

Learning in the Workplace

How can we help students reflect on their experiences

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Brief Overview

- Students undertaking a PT year often under estimate the level of social interaction that frontline roles in the service sector require
- In fact many are totally naive about what skills they need to develop to manage people

“Haven’t they grown up”

What is it about this experience that creates this remarkable metamorphosis?

Can this be about the acquisition of these so called soft skills?

Anecdotal evidence

- Evidence from making over 300 student placement visits would suggest that: -
 - Students relationship skills in the workplace environment are underdeveloped.
 - Reflection on the workplace mindset is rarely considered.
 - There is little awareness of the drivers that influence this mindset.

How can this be changed

- Placement students are required to keep 'personal development logs' (developed as part of my SCEPTRe fellowship)
- These logs are designed to record interactions between the student and other people they have to deal with in their work

• Please see handout

A brief case study

A real situation and real comments from the student expressed through personal logs. It concerns a student who has a very difficult relationship with her boss in a 5 star hotel

Please see handout

Case study

3. What was the most challenging aspect during this period and why?

"Over the last week I have finally decided that I have had enough of my current job (and the company itself). Every morning I wake up with the dread of going to work. I have no motivation and no respect for the workplace".

"The problem is our director, She is very unpredictable, short tempered, stubborn, superficial, uncooperative, defensive, irrational, unprofessional, and temperamental; the list goes on. She regularly belittles managers in front of their employees, which is very unprofessional of her (and is highly embarrassing). She has an extremely sharp tongue, she will do things out of spite, she is never wrong, she likes being hated – she seems to get a kick out of it".

The issues

- Help with the immediate problem
- Give the student the opportunity to solve the problem and identify learning from the situation

Positive Intervention

A placement student who is faced by a negative personal experience will in most cases: -

- Take it personally
- React emotionally
- Look for support from someone

The support (intervention) could come from: -

- A family member- in which case it may be an emotional response
- A work colleague – who may have their own agenda
- The professional training tutor – there to help the student learn from the experience in a creative and intelligent way

Managing expectation

Five phases of the placement experience

Expectation
Anticipation
Realisation
Reflection
Rationalisation

Taking it personally

- Easy to say don't take things personally – but they are personal
- Familiar responses from managers about rude customers/colleagues are:-
ignore the comment be professional
they're just talking to your job role
they're just addressing the uniform

Deep Reflective Approach

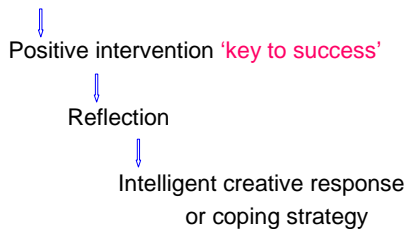
- The deep reflective approach is not to resolve the issue for the student but to enable the student to resolve the issue for themselves
- My experience has been that you can't dress this up – you have to analyse the problem as openly as possible – the student themselves maybe their own worst enemy

- The problem is we simply don't know the emotional threshold each individual student has, whether male or female, when faced with a negative personal experience

Creative Intelligence ?

Negative Personal experience

Initial emotional reaction



Template for inducing reflection and a creative approach to problem resolution

WHAT	HOW	WHY
Have a dose of reality	Take a look in the mirror	You have shortcomings too
Do you need to grieve	Have a good rant	Better out than in
Define a difficult person	List pros and cons	You might be one
Deal with strong feelings	Talk to someone you trust	Have no place in conflict resolution
What roles are people playing	Examine their agenda	May reveal hidden truths
Can you both win	Examine what each needs	Easier to resolve
Can you attain Catharsis (emotional release)	Disentangle your emotion	For liberation and peace

Using the model

- It is about having a conversation in a controlled environment – because sometimes there are tears
- It is about taking time to know your student through conversation
- And for me it is about people watching and attempting to analyse what is going on – again through conversation but also through observation

Changing Perceptions

Changing students' perception of taking a placement year from; 'being a chance to gain work experience' to; 'learning about themselves and understanding the employment relationship'.

Provocative Positive Enforcement

Provocative positive re-enforcement –
“student says I'm useless at this and you agree with them – you will get a reaction”

In management teaching I do not want to spend hours, days, weeks trying to convince someone who thinks they are unworthy or useless at achieving a task that they are perfectly capable of – I would rather they convince themselves.

Next Step

- At Surrey fifty percent of the student's placement report will be concerned with personal development.
- Personal logs will provide the framework for both the pre-report discussions with the visiting tutor and support the report itself
- Remainder of the report will discuss the placement from a business perspective

Learning outcomes

Understanding the employment relationship.

- Culture – work ethic – dealing with people
- Self development – from working with others
- Understanding self – through work relationships
- Building experience – by learning from others

Thank you for listening
Questions please?