Master of Arts in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change

at The Process Work Institute, Portland,OR,USA.

Final Project

"CTCM: Conscious Tech Connection Manual"

Contextual Essay

Jiro Isetani

June 28th, 2011

About this Essay

This essay covers and tries to include the "research" nature of my final project. Because I wanted to keep the manual a simple tool, things which I perceived as too academic were moved from the manual to this essay. The communication manual is for technical people. This essay is for process workers. The purpose of this essay is to explain how and why the manual is different from process oriented relationship work for the general public. I also want to describe how the manual was created. I also explore how the manual is geared toward the unique tendencies found among the geek and technical population.

I used to have a helpful idea that I called "The Relationship Panic First Aid Kit". The kit only had three items: ranks, double signals and working on the edge to dream together. When I would get into panic about one of my relationships, I would pull this list out from my head and try to use all of the skills. This kit served me well for a long time. This manual is the deluxe version of the first aid kit.

1. Topic and focus

I would like to specify the particular focus of this project. The project focus is the **"**Communication Manual**"** for technical people. Process Oriented Relationship Work usually includes three levels of work, depending on the process of the relationship: individual, interpersonal, and field level. On the interpersonal level we find communication between individuals. This manual mainly focuses on the communication level. Process oriented relationship work is also being practiced to 1) facilitate one's own relationship with somebody and 2) to facilitate the relationship of two other people. This manual includes definitions,

theories, and exercises which help to facilitate one's own relationship, but do not include how to facilitate other two-party relationships.

2. Purpose

I would like to write about why I am doing this. Basically, I want to share what I have been learning. I feel the purpose of this project has some multiple intentions. These intentions include some of my own healing as well as sharing what I have learned to help other people. By sharing the skills which I outlined in the manual, I hope to bring happiness in relationships to computer geeks. Portland is already one of the most heavenly places for open source computer software contributors and developers. Many major open software founders are living near Portland, including the founder of Linux, Linus Torvalds. I had a vision of accelerating this open source movement community by my contribution to enhance geek communication skills. The geeks are also a reflection of me, too. I feel a great amount of healing in my own relationship struggles through using some of the techniques I suggest in the manual. I also see my own business development unfolding. The creation process of this manual itself was educational for me. I now know more about relationship work and related fields.

3. Aims and objectives

I had a lot of trouble learning about relationships and communication. I would like to share the skills and awareness which have been beneficial for me. I want to make the world a better place. I want to popularize process oriented communication awareness within the Portland open source community.

Why did you choose geeks and technical people?

First let me explain what I mean by the word "geek": a geek, in this instance, is someone who is proficient intellectually but may be a little socially awkward. The term "geek" has changed for many people from a derogatory term to a term that has a source of pride for many people who enjoy high levels of intellectual achievement and specialization. I chose this population because I am a geek and I wanted to share with people who have similar struggles and features. I already have skill sets in the computer field. I wanted to have a less dramatic, more holistic and integrated way of transitioning between my professions, as a computer system engineer/administrator/tech support and process oriented facilitator/mediator/consultant.

How and why technical people are different from general public.

Not all of them, but some technical people (including me) have had enough painful experiences around the world of emotions, because they (we) recognize and handle emotions in a different way from the majority of the population. In technical culture, emotional information is less recognized than fact based information. Many people in highly technical fields are accustomed to using data and are not so used to navigating subtle social cues and emotional expression. Many of us share a fascination toward technologies. Learning is a fairly common activity because of the flow of new technologies. What you know and your skill sets become old quickly. Due to the speedy development of technology, people working in this field tend to spend a good amount of their time keeping up with new information. Some people prefer to relate to technology and not as much to people. Some people excel at relating to technology and find relating to people on an emotional level to be difficult.

How did you modify traditional process work to fit the geek population?

I modified the information in my manual to be more mechanical, tangible and more technical. I started with smaller steps in the beginning, like working on double signals. Then I moved toward more advanced material near the end, like edge work. I included more signal based, phenomenological approaches to process work.

4. Approach

Methods and techniques

Making manual. Giving class. Getting feedback. Modifying manual.

First I made the manual according to my experience. I selected skills by using two major criteria. One criterion is the manual's usefulness for me. I selected skills which contribute effectively to my relationships. The other criterion is how easy it is to share the skills with technical computer people. I went to many computer software oriented events to find participants and to gain feedback about my project. I learned a lot from the process of going to these events and getting feedback on my ideas. One thing that I learned is how comfortable I have become with relating in comparison with some others in technical fields. Another thing that I learned was how different groups of people use different terms and jargon to explain the same experience. I also learned many things on a personal level that I did not directly add to my project but which enhanced my own life and work as a consultant.

