadwick refers to a secondary source of information as being *The Akashic Record* to access the personalities of the characters and events in their lives. This is a belief that each person leaves behind an indelible record of themselves impressed upon sub-atomic material – what mystics call the consciousness of the universe. On reference to the Concise *Oxford*

Dictionary, the word is defined as “(chiefly in Hinduism) a supposed all-pervading field in the ether in which a record of past events is imprinted.”

Before we dismiss this out of hand, we must remember that the seers of India inspired the classic Greek temple at *Delphi (Oracle at Delphi)*. The methodology, which by way of contrast to the *Akashic Record*, deals with looking into the future, was popularised by the American, Edgar Cayce, in the early 20th Century. Of interest, the name is paid tribute to in modern times: the *Delphi Session* estimation tool in Project Management from the 1940s and now a different meaning of *Delphi* in computing (USA) in the 1990s.

In devising new tools in the Twentieth First century, we must remember that we are not the first to face the challenge - people have been dealing with risk and uncertainty for hundreds if not thousands of years - although such historic references may have only limited relevance today.

Regarding the *Akashic Record*, more than once when reading through files during my earlier insurance career on fatal and other major claims, I would realize something that I felt happened, even with little supporting evidence and a shiver would run down my back - so who knows?

We must all make our own judgement in these secondary areas, especially when involved with a decision process.

Anyway, back to fundamentals - in a future issue, our member, Mark Swaby, will be writing about the *Delphi Session* tool from Project Management and I for one, look forward to that. *Ed*