

Miriona's Message – no. 9

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Introduction

Don't forget training and CPD...

I was speaking at a conference earlier this week and the number of attendees was definitely less than originally expected. When I spoke to people about this, everyone agreed that all conferences (and training courses as well) have far fewer people than normal attending. In times of budget restraint, training and development are often early victims. This is a shame as people need to keep skills current and growing, or risk stagnation (and may result in you losing good staff, even in these uncertain times).

I thought it might be worth reminding you of the many events organised by the British Computer Society. They cover a range of topics, are cheap or free, most can be attended by non-members and are often run after office hours. See <http://www.bcs.org/server.php?show=nav.5817> for a list of all forthcoming events. (And yes I am a BCS Member but am not on any commission!)

Hot Topic

Security - Social Engineering

There was a very interesting article in a recent Computer Weekly concerning the risks posed by social engineering. A company asked a consultant to check out their office security. He had no inside help and did not use any equipment – just his laptop and social engineering techniques. He gained access to the building by tailgating whilst 'talking' on his mobile. He then sat in a meeting room, undisturbed, and within 20 minutes saw a confidential document (concerning a multi-million pound merger) left on a desk. He used techniques like carrying two cups of coffee to get people to open security doors for him. He also gained access to the data room by pretending to conduct a security audit! And it gets worse (read the article for more details at <http://cde.cerosmedia.com/1U4a112585295f1809.cde> page 10).

This is a useful warning that social engineering is a real security threat. An Information Commissioner survey a few years ago showed that it is a higher threat than hacking and losing laptops/USBs – but we often spend much more time worrying about these. Is your Service Desk team alert for social engineering calls? Are all visitors escorted? Would you ask a stranger why he was there? Points to ponder perhaps....

For more information, you can call Miriona on 07766 948470 or email newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

Working Smarter

De Bono's Hats – How to use this method for a review

What is the method?

De Bono's Hats is a fairly well known method which helps a group to see all perspectives of a situation. The method uses six coloured hats, each of which has a particular meaning. The group can all wear the same (virtual!) hat at once or people can wear different ones, depending on how you want to use them.

Using the former method in a particular order works very well for a review (of a team, project, activity....).

How do you do it?

1. The first hat to wear is the white one, which means facts only. Use this hat to establish the scope of the review and the key elements, such as who was involved, when it started and ended, budget and actual spend, objectives met and so on. This sets the boundaries for the review and gets people contributing.
2. Next is the yellow hat. This is things that went well – but they need to be justified. Just saying communication was good is not enough – ask why? Maybe team meetings worked well or a newsletter was useful - get the specifics.
3. Follow that with the black hat – things that didn't go so well. Again these need to be justified. Don't let this section just become a series of whinges!
4. The previous hats required people to justify their contributions. The next hat, red, covers feelings and no justification is needed. People can say how they felt and what they feel is most important. This can be very useful for allowing people to let off steam, especially if the review topic is a contentious one.
5. Finally the green hat is for ideas. What should we learn from the review? What would we do the same or differently next time? What actions are there?

Why would you use this?

Reviews run using this method tend to produce far more useful input and outcomes. If a review has no structure, it is easy for people to just raise a load of issues, forgetting the good things (there are usually some!) and not focusing on outcomes/actions. It also allows for an easier write-up, especially if you are running more than one review session on the same topic.

One point to note is that having an independent facilitator running this type of review is key – if someone involved in the topic under review does it, it is difficult for them to contribute themselves and they may not be seen as objective.

Want to discuss this further? Contact Miriona on 07766 948470 or email newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

Hints & Tips

PowerPoint: Quickly move between slides

When you are running a PowerPoint slideshow, typing in a number and entering moves you to immediately to that slide. Just make sure you know the numbers of each slide!

Outlook Calendar: Displaying Different Time Zones

If you work in multiple time zones, it's useful to have them displayed in your Outlook calendar. In the Day or Week view, right click on the time in the left hand column, select Change Time Zone, and then check the Show an Additional Time Zone. Select the one/s you need and they display in the calendar.

The Lighter Side of IT!

Axioms for the Internet Age

- Home is where you hang your @
- There's no place like 127.0.0.1
- The e-mail of the species is more deadly than the mail
- A journey of a thousand sites begins with a single click
- C:\ is the root of all directories
- Too many clicks spoil the browse
- The geek shall inherit the earth
- What boots up must come down
- A user and his leisure time are soon parted

Thank you for reading!

Any comments or ideas for future newsletters are welcomed – please send to newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

More information on Miriona and our services can be found on our website www.miriona.co.uk.

To contact Miriona, please call 07766 948470 or email newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

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