

Comments on training course April 2013 as part of the RESPECT project by Stirling Smith

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Introduction

This is a report on the pilot course held in Kardzhali on 4/5th April 2013. In this report, I do not propose to revisit the content issues within the course, except insofar as they illustrate methodological issues. The focus is to what extent the programme and delivery went according to plan, and proposed revisions.

The course was revised substantially, following recommendations made in my earlier report submitted in early March 2013. Now it has been piloted, some additional revisions will make it a useful tool which can be used beyond the life of the RESPECT project.

Structure of this report

- General remarks
- Day by day commentary
- Proposals for revising the course
- New material examples

General remarks

1. The trainers did very well and it was clear that those attending enjoyed the programme, and especially the active learning methods used.
2. It was an achievement to get the attendance for two days of senior managers of garment companies; these are busy people (as they reminded us in the introductions). Particular thanks to Christina! Numbers dropped off for the second day. To secure attendance, and keep interest, the course must be very focussed and of obvious relevance to busy managers.
3. There is a tension between two elements of the course. On one hand, there is content which is suitable for a general manager training course including tools such as Root Cause Analysis (RCA). On the other hand, there is the drive to help managers in the relationship with brands. Given more time these two strands could be accommodated. But given the course duration, one has to dominate. There is not enough time, or resources, to elaborate the tools in depth. We must keep coming back to Responsible Purchasing Practices (RPP).
4. Throughout the course, learners (I prefer this term to participants, as it makes

it clear that our objective is learning) had difficulty relating to the main theme - RPP, even to wider CSR. In the “pitch” exercise and the role play, Codes of Conduct (CoCs) were not referred to, let alone RPP. The conclusion: suppliers do not see CSR/RPP something they negotiate with buyers about.

5. The first day programme actually reinforces this problem. Having identified how lack of RPP causes problems in CoC compliance, we shift the course back to issues under suppliers control. Encouraging RPP by buyers is what RESPECT is all about. But after the RCA exercise, we say suppliers need to think about matters under their control, and so we are letting the buyers “off the hook”. Because the suppliers think about how they can manage production better etc. Rather, we should help suppliers develop the negotiating skills to get buyers to accept their responsibility to use RPP.
6. A practical point was that the wall surface was unsuitable for placing flipcharts - the “bluetack” would damage the paint. It is really helpful to paste flipcharts for reference later in the course. This should be borne in mind when selecting venues.

Comments on the two days

Day 1

We started 40 minutes late, and time was an issues throughout the day.

The paired introductions took a bit longer than scheduled and colleagues will recall the discussion we had at the debriefing at the end of the day.

Paired introductions do take much longer, but can have valuable benefits. These are more apparent when learners are from a different background or constituency; or where they are very shy; or where they have a lower educational background. In this case, self introductions might have been an alternative.

It is important whatever introductions method is used, to capture expectations on a flipchart, to refer back to throughout the course.

The other tutor led inputs about the context and project were clear and relevant.

The Brainstorming exercise worked - learners were honest about the problems and the issues they raised coincided with those from the research.

Turning to the RCA with Fishbone exercise, judging from the flipcharts from groups with fishbones, the tool was not well understood or learners had insufficient time, or had not yet developed the skills to use the tool. Yellow post it notes were used as the small bones, and this helped with the next session.

We need to differentiate between the idea of Root Cause Analysis and a particular RCA tool. The Fishbone tool was not suitable for this audience at this time.

The reporting back of the group work (session 9) on RCA started at 2PM, which was 1 hour 45 minutes behind schedule. So during the morning, we had lost an extra hour of time.

Session 9 was merged with the reports. This was done well, and in an active way, moving post it notes of causes under the suppliers control from the fishbone charts to another specific “under supplier control” flipchart. There were more than 20 of these causes, that then had to be grouped together into five issues, and then after the presentation on Pareto Principle, Session 11 the Matrix tool was used to prioritise them. This took 25 minutes. (If it is felt essential to do this, it could be done very quickly with dots. Each learner has 2 less dots than total number of issues. So if there are 5 issues to be prioritised, everybody had 3 dots.)

