
The Year End topic - Communication

Our work programme does not allow time for a seasonal informal issue as in years gone by. The current objective of the SIG with regard to the *Guide* is to provide a cohesive communiqué of our findings for a wider audience. Perhaps we had better look at communication:

1 of 3 - Communication - the two contexts, or not the two contexts?

Last month we mentioned that the SIG had been inspired in 2005 out of the need to cover communication as

Appendix 1 attached

2 of 3 - Temporary autism has raised it's (ugly) head again

We have a number of new members, including students, who have been browsing the back issues on the **irm** Website

Appendix 2 attached

3 of 3 - 2009 AGM - exciting venue sought

That time of the year will soon be here. We need to meet in April of next year to deal

Appendix 3 attached

And now the something different section:

Some of you may have been following the Channel Five programme on Tuesday evenings, "Dangermen". The edition on 9th December

Thought of the month

I see that *Amazon* are in trouble for allowing substandard suppliers to use their well respected Website. I'm sure readers will be pleased to know that your editor only buys new books on the site from *Amazon* themselves. My latest purchase is "Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory" by Mary Douglas, first published in 1992. So there will be a lot more offerings in these pages next year that will have been suitably cross checked and referenced. **Best wishes to everyone for 2009**

The NEWSLETTER will be back in the New Year with *Issue No 35*.

Bruce Widdowson
Secretary
e-mail bruce.widdowson@btinternet.com Tel. 0115 986 3254

Appendices

1 of 3 - Communication - the two contexts, or not the two contexts

Last month we mentioned that the SIG had been inspired in 2005 out of the need to cover communication as an additional facility to the examination syllabus for those advancing their RM careers with the widest practical knowledge base.

In established RM texts down the decades, communication dictums have related to “risk communication”. The prime concern within the SIG was risk arising from organisational communication by error, misunderstanding and even total lack thereof. The two contexts are separate - or so they might seem.

As we know, risk is multi dimensional and there is the need for a holistic approach to handling all aspects of uncertainty - where better to start than communication? What we ought to be doing is expanding existing theory on *risk communication* so that all aspects of organisational communication are covered. Lack of space in this issue means that I shall have to continue this thread next month.

2 of 3 - Temporary autism has raised it's (ugly) head again

We have a number of new members, including students, who have been browsing back issues on the **irm** Website, prompting comment on the very nature of the terminology. The name, which has evolved in contemporary study of what we now term *Emotional Literacy*, does imply some form of mental malfunction, whereas this is actually a natural state when the forebrain shuts down and the limbic part of the brain takes over (Issues 11, 15 and 18). I think if we are going to improve the situation here with meaningful training recommendations in the *Guide*, we have to recognise that there is nothing we can do about it, at least not once things have been allowed to go that far! Once we reach the area covered in Issue 15 which also argued a connection to the rate of heartbeat to the point where the limbic system takes over. In high pressure scenarios, the right decisional making has to be made earlier on whilst the combatant operative (armed police in these cases) still has full reasoning powers.

I am grateful to Harry E Clarke for drawing my attention to the *de Menzies* case which has not been commented on in these pages before. Anyone from overseas reading this letter will need to know that de Menzies was an illegal immigrant in the UK who was shot dead fleeing from the police who had mistaken him for a terrorist, which he was not.

One emotive aspect of this case was that it drew more media attention and subsequent public sympathy than the “man with the wooden table leg” (issue No 11) where the victim was 100% innocent. De Menzies was innocent of terrorism and didn't deserve to be shot dead, but he was guilty of being an illegal immigrant and no doubt in his own mind had reason to be running from the police. The “table leg” man wasn't running, he was shot in the back merely because he instinctively started to turn round to see what was going on whilst walking slowly or by then even standing still - debatably a worst case, but a failing of just one armed officer on the day.

Now lets try and look at the facts objectively: The difference in the cases, in another dimensional context - was the “table leg” incident was at night in darkness and with few if any witnesses. The public outrage at *de Menzies* was mainly because it was highly public on a crowded London Underground train and involved an action

where things appear to have got out of hand much earlier in the chain of events and I believe that most of the officers were in plain clothes – the more frenzied shooting taking place with traumatic effect on many bystanders – this also appeared to whip up the media. Ed.

Both cases highlight Police errors, but in the *de Menzies* case the CCTV on the Underground showed graphic images of numbers of armed police rushing down escalators – the question must be asked, should the chase should have been called off at this stage, rather like some car chases where there is considered excessive danger to the public. Indeed, would not the police have been able to liaise with the Underground CCTV control and see where the suspect eventually emerged – still I am wandering off into operational areas here. Part of the answer lies in training, all advance training should include opportunity for uninhibited interaction with delegates/trainees and actual practical simulation. Incidentally, most of you will be aware that the IRM are now involved with training accreditation. Another part probably lies in our national culture towards guns, but again I have insufficient space to deal with this in this issue. Ed.

3 of 3 – 2009 AGM – exciting venue sought

That time of the year will soon be here. We need to meet in April of next year to deal with the usual formalities – so a venue with supporting attraction and some food is sought.

As you may recall, Michael Ocock gave notice last year that he wished to hand over the Chair to allow for fresh views. I am indebted to him for outstanding service to this SIG and service to me as Secretary over the three years that he has held office – so we will need nominations with seconder for a new Chair.

Regarding the Secretary and NEWSLETTER Editorship, I am willing to offer myself for re-election for 2009, but this will be the last year that I will do so, as I feel that once the *Guide* has been published and any follow up clarified, my natural time will have passed and here again, the SIG will benefit from new ideas for 2010 and the decade beyond. In the meantime, any alternative nominations for 2009 with seconder should also be submitted.

These need to have arrived (for both posts) by a closing date of 15th March 2009.

Anyway, the most important issue this early on, is to arrange the venue – anyone able to help, could they let me know as soon as possible, please. As a reminder, the three previous annual meetings have been: Staffordshire Fire and Rescue; the “Waterfall” Derby and RAC Rescue HQ, West Midlands. A fresh concept would be very welcome, but location needs to be readily accessible by car and rail from most parts of the Country, but previously the attendance has not been large and a capacity of about 10 to 12 should suffice.

And now the something different section:

Some of you may have been following the Channel Five programme on Tuesday evenings, “Dangermen”. For your editor, the edition on 9th December followed on right after switching over from the long awaited climax of the current thread in the BBC’s evergreen soap “Eastenders”, which resulted in the baddie being duly jostled

into a Police car and driven away in time honoured tradition – but the switch over to Channel Five produced a much more constructive use of my time:

The programme followed the construction on the largest wind farm project in Montana by the giant US contractor, *Mortenson*. A quick look at their Website shows they undertake road interchanges; tall office buildings; university complex work; electric and semi-conductor contracts; hospitals; hotels; court houses and detention facilities; sports facilities; water treatment plants and the subject of this programme – wind farms. The company also states that as well as training, it operates a “Zero injury policy”. Perhaps more about that another time.

Two interesting points for us this month, were that they sacked an operative for horseplay during an incident at a bar the evening before (*bullying*) and they started off the workday with an open-air session (there were 200 site workers, very big men, here) of stretches in time to music as this had been found to aid safety. (I don't see eye to eye with everything American, but I do approve of both these measures, I can recall an underwriter many years ago with one of the leading UK insurers who used to do stretches (in secret) when he arrived at work each day to take the pressure of the journey out. By the way, could we sack someone for horseplay with another employee at the pub the night before in this country? - Ed).

Back to the *Mortenson* Website, their client list included the Rawhide Theme Park and “Wells Fargo” and the Harley-Davidson Museum – oh wow.