

Stephen Chong
– *defining corporate wisdom*

How managers can use the ‘pirate model’ in business to communicate to the max!



By Stephen Chong M.Ed.

It’s an unfortunate reality today that the childhood pleasure of dressing up as a heroic character such as a pirate are distant memories. Certainly before the harsh realities of the world invaded the freedom of your free-flowing creative imagination and dream of standing at the tiller with a patch over your eye.

Maybe? Maybe not! Anyway, here’s the thing ... a pirate says “Arrrgh” a lot, like “Arrrgh, me hearties”. You get the picture.

Let’s extrapolate this to a series of “RRRRRRRs” that can be most useful tools in our efforts as managers and leaders to communicate effectively* with those around us. I guess when we do this we are starting to create positive experiences with those in our sphere of influence at work.

Our first ‘R’ is (Un)Reserved Acceptance ... sorry for the play on words, but many a manager knows what it’s like when you’re in a work situation – things build up. Those nasty little habits like untidy work areas that irritates no end.

Well, here’s the important thing: if it irritates you, do something about it. Work on the following useful principle to determine whether something is important (or not): “Major the majors, minor the minors, don’t major the minors or minor the majors.”*

Don’t let it build up to a crescendo, as in “The next time they do that, I’m going to explode”. Now, this can’t do anybody any good.

It’s like keeping a scoreboard or a tally of all the times they’ve “pissed you off”.

This stuff builds up. It festers and gets bigger, just like plaque on your teeth. Don’t keep a tally – deal with it. Speak (nicely). Engage, talk and resolve. Maybe something like, “Just work on one file at a time and return them to the cabinet when you’re finished – it saves us all time looking for them. Thank you.”

The next “R” is the REQUEST. It’s the “can you”. Can you do this? Can you do

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that? It's like the list on the staff notice board that never ends! "Can you put the milk away?" "Can you put the dishes in the washer?" "For God's sake, can you keep the kitchen clean?"

This is what they call a "land mine", because it leads to the third "R" – REACTION, as in "I'M SICK OF YOU TELLING ME TO PUT THOSE FILES AWAY". This is a land mine because you have to tread carefully or risk things blowing up into unacceptable pieces.

Maybe it's here that we can set some ground rules for the engagement, such as:

- No yelling or screaming
- Let's talk in private (away from the other staff)
- Let's resolve this before we leave tonight
- Let's always respect the other's opinion
- No foreign objects (please, it's not a wrestling match, it's a discussion)
- Understanding, Openness, Empathy

At this point this is where we must draw a "line in the sand".

- (Un)Reserved Acceptance (no scoreboard)
- Request (files)
- Reaction (land mine)

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- Repression
 - Resentment
 - Rejection
 - Revenge

Why a line in the sand? I hear you say. Well, that's because if we allow the situation to progress below the line, if we do not deal with the situation, there are consequences that are certainly undesirable, particularly uncomfortable and significantly unnecessary.

You see, under the line we have another four "R's", each one being progressively more dolorous.

The first under-the-line "R" is Repression.

It is here that the trouble starts. We push down (repress) what we really feel and think. We deny our natural voice in deference to another's whims – or worse, for the maintenance of peace. This is not a healthy practice because if we repress too much and too often it leads to the next 'R'.

The second under-the-line "R" is Resentment.

An overload of repression has the effect of us building up our levels of

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resentment. For example, “I really am growing to dislike you.” “I hate you. Do you know that?” “You really piss me off”, or some such other similar expression of distaste. This stuff is not good!

The third under-the-line “R” is Rejection.

Too much repression leads to a build-up of resentment. Too much buildup of Resentment leads to the next regrettable act – Rejection. As in, “I’m out of here. Bye-bye”.

Now of course if things get REALLY bad, this can lead to issues of recrimination, e.g. court cases, compulsory mediation and so on. This is the fourth under-the-line “R” - Revenge.

All of these unfortunate consequences may of course be avoided if we simply: “LIVE ABOVE THE LINE.”

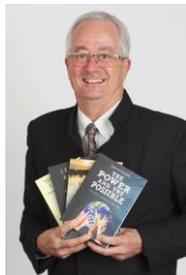
* (2007 - 2008) Results Accelerator Programme – WHK Greenwoods

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Stephen Chong M.Ed. is a highly sought after Personal Development Coach, Speaker, and Author. In his coaching work, Stephen focuses on imparting the essential envisioning and goal-setting skills that bring out the best in executives, managers and staff in the modern workplace.

He has established a considerable reputation for designing and delivering quality coaching and training programs, evidenced in the many courses he has written, such as: Enhanced leadership skills; Effective communication; Conflict resolution; Living on the edge of your comfort zone; Developing winning teams; and Overcoming the obstacles.