First, I shared the beginnings of my manual and concepts from the manual. Exchanging ideas with agile software development community members was especially helpful for my project

because some of these members are experts in the relationship skills of computer software

developers. Computer software developers need special communication skills to ensure that

content is delivered and understood and context is explained well. They understand the detail

oriented nature of engineers and know how to communicate accordingly. Some of them

experientially already understood high and low dreams and big "bump in the road" moments.

I gave two evening classes and one half day workshop. These events were videotaped.

Participants were asked to give me feedback both in the middle and at the end of the events. I

updated the manual according to the feedback. I changed a lot of terminology to fit my audience

for instance I changed "emotion" to "gut sense" or "passion". Many people in the technical

industries are turned off by overly spiritual terms, so I was careful to frame things in non-

spiritual terms. I defined basic terms in the beginning to educate my audience about specific

process work concepts.

5. Audience

Who is it for?

The manual is for technical people.

The contextual essay is for process workers.

The audience for the manual is people who have technical, professional roles in the information

technology industry. I would like to extend this manual to many types of fields, like medical,

nanotechnological, or engineering industries. However, this project solely focuses on the

members of the informational technology industry. At first I had the ambition to include non-

technological industry members: people who communicate with technical people. For example, I

considered using manager and sales people who are interested in developing communication

skills to talk with techies. However, two groups of audience felt like too big of a project, so this

aspect was dropped.

6. Quality criteria :

By giving classes and acquiring feedback, I was able to increase the quality of the manual.

Responses I received shaped the manual. For example, I ended up modifying portions of the

manual that used words about feelings and emotions. This was a result of the feedback I received

from people in the computer technology industry. Emotional material is not commonly used in

the computer industry because it is not recognized as a rational and efficient way to accomplish

tasks. It is like a foreign language. One participant stated that in his ideal world emotion would

not be present, so the best choice could be made based on rational collective opinion. Another

participant even asked if I could remove the word relationship referring to the romantic

partnership definition of relationship. One consultant really related to the "high dreams and low

dreams" in relation to introducing new methodology to developed software. He really

understood the benefits of outlining high and low dreams in the beginning of this introduction of

new methodology. I received a lot of positive feedback regarding channel theory so felt a lot of

confidence and wrote more details about channel theory. Incorporating this feedback raises the

practical nature of the manual for this population.

7. Limitations

Constructive critiques

In the technical field, video and audio media are becoming usual, useful styles for learning, however, this project does not include these forms of media. This is a rather large limitation, given the fact that in the present day, technical people increasingly learn from sources other than paper media. The project itself is becoming slightly incongruous, because the manual is claiming to be useful for technical people, but it fails to incorporate the shift of media in its own industry. On several occasions, I received requests to share an online video or audio media as tools to learn process oriented communication. It seems to be getting standard to choose one new media channel, such as a social network service's online video, to develop a user group which promotes a new practice. I chose to stay with paper format because of time and resource limitations. I discussed this choice with my supervisor who agreed that the project was more manageable in this format and size.

The number of people who gave me feedback was very limited. I got feedback from approximately 25 people, nine of these people participated in my groups and the others I just shared these concepts with by chatting and sharing the written manual. I had a limited amount of time to attend groups and had only two evening classes and a half day workshop that I facilitated myself. This is a fairly small number to represent Portland Geek culture. I picked up the topics which I felt were useful; hence, only a few relationship skills are covered in this manual. I dropped the individual level because it was more therapy and coaching rather than relationship work. I found that for myself the communication level was the most helpful, so I dropped the field and individual level to focus more on what was the most helpful. I thought there would be

less resistance to start with working on the communication level because it is more common.

Also, I have dropped skills to facilitate other people's communication and made the focus on

facilitating one's own relationship with another. I really wanted to make a manual which is easy

and useful for technical people.

8. Contribution to the field

 A written manual of this kind designed specifically for technical people has not been created

before. This is probably the first written manual to focus on the relationship and communication

of technical people. I interviewed several people about the essential part of communication for

technical people to find out the usual level of communication they experienced with their peers.

I used this information to include additional skills in listening and understanding.

 I started one of the classes by focusing on double signals. I felt the demonstration had a kind of

ice break effect on the class. Intentional double signal demonstrations often make people laugh. I

guess double signals are so common for all human beings. Things are not always yes or no, but

there are many shades of gray in between. Most people do not have a high level of psychological

training. Double signals are something that most people experience at one time or another with

varying degrees of awareness.

    I received recommendations from multiple people in the technical consultation field to be

careful to not use the words relationship, feelings and emotions. One person clearly said that a

world without emotions is ideal because things can be decided totally together by rational,

reasonable and practical points of views. I learned to frame theory and exercises in a more rational way to meet the style of the participants.

