



## Walk the Talk

### Radio for Agile Minds

<b>Shelley</b>	<p><b>It's that time of the month when we welcome Nick Anderson to the studio.</b></p> <p>Nick is Senior Partner for Professional Development Services – The PDS Group</p> <p>Affiliated with ROCG Business Transition Specialists. Over the last 20 years Nick has helped many house hold names like Turner Construction, Qwest Telecommunications and Royal Bank of Canada to impact bottom-line results through changing people's alignment within their organization, with their customer's and their partners.</p> <p>Each month Nick chooses a topic related to the business world in West Michigan focusing on the transitions this economy is going through</p> <p>Welcome....What have you chose for us this month?</p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p>This the second in my series to help people assess how good their interactive skills are. Last month I introduced the research based model that led to many useful insights into what the more effective communicators do in different settings and focused on what happens when meetings become imbalanced by getting stuck in too much Initiating, Reacting or Clarifying. And as an aside what I will cover in this program is some of the key models we were coaching two</p>

	<p>Architectural firms last week in Sacramento. This week I want to get people thinking about getting more productive meetings i.e. commercially viable ideas to compete and improve.</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>What type of research was involved to develop these models?</p>
<b>NICK</b>	<p>I want to focus on two key Initiating Behaviors and their relationship to meeting success, namely</p> <p>Proposing – putting forward ideas, suggestions courses of action</p> <p>Building – sounds like a proposal, which extends or develops another person’s proposal</p> <p>The difference between them is the proposing is an independent idea and building must be dependent on another person’s idea.</p> <p>What I want listeners to think about is the proportion of these two behaviors in their meetings is it at work, church etc. and how it influences meeting outcome.</p>
<b>SHELLEY</b>	<p>So, I am assuming that you would need to consider both the quantity and quality of ideas put forward?</p>
<b>NICK</b>	<p>That’s an excellent point. The research looked at the sort of Initiating going on and could it be more effective.</p> <p>The research was based on 23 working teams to see if there was a connection between effective performance and Initiating behavior. The teams were mostly research and project teams. We</p>

	<p>established their effectiveness against three criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The number of ideas brought to management's attention</li> <li>2. The number of ideas accepted for implementation</li> <li>3. The estimated commercial payoff</li> </ol> <p>The results clearly showed that these three criteria were significantly related to the ratio of proposing and building behavior. The more building, the better the performance</p> <p>The sounds like "Building is a god thing!"</p> <p>Unfortunately, like so many simple conclusions it is only partly true.</p> <p>Studies of other groups that were efficient and effective used no building at all.</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>Why should prove to be a strong predictor in some situations and not others?</p>
<b>NICK</b>	<p>It puzzled us until we stated to look at how a group deals with ideas. Groups seemed to take two very different approaches by either focusing on Proposing or Building.</p> <p>We first looked at groups that were very much higher in Proposing Behavior and used little if any Building. Here's a typical sequence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First person puts forward an idea (P1)</li> <li>2. Others don't like it and it gets rejected</li> <li>3. On the next agenda item an idea id put forward and then countered by another person.</li> <li>4. The second and third ideas are considered</li> </ol>

	<p>and the group likes the third idea.</p> <p>5. A change of topic and another idea is not fully accepted e.g. buy five machines gets reduced to 3 machines.</p> <p>So, What's happening to how this group handles ideas?</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>It sounds like ideas would not be fully considered before being either accepted or rejected?</p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p>That could be true if the ideas were complex and impactful. But your description is accurate, this group either filters or reduces the number of proposals – FILTER MEETING</p> <p>Because of the low level of building, proposals are not develop by others. They are either accepted or rejected or reduced.</p> <p>To many people they think that all meetings should focus on building on each other's ideas. However, Filter meetings can be incredibly efficient and effective where management has too many ideas already and needs to pare down and get focus on doing something.</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>So, how do you judge when a filter meeting is not the right way to go in handling ideas?</p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p>Essentially it comes down to four negative impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ownership and the Win-Lose Problem              Defensive – clinging to own ideas              not listen              politics before, during and after.</li> <li>2. Lack of Integration</li> <li>3. Lack of Commitment and Motivation</li> <li>4. Problem of Self-Reinforcement – filtering gets ingrained into regular meetings.</li> </ol> <p>In fact in one case study we observed six meeting of the same group. In meeting 1 24 PR's</p>

	<p>to 20 BU's but by meeting 6 PRs 39 to 0 BU's</p> <p>It illustrated for us why there are so many Filter meetings in commercial life and so few meetings with High Building Behaviors.</p> <p>Such meetings which are high on Building and low on Proposing deal with Initiating very differently</p> <p>(Describe)</p> <p>The Key is that several people contributed to the final idea by Building on one proposal – so an idea was AMPLIFIED – Thus Amplifier Meeting</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>I think I would rather be in that sort of meeting, what did participants say differently from those in the Filter Meetings?</p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p>Well, the impact on participants is very different. Firstly there's a sense of excitement. In Filter meeting the range of possibilities is known before the meeting and the outcome is often predictable.</p> <p>Whereas in an Amplifier Meeting the outcome is frequently unexpected. Ideas are developed dynamically.</p> <p>2. Increased Commitment 3. Increased Quality</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>How did they judge quality of ideas?</p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p>Panel of independent judge's i.e. commercial viability over twice as many high quality ideas as in the Filter Group.</p> <p>Of course Amplifier meeting do take more time and a lack of structure</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	<p>How do you get out of the Filter Rut and get an Amplifier Meeting going?</p>
<b>Nick</b>	<p>Well, let me tell you what I do which seems to</p>

	<p>work most of the time:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Choose an issue where nobody has fixed preconceptions</li> <li>2. Give no advanced warning or agenda of the issue</li> <li>3. Stop the Meeting after the first proposal</li> <li>4. Encourage Building</li> <li>5. Dealing with Criticism</li> <li>6. Not moving on too soon</li> </ol>
<b>Shelley</b>	How do you know when you have a Filter vs. Amplifier Meeting
<b>Nick</b>	Explain PR: BU Ratios
<b>Shelley</b>	In your research how frequently do the different meeting occur
<b>Nick</b>	<p>312 meeting observed.</p> <p>78% Filter</p> <p>4% Amplifier</p> <p>18% Neither one or the other</p> <p>Overall, we questioned the need for more Amplifier meetings. At a perceptual level, post meeting questionnaires revealed that</p> <p>Efficient – F</p> <p>Creative – A</p> <p>Competitive – F</p> <p>Organized – F</p> <p>Exciting – A</p> <p>Participative – A</p> <p>Useful – A</p> <p>Committed to meeting outcome – A</p> <p>Quality of Decisions – A</p>
<b>Shelley</b>	So How do you decide when to have a Filter or Amplifier Meeting
<b>Nick</b>	<p>Filter when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need to reduce the many choices for action available</li> <li>2. Tight time constraints</li> </ol>



	<p>3. Do not need individual commitment for successful implementation</p> <p>Amplify when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Need to create solutions where no predetermined alternatives exist</li><li>2. Need individual Commitment for success</li><li>3. Need high quality solutions<sup>2</sup></li></ol>