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*More guide news in this issue*

**1 of 2 - Response to Communication feature**

Interesting response to the holistic communication feature in the last issue. The Guide will need to show a simple and . . . .

*Appendix 1 attached*

**2 of 2 - Point of sale sagas**

Two case histories have been brought to our attention - one involving a finance fiasco at a motor dealers and the . . . .

*Appendix 2 attached*

*And now for something different*

Now here's a smile for you. Your editor has had his collar felt by the long arm of the law . . . .

*Final Appendix attached*

*Thought of the month*

Well now, "**Greed is Good**" seems to have bitten the dust recently, so how about "**Communication is Cool**" as the latest bit of jargon?

**AGM** We are still trying to find a venue for our AGM this year during April (after Easter). If anyone can help, then please contact the secretary.

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*Appendices*

**1 of 2 - Response to Communication feature**

Interesting response to the holistic communication feature in the last issue. The Guide will need to show a simple and effective illustration for composing messages within organisations.

You will recall that an example was shown of an instruction to a driver to take a lorry to the northern depot with a warning that there was a weather forecast of flooding in the area which was offset by advice from the local depot manager that the road was clear.

Our thanks to member Harry E Clarke for his well thought out response. Harry includes the following points:

1) "A risk management decision has already been made." (Ed - Indeed) "The instruction "Take the lorry up to the northern depot urgently" has been given to the driver, the person sending the message has authorised the vehicle to go out."

2) "This is the primary message to the driver. Placing this part other than in first place hides its importance, and could mean the person listening to the message loses its significance."

3) "The message (**risk part**) is that the driver should be aware of the danger, and if necessary take avoiding action. In other words, the driver can modify the primary goal taking into account local conditions at the time.

A) "The weather forecast is of heavy flooding in the area, but the depot manager says its OK the roads are clear" or:

B) "The depot manager says the roads are clear, but there is a weather forecast of flooding in the area."

are the two components of the risk message added to an organisational instruction.

In the future, I had gone on to explain that I was interested if the findings from the research of Breakwell and Barnett in 2003 involving the messages about breast cancer to the 50 women to explore risk perception, could be adapted to suit our quest for a combination of risk and organisational communication in a single message. At first it would appear that the answer is probably *no*, it would seem there is no great difference between A) and B) above - *if we take on board the findings of the experiment, then the driver will take more notice of the last part of the message (emergent uncertainty)- in A) he would have a lower risk perception of roads that were probably clear and with B) a higher risk perception that there could well be flooding in the area .*

*But, another view, could be that just one component in the risk message is "raw data", and two components make this more like confirmed information and therefore more credible - this is even with, and perhaps because, the two parts are conflicting, as it was giving the driver a better chance of applying his own experience and skills to the problem. Indeed, this could be a sub-conscious reason for the 50 x women in the Breakwell and Barnett experiment appearing to take more notice of the second part of the message - it was merely taken as confirming the initial data, making it into information!*

*Now, this might be significant, if this theory is used in the field of "emergent risk", the whole idea needs further thought - anyone have anything to add, please?*

*In the meantime, the next NEWSLETTER will include another example for the extension of this theme. This will be taken from an actual recent NHS incident.*

## **2 of 2 - Point of sale sagas**

Two case histories have been brought to our attention - one involving a finance fiasco at a motor dealers and the other, a credit card transaction over the internet:

*Case 1 - A disabled person, who was eligible for the *Motability* scheme, found a car for sale at a main dealership which was a "manager's special" offer and also qualified under the rules of *Motability*. The car was attracting a lot of interest from other general customers. It was a Friday early evening when the garage was still open but with a skeleton sales staff, the *Motability* advisor not being back at the*

office till Monday morning. A test drive was given by a general salesperson and the disabled person decided to have the car and paid a £100 holding deposit saying they would complete the paperwork on Monday. All OK up to this point, but another potential customer (non-disabled) was standing outside the showroom waiting to see what happened!

The salesperson said that as the disabled customer was not paying cash and the dealership was potentially losing another customer, an additional security would be needed - the disabled person would have to complete a conventional hire purchase application form to be held in the file to be used on Monday morning in the event that there was not an entitlement to *Motability*. Remember, this was Friday evening. Reluctantly, the disabled person filled in and signed such a form.

Saturday morning - the sales manager who had left the previous evening promptly at 5 -00 PM came in, and looking through the files left on the sale person's desk was delighted to see that his subordinate had made a sale. He then saw the completed application form for the HP and cursed the salesperson for not being on the ball and then put the application through himself there and then! The application was rejected by the Finance Company after consulting Credit Reference Agencies.

On Monday, the *Motability* salesperson came in to be confronted with a sale, but also a mess. A number of issues were involved here beyond the basic transaction, sufficient to say that as well as the parties themselves, several agencies, firms of solicitors and officials were involved and the aftermath took over six months to sort out, probably involving many hundreds of pounds worth of person/hours and great distress to the disabled person (who eventually took delivery of the car under *Motability*).

*Case 2* - A customer ordered clothing to the value of around £25-00 over the internet. The details of a credit card which had been used previously with this supplier but had subsequently been withdrawn by the provider, came up automatically from the previous purchase. Due to a minor problem with the system the customer was unable to remove this data and put in the details of a replacement card - the old one went through in error. Fortunately, there was a delay for manual processing at the supplier's end and the customer contacted the store in time and the manager said "that's OK, put through another order with the correct card and I will cancel the original".

The customer did this, but for whatever reason the first order was *not* cancelled and was put through a week or so later when another employee found the *unactioned* computer entry and thought, "oh dear, this has not been put through?"

### Conclusion

In Case 1, the problems were multi dimensional, as the disabled person's rights were also involved, but that is not the context of this feature. These complex type of transactions do have to occur from time to time - the problems fall within a sub-section of our forthcoming guide **Unforeseen consequences**. [How could this have been avoided? The Friday car salesperson should have written a clear note explaining the circumstances and stapled it to the signed HP form so that the manager \(or anyone else looking at the file\) knew what was happening.](#)

Similar general remarks apply to the second case, although perhaps the manager should have cancelled the incorrect credit card order *before* a new order was made out, but of course there was a natural desire “to hold on to the binding order”.

In this SIG we regard these incidents as people problems falling within our orbit, although others say they are merely “operational risk”. They are of course both - risk is multi-dimensional, people and communication exposures are everywhere.

*And now for something different*

Now here’s a smile for you. Your editor has had his collar felt by the long arm of the law. Once every two weeks or so, I visit a park some miles from home, near where I used to live, with my dog – this involves a car journey and I park in the two hour waiting zone at the side of the park prior to letting her have a good run round and lots of doggy sniffs. This park is a place I have been visiting and parking next to off and on for over 35 years.

The other week I returned to my car to find a traffic warden standing over it. It came to light that some three months ago, the local council had painted a white dividing line half way down the parking zone, the spaces beyond now being restricted to resident permit holders (I just hadn’t be caught before). The signs are of similar type both sides of the line, but being so familiar with the area, I never bother to read them! Now, don’t get me wrong, the council has done nothing incorrect – I have. But whilst the signs are in compliance etc. they were not *good* communication, that would have been putting up bright temporary warning signs for the first few weeks clearly stating to the *regulars* there had been a change. *Good communication should be of the essence.*

Anyway the punchline is, the warden thought I had a lovely dog and let me off with the friendliest of warnings.