9. Developmental detail of each section.

Basic concepts.

Originally, this section was part of the introduction. In order to maximize the reader's learning of the basic concepts, I chose to repeat important concepts throughout the manual. I initially felt it was good to remove the glossary because of the overlapping content when I created the "Basic concepts" section. In the end, I retained the glossary, with the intention to help the reader learn concepts through more exposure.

Double Signals, Mixed messages of Yes and No.

Picking up on one's own double signal. How to unfold double signals of other side.

I chose double signal as the first topic because it is the most simple and still a very useful concept and practice. In addition, I felt "picking up hesitation" is becoming more common knowledge in mainstream business culture so many people are already working with the concept of "double signals" just using a different way to describe it. I wanted to start somewhere closer to the daily life of technical people, and double signals are a common occurrence that technical people can be aware of by paying attention to others' and their own hesitation. I wanted readers to experience a good result in a short learning time.

Communication and channels

Which channel do you usually use? With which channel do you usually have trouble?

Communication channel concept is easy for me and also understood easily by other technical people. I do know some people take a long time to recognize or to differentiate relationship channel and world channel. I created the more clear concepts of "single channel family" and "multiple channel family" to explain how different channels manifest so that people would be more likely to understand their definitions. Single channels use only one sense and multiple channel families have processes through multiple senses. Process work has six major channels. I decided to use seven channels. Joe Goodbread added verbal channel into auditory channel. I used the verbal channel and auditory channel because separating them into two channels is practical and useful. I also thought technical people are more trained to listen to only verbal contents and more marginalized auditory attributes. I touched very lightly upon internal channel and external channel. I mean when you are operating in an internal channel you are processing information from the inside with yourself. When you are operating on an external channel you are processing information outside of yourself in relation to others. For example when using the verbal channel I can listen to my inside voice or listen to speech from other people. One part of me wanted to go all the way into detail, but another part of me noticed this section was already pretty heavy. I felt that the details about internal and external attributes of the channels were too technical, even for technical people. This section was one of the most popular among group participants. Most people understood the concepts well and felt they could practically apply them.

Fear and hope: low dreams and high dreams

Feel like a roller coaster? Do you experience many ups and downs? It is time to see what you are expecting.

Low – high dream is one of the most effective methods for me personally because I am greatly affected by high and low dreams especially at the beginning of any relationship. Working with these high-low dream exercises make me more stable and calm. I typically use romantic relationships to explain low-high dreams: however, I intentionally used a scenario in which an engineer is experiencing an employment interview. The purpose of this choice is because these skills are most practically described in a work environment. Dreaming is one of the core aspects of process work. I chose to include the concept of dreaming in this section in particular because it is so clear and easy to understand in the context of the high-low dream. Dreaming is a very wide concept and high and low dreams are a specific manifestation of dreaming. High dreams are a kind of dreaming that is closer to a hope or wish. Low dreams are a kind of dreaming that is closer to a fear or things that people want to avoid. Many people have experience already in this area. I emphasized the difference between internal and external processes. I presented the concept of internal and external processes in this section, because high-low dreams is one of the best places to become aware of these differences for me. An internal high-low dream is within yourself and an external high-low dream is from the other side or shared with the other side.

Rank Awareness --- Power, strength and privileges

Rank is one of the most important, helpful concepts for me because it helps people to deal with issues of rank in relationships in a better way and reduces tensions when rank is addressed.

Geeks typically have knowledge of rank which in the Geek world is connected to social rank. Project managers tend to have more psychological rank, good "people skills", and generally more social rank/contextual rank than programmers. I introduced rank awareness in my class and workshop by explaining a common rank problem of one person noticing another's high rank being misused against them. It is easy to notice areas where you have low rank. Other people notice your high rank and their own low ranks. The participants in my group seemed to understand these concepts well. They seemed to find these concepts useful in understanding past conflicts.

The manual identified different kinds of power and strength, and examined typical rank dispute situations, teaching the trick about awareness rank.

I changed the name of "spiritual rank" to "detachment rank". My goal was to reduce spiritual connotations.

Bumps on road moments --- deeper or "real" topic

Conversation will come back to bumps on road moments eventually. Bumps on road moments tend to cycle if not addressed and processed enough. Sometimes a process gets to a moment when there are strong reactions, silences, or tensions. They tend to get overlooked, but because they hold information it is important to bring awareness to them. I refer to these moments as "bumps in the road moments". These moments can occur in any level, individual level, communication level and collective level. This concept is designed for people who have less awareness of these levels and intended to catch any "big" signal. I chose this subject because

bumps on road moments can be tracked simply by measuring noise level, shocked silence can also be a bump in the road moment. It is easy for technical people to understand this skill because it can be simply identified, in a tangible manner. I was debating whether or not I wanted to combine this with edge work. Bumps in road moments bring relationship systems to the edge. Bumps in the road moment tracking is one style of edge work. If you find a bump in the road moment, you need to hold the edge. People in the group got this concept. The tricky part for them was picking up shared bump in the road moments or others bump in the road moments. It was easier for them to identify their own bump in the road moments. This name "bump in the road moment" was originally "hot spot" used for group process.