None of this helped to concentrate our minds on RPP. I recommend cutting 11.

The action planning started at 1645 and took 30 minutes. One group was ready to report, but its report was only verbal, and very general. Other reports were then held over to the next day.

Day 2

Day 2 kicked off by finishing off the Action Planning (although I think this should be renamed Problem Solving, to differentiate it from the general Action Planning at the end of the course.) Just six participants were present. The reports held over were written up, which made the discussion better, but the proposals were still too general.

The presentations on Communications (3,4, 5, 7, 9) were fine, and to save time, sessions 6 and 8 were dropped - wisely in my view.

The role play was strong, as we expected. The briefs were well written. We agreed in advance that the observer should be able to read both briefs at the start. Maybe we can add stronger instructions to the observer (I have added an example). As mentioned under General Remarks, the problem was that NOBODY used RPP or CSR as an argument, despite very good clues in the suppliers’ brief.

Action planning was OK, I think it needs more time. There is a danger that it becomes a routine exercise.

Proposals for changes to the course

Numbers in the first column refer to the session numbers in the course programme used on 4/5 April 2013.

In theory, if Day 1 over runs, topics can be picked up on Day 2, in the morning. But if this does not happen, and if we cut sessions 6 and 8, as proposed, the morning of Day 2 will be quite short.

It might even be that the role play can be run in the morning, take lunch later, and keep Action Planning, wrap up and evaluation for the afternoon.

Session Number	Recommendation	Comment
DAY 1		
1	None. It's OK.	
2	Consider switching to self introduction	Still important to get learners to state concerns/expectations, capture these on a flipchart to refer back to throughout the course - and especially evaluation.
3	None. It's OK.	
4	None. It's OK.	Recording could be more structured. Group flipcharts or a tutor crated flipchart should be on the wall, ready for session 7. Example given.
5	None. It's OK.	
6	Substitute "Chain" for fishbone. This should be a worked example, the trainer asking and checking at every stage, so the learners are involved in building up the chain. Please see Example below	This should help understanding of the principle of root cause
7	The group exercise will now be preparing a similar root cause chain for a problem identified in session 4.	
8	Each group's flipchart can be critiqued and amended - trainer to use different coloured pens to amend.	Trainers really need to push the learners here. Keep brining the discussion back to RPP. See discussion in my narrative of the course.
9	As mentioned in general remarks, current course design shifts here to matters under suppliers control, which is a mistake - if our emphasis is RPP.	

10	The tutor input as it stands is fine, and knowing about the Pareto principle is interesting, but I do not think it is vital to our purpose. This is one session that could be dropped if time is short.	
11	Delete. I do not believe that prioritisation exercise has much value. By this stage, there are 3/4 flipcharts dealing with different problems. Why not just carry on with these?	
12	Session 12 and 14 are merged into "Problem Solving"	
13	This session should become new 12 and be re labelled "problem solving."	We need to distinguish this process from Action Planning which should happen at the end of Day 2.
14	<p>Session 12 and 14 are merged into "Problem Solving", a group activity.</p> <p>Each group/table continues with its flipchart - the ROOT CAUSE CHAIN. And proposes solutions, which it writes on a flipchart.</p> <p>The flipchart is passed to the next group, which adds its comments. And then to the next group. So each Problem Solving Plan is very thoroughly examined before being discussed in plenary.</p>	The trainers need to be active in pushing groups to include RPP issues in the reports and comments.
15	Plenary discussion of the proposals of each group	
16	None. It's OK.	

