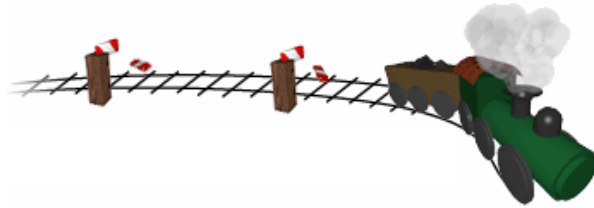


Finding the positive in uncertainty

by Stephen Walsh, Six Sigma Group



Turn of the 20th century physicist Heisenberg first coined the term the **uncertainty principle**, by which he stated that the '*observer affects the observed*'. Of course, the detail was pertinent to quantum mechanics, but the principle that '**being there changes what is there**' can provide a useful learning point for everyday life.

You might imagine, for example, that a train driver could draw the conclusion from repeated observation that the barriers of a railway crossing are always down – after all, he has never seen them up!

We can influence outcomes, the behaviours and responses of others by the way we are – make a difference by what we say and the way we say it. We can phrase things negatively and cause people to be resistant, unco-operative and surly, or we can couch the same thought in positive language and find that people become supportive and helpful.

Consider the difference between the following statements:

<i>"I agree"</i>	and	<i>"I don't disagree"</i>
<i>"I can see you later"</i>	and	<i>"I'm too busy to see you now"</i>
<i>"I can have that job ready some time this afternoon"</i>	and	<i>"I can't have this job ready before this afternoon"</i>
<i>"Let me transfer your call to the right department"</i>	and	<i>"You've come through to the wrong department"</i>

Here is an excellent example, picked up at Rugby Tesco Stores, of finding a positive approach to reporting a difficult situation:

News
We're adding extra!
Very soon, you'll see hoarding going up, and builders walking around . . .
Over the coming months we're going to transform and extend your store to make it the best Tesco you've ever visited.
More details will be available soon.

The usual '*We apologise for any inconvenience . . .*' at best automatically instils a mood of tolerance in the reader. The above notice tries to build an emotion of anticipation. Being positive is a habit. The rewarding thing about this habit is that not only does the initiator gain a sense of wellbeing, but everyone else feels good too.