Edge work: Learning to Identify and stay with edges in relationships

This section is the least developed section in this manual. I had difficulty choosing one type of edge work. I felt that there are almost too many ways to recognize and work on edges. At first I thought it might be impossible to introduce edge work through the written manual because keeping awareness near your own edge requires a lot of training. This experience may be easier for those who have practiced meditative techniques. I had the edge to recognize the diversity of readers and the development of edge work in the manual itself. I'm discovering that Geek people in reality are more diverse than in my imagination. In my imagination Geek people had less in common with process work people and I did not think they could put into practice the concept of edge work from a manual. I explained the concept in the group and we did some exercises which I later modified because it did not work well. It did not work well initially because I used too broad and conceptual exercises. I tried to cover too many kinds of edge work at once. The participants needed more support to go over edge like having more modeling and examples.

Explaining the concept was not quite enough. In the manual I provided much more explanation and simplified the exercise.

Talk about mythic level.

At first I thought it was a good idea to have a mythic level section and created it. I used the mythic level concept for one of the classes and got feedback that "myth" has a relatively negative connotation in the technical field. Eventually I just removed this topic.

Why mythic level was dropped.

There were several reasons. Based on my limited experience, I think that there are more non-spiritual people in technical fields than in the general population. It was originally not such a high priority. The mythic level is very important when the nature of the process is ending or beginning, or when there is loss of the meaning. However, this kind of process is not so prevalent in Geek daily life. Another reason for removing the topic is that I had an edge to access my own mythic level. As a result, the creation process of this section did not flow well. I got too much feedback about this section, and I did not have enough time and energy to incorporate it. Another reason for removing the mythic level was because of the feedback I received from class participants. I perceived that they were neither enjoying, nor going deeper into the process. The experience did not look so good. All of these reasons added up to my decision to drop the mythic level from the manual.

How was the experience of going to the events and inviting participants to my classes?

I liked that. I enjoyed meeting new people at technical meetings and asking them to come to my experimental classes. At first, I became nervous because I didn't want to go to open source oriented events that frequently. I did not know the techies who come to these events in Portland. Afterward, I went to more meetings and events, especially weekly and monthly meetings, and I started to become comfortable as I saw more of the same faces.

How was the experience of using the manual at the classes?

I found it very helpful to have the steps written out during the exercise sections. Sometimes when I used the manual as a template to follow it supported my English speaking language ability and people better understood what I was saying. I liked that people could take the manual home and reflect later on the material we went over during the classes. Each class did not cover all of the topics in the manual. It was nice to get to look over the topics as a group and decide what we would cover in each class together. Participants responded favorably to channel theory and double signals. I received some confused feedback to mythic level and removed this section.

Length of exercises.

The exercises are very short because I was imagining that the audience is less familiar with working on relationships. I simply wanted them to get accustomed to "working on connection" itself. This is why I kept the exercises short and simple. I hope some people even memorize the exercises and do them without this manual.

10. Future possibilities

What are the possibilities this project may open up for the future? What might I or others

do to build on what I have done? How might this project be useful to others?

Example: I would like to see the manual expanded into a series of videos. I would like to see the

videos expanded into a multi-media production including audio-visual, photography, animation,

comics, and performance art.

Others might like to use this project as a basis for further exploration and illustration

of concepts in a variety of contexts. For example, I would like to explore it further

with other technical people and medical people.

I would like to make this manual available through web based video services like youtube.

I'm also interested in making this in an audio format, such as a podcast, so that busy, technical

people can listen to it during their work or commute.

11. Conclusion

In order to serve the IT industry, it is useful to be careful and more gentle around the

psychological attribute of process oriented relationship work. It is recommended that you need to

be aware that some people not only have discomfort around relationship work but may have had

painful past experiences which may cause resistance to learning relationship skills. My manual

provides a safe step by step learning experience for technical people, and develops their

confidence to connect and relate.

I am satisfied with the manual overall as a good solid beginning point to be expanded on. I am

especially happy with the work I did in this manual in the channel section. I feel that my

sequencing order in this manual was very good. I feel that one successful point was the easy

introduction of process work concepts for geek/technical people. I could have done much more

work and improved the edge work section. This project helped me to envision a more rich, fun,

and positive experience relating with my peers in technical work situations.