

me293 – Project Management & Social Responsibility

Some Hints About **People in the Work Place**

No discussion of Project Management can be complete without some observations about the people you work with. What follows are a few of my observations coupled with a number of the techniques I have learned to occasionally use when the need arises.

The Best Way to Gain a Good Reputation Is ...

- Be a clear communicator – honest, straightforward, generous.
- Volunteer to spearhead an initiative
- Wear and correct your errors (rather than blaming someone else)
- Do what you say you will do

That said, there are other techniques that will help you too ...

Let's Say You Are Going into a Meeting ...

- Know what you want.
Most people have only a vague notion of what their goals and desires are. Think about yours. If it turns out you have some goals and/or desires as to the outcome of an upcoming discussion, think for a time and articulate them clearly to yourself.
- Think about the motivations of others. What drives them? What do they want? Why do they do what they do? If you can figure out a part of that picture you are way ahead. Through a series of subtle and well-timed comments you can help them make decisions in the direction of your desires.
- Know that people's ideas can be moved incrementally, bit by bit. No argument necessary. In fact, if you add little comments and/or ask simple questions here and there, they won't even know their ideas are being incrementally altered.
- It is helpful to know what people are thinking. How can you do this if they don't verbalize their views? Use their body language.
 - Look at their ears. If ears go red, it is a sign of an emotional reaction to what was just said. If you see this think 'Wow, that person's ears just went red'. Ask yourself why? Think it through. What was just said. What meaning does that person take from what was just said that they had such a strong, emotional reaction?
 - Look at their arms and legs. If someone crosses his or her arms or legs it is an act of self-defence. Why are they feeling so defensive all of a sudden? What was just said?
 - Look for people who start gently stroking their ears, noses, chin, hands, etc. This is self-soothing behaviour. It is used as a means of moving one's self from a state of tension to one of being more relaxed. Think 'what are they tense about in this situation'.
 - Be observant of others. They do things they don't realize that give away how they are feeling minute by minute. Read the signs.

- The corollary of the last point is ... keep control over your own body language. Deliberately communicate the message you want to portray.
- Based on these signs and based on a knowledge of your own desires and based on your knowledge of who is in the room and what their motivations are ... you can sometimes move individuals and the group through a series of ideas to the one you want them to accept. You can do this even if you are not the boss, most of the time without them knowing you are doing anything. Sometimes your idea will come out of someone else's mouth in the room. All you need to do is support them and your desires are achieved.
- Keep your ego in check. No one need know it is your desires that have been achieved. They just think a decision has been reached. Most people don't have strong desires so they will simply be happy that they now have direction.
- Sometimes you have to plant a seed.
 - You can make a suggestion to your boss or co-worker one day, where they reject or seem to disregard it. As if by magic, the next day you hear they have had a 'great idea'. Your ideas win again. They may not even remember the discussion from the day before.
 - Sometimes you can be more overt. Before a meeting have coffee with individuals. One by one you can seed the meeting with your ideas. Its amazing how they will replay your coffee talk when they all get together.
- People are often smart. They may take your seeded ideas and improve them. Be prepared to accept better ideas. It's a shock to realize that you are not really in control.
- If people are stuck going in a certain direction and you want to change that, inject some randomness.

This is all part of my theory of 'Precursors to Bifurcation'. If you get me going on this subject, watch out ... I can really become boring. <<< blah, blah and more blah >>>

Humour is useful or stating some bizarre and seemingly strange ideas are two good ways of injecting randomness. Then when the inevitable imbalance occurs inject your idea and watch the group follow along. They'll never know. Poor mammals.

- If you observe random behaviour in a crowd under any circumstances think back to 'Precursors to Bifurcation'. Now is the time to be scared or the time to change their direction. During these moments the injection of a gentle (low-energy) decision making influence may be all it takes to sway them.

A few other useful observations.

- If you are meeting with a really tough person, suggest meeting over food. Volunteer to set up the restaurant and choose a slow-service, pasta place. Eating pasta induces the production of serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is calming and will relax and soften your tough minded lunch partner. You eat meat.
- Come to a restaurant meeting having had a snack already. You are not there to eat. You are there to orchestrate a positive decision making session. Hungry people are poor orchestrators.
- Random people with poor memories cannot be 'managed' in the ways talked about above. Beware the stupid and try and change co-workers, bosses, clients or people working for you.
- 80% of workers get a little depressed about half-way to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through a project. Don't worry, everyone will feel better in the last quarter of the project.
- 10% of workers get very negative when problems are found in the last 25% of a project. They start saying things like 'we are doing this all wrong', 'we need to start this over', etc. Ignore them and push on. In the last 5% of the project these people will swing back and once again be back on track.

Finally

- Observe and think 'effect and cause' plus ... how can I use that?
- Read Sherlock Holmes and apply his techniques.
- Practice, practice, practice. (jacket on / jacket off, jacket on / jacket off, etc)
- Do not use these techniques inappropriately. They are powerful. Don't abuse your power.
- If you do use them, don't disclose the details to anyone. They will ever more be suspicious of you.