

A large Saguaro cactus stands prominently in the foreground, its arms reaching upwards. The background shows a vast desert landscape with rolling hills and a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on a dark blue horizontal band.

*How to Train Difficult Stakeholders
Like You Would Train a Bird of Prey*

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Shameless Plug

- @FunkyTheOwl is now on Instagram!
- Please follow for fun owl pics & facts
(plus we are in a competition with a poodle and ferret for the most followers)



Bird Training & Difficult People

- Presented at IAATE professional conference on changing cultures
 - Similar to bird training terminology
- Difficult people
 - EXACT SAME terminology
 - Makes sense...dealing with people...people are animals, and animals can be trained.



Training Terminology

- WIIFM
- Trust Account
- Labelling
- ABC
 - Antecedent / Behavior / Consequence

Human ABC: A=Hold my Beer B=stupid behavior
C=consequence that causes us to never do that again



Difficult People

- Create unnecessary complexity, strife, and stress
- Not enjoyable to be around or work with
- Defy logic
- Inevitable
 - Like death and taxes

Study of One



What we learned

- WIIFM
- Build the Trust Account
- Don't resist resistance
- Celebrate approximations

- WIIFT
- Lessons in stakeholder management from Mr. Rogers
- Understand their personality traits

Understand all of the stake(holder)s in the game



Build the trust account

- Understand personality traits
- Mind how you come across
- Always assume best intentions

Building the Human Trust Account is far more difficult than building the animal Trust Account

Don't resist resistance

- Communication mechanism

Resistance to change is simply an emotional and behavioral response by potentially affected people to actual or imagined threats to an established work routine. (Brown, n.d.)

- Dealing with resistance while keeping the trust account high
 - Breathe (incompatible behavior)
 - Pretend the anger does not exist
 - Be the Bamboo

(Your) Resistance is Futile





Celebrate Approximations

- Per the Agile PMBOK Guide
 - Celebrate team successes...
 - Create upward spirals of appreciation and good will for increased collaboration.

Party all the time!



Example – The Bully

- Bully Resistance
 - confrontational
 - low emotional maturity
 - myopic and dismissive



Example – The Bully

- WIIFM
 - The WIN
- Build Trust
 - Strong first impression
 - Maintain emotional maturity
 - Be seen as a winner
 - Self-confidence
 - Produce data (assignment)



Example – The Ghost

- Ghost Resistance
 - lack of involvement
 - ambivalent to status
 - difficult to get ahold of



Example – The Ghost

- WIIFM
 - Success with minimal investment
- Build Trust
 - Find their Guardrails
 - Respect the guardrails
 - Concise but regular updates



Example – The Micromanager

- Micromanager Resistance
 - Requests project statuses often and adhoc
 - Provides updates on teams' tasks
 - Goes directly to team members for status updates.





Example – The Micromanager

- WIIFM
 - Want to be seen as the “expert”
 - Fear loss of control
 - Fear that work will reflect poorly
- Build Trust
 - Provide concise, regular and actionable status updates



Summary

- Dealing with Difficult People
 - WIIFT
 - Build Trust
 - Resistance is Communication
 - A/B/C
 - You have control over A & C (and your behavior)



Quotes

I am thankful for the difficult people in my life. They have shown me exactly who I don't want to be. ~ Anon

If you want plenty of experience in dealing with difficult people, then have kids. ~ Bo Bennett



Questions?



References

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