Session Number	Recommendation	Comment
DAY 2		
1	None. It's OK.	
2	None. It's OK.	
3	None. It's OK.	
4	None. It's OK.	
5	None. It's OK.	Of course, alternative case study could be used, if available.
6	The exercise can be dropped to save time.	However, the picture can be shown and everybody invited to suggest what is happening. Different answers will make the point about how we have different assumptions and perceptions.
7	None. It's OK.	
8	The exercise can be dropped to save time.	
9	None. It's OK.	
10	None. It's OK. However, suggest allowing a little more time.	The focus of the pitch, or at least part of it, is integrating the supplier's CSR compliance with price, quality etc. Therefore, the presentation will need to cover this aspect.
11	None. It's OK.	The trainer can role play the buyer, and be discouraging. Trainer should provide clues and ques about CSR and RPP.

12	None. It's OK. Depending on numbers in the course, this could take less than 90 minutes - maybe an hour.	It is important to have a good debrief at the end of the role plays. The trainers should have a flipchart and fill it in by drawing comments on "what were the strong points from supplier?" and "what was strong answer from buyer?"
13	None. It's OK.	
14	None. It's OK.	

Examples of new materials

DAY 1

For session 4

Reporting format

Specify a purchasing practice by Brands leads to>>>>	Difficulty in complying with Brand CoC requirement - cite the clause and/or specify the issue, e.g. Overtime, unauthorised sub contracting

For session 6 - Root Cause Analysis

Instead of Fishbone, we need a chain. The trainer draws this on the flipchart, starting with the first link.

The PowerPoint presentation can have a picture of a chain?

The “story” starts when a worker slips on a puddle of water on the factory floor.

WHY?

1. They did not see the puddle? Is this the ROOT CAUSE? NO
2. The puddle of water had not been cleared up by the cleaner? Is this the ROOT CAUSE? NO
3. The puddle could have been fenced off. It was not fenced off, so worker slipped and fell. Is this the ROOT CAUSE? NO
4. There was a hole in the roof of the factory? YES!!

BUT WHY?

1. Lighting struck the roof? Is this the ROOT CAUSE? NO
2. Nails or screws holding roof tiles in place had corroded, so they broke, nothing to hold roof tiles in place. They slipped, so hole in roof? YES!!

WHY?

1. Nails/screws were old? Yes, but this is not an accident, such items will get corroded. So, is this the ROOT CAUSE? NO
2. Roof was not checked regularly. YES!!

WHY?

Maintenance Department was downsized, their schedule for checking the roof was cut. YES!!

WHY?

Maintenance not seen as “core” function. “They don’t produce anything”

WHY?

Short term view of what is important.

MAYBE WE HAVE REACHED THE ROOT CAUSE?

Day 2

Session 12: role play

Example

Observer Checklist

Watch the role play carefully, and organise your comments as follows:

Supplier

- Was she or he well organised?
- Did they refer to facts in the brief?
- Did they mention Responsible Purchasing Practices?
- Did they follow up concessions from the buyer?
- Any other remark?

Buyer

- Were they well organised?
- Did they refer to facts in the brief?
- Did they accept points made about RPP?
- Any other remark?

Stirling's tips for using role-plays:

- You, the trainer remain in charge of the process at all times. You can stop the role-play at any time, ask the role-players to start it again from any given point or 'freeze' at any point.
- Begin by setting the context: explain the objectives and provide the rationale for the role-play.
- Distribute the roles (including observers) and give participants time to plan.
- Begin the role-play. You can say "LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION!" like on a film shoot, just to remind people that they are acting.
- End the role-play - explain that participants can come out of their role; appreciate their work while in role.
- Give observers a few minutes to prepare their feedback
- Ask generalizing question - facilitate brief discussion.
- Make a connection to the learning outcomes of the activity

Effective role-play sessions have the following characteristics:

- Issues in the role-play should have an obvious connection to the participants' real world
- The role-play should be open ended, not scripted.
- The role-play should not be too complex or involve too many characters - two or three are about right for most situations.
- The characters must not be too remote from the experience of participants - what we call "the shift in role" must not be too large.
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Some common mistakes that trainers make when using role-plays include:

- Creating a situation that is too complex, involving too many role-players
- Creating a situation and/or characters that are not believable
- Giving too many instructions at once
- Letting the role-play go too long



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