



A Week in the Life of Simon Pocock (Principal Consultant)...

Monday: My Dream Client

The week started well. Simon A and I were in London with the Organisational Effectiveness Executive for a major drinks company. Simon and I met up prior to the meeting, in a bar just around the corner from their office. In the interests of client research we did toy with the idea of necking a couple of pints but common sense prevailed and we stuck to coffees. I'm sure it would have been taken as a compliment though.

Having done our research before the meeting, we knew a little about the business – you wouldn't believe how many drinks brands you'll have had that are owned by this company and even more that you'll have heard of. As a big fan of much of their produce, it felt a bit like walking into my own personal Santa's grotto and I was disappointed not to see lots of little elves producing alcopops in time for Christmas.

The meeting went really well. Hopefully we convinced them of our expertise in helping organisations streamline their processes and equipping their people to cope with the change. I really hope so. Never mind working for an internationally recognised, globally positioned client and the kudos this would bring to Berkshire...we might get access to their staff shop.

Tuesday: Getting Paid for People Watching

There is nothing better I love than to people watch. It's a huge pastime of mine. The problem is the longer you do it, the more likely you are to be arrested for stalking. How fabulous then, to actually get paid to watch people interacting with each other and actually be *required* to take notes while doing it.

It was a development centre for one of our existing clients' managers, the last one of nine in fact, where we observe them over the day in a range of activities that put them through their paces and allow us to make recommendations about their development needs. All set against a specific set of competencies that are geared towards engineering a management team capable of leading through change.

The feedback from the day was that they actually really enjoyed it, even though they were nervous at first about what they were letting themselves in for. But, hey, each one of these events is something like a 12-13 hour day, so I reckon I can cope with the guilt.

Wednesday: Take That and Strategic Direction

An actual day in the office. A rare treat. A chance to catch up with colleagues to discuss where the business is up to, clients we're working for, ongoing projects as well as work we're hoping to win from prospective clients. A chance to sit back and reflect on the state of the business and its strategic direction.

Not to mention comparing notes on how we all found the Take That gigs we went to (a gift for my wife, *OK!?!),* discussing the promotional chances of various Championship football teams and the pitfalls and merits of Facebook (do make sure your profile is either whiter than white or hidden, people!).

Headed off to Liverpool in the afternoon in time for the work I'm doing with Lynda tomorrow. It's a fair old drive so it was good to be able to get everything sorted and be on the road by mid afternoon.

Thursday: More With Less

The day started well. It's always nice to be in a hotel that is right across the street from the client's office. A chance to use the gym before work or more realistically, a chance to stay in bed a bit longer. I met Lynda in Starbucks, to talk about the progress with the client. I've been involved in other projects for over a month so the chance to 'tune back in' was welcome.

This particular client, a Central Government department, is many faceted. The section we were with today is a smaller section that has grown rapidly in the last few years and has employed us to help them work more effectively. Other members of the project team made up of the client's and Berkshire staff have identified process changes to 'what' they do and it was our job to help people begin to think about 'how' they implement them.

We ran four different sessions today to four different groups of people. The idea being to deliver some highly specific and tailored learning that literally takes an hour and a half. After which, they can go straight back into the workplace and begin using that information in a real and practical way. Further down the line, we'll help them examine how they've applied that learning and explore the same subject in more depth to extend their skills even further. It's a very different approach that takes more planning and flexibility on our part but it won us 'Supplier of the Year' with the Home Office this year and all the evidence so far indicates this client appreciates the effort too.

Friday: Work/Life Balance

I'd managed to arrange my diary so I was at home. After those long days recently on the development centres, it's nice to know I have no travelling to do, not have to shave, work in just my pants etc. Today was about writing up the reports on the managers I was observing as well as making pre-contact calls to some of the participants on another client's Leadership event I'm running with Sue next week. The former is about ensuring that you piece together all the observer reports on that person and amalgamate them into a meaningful report that they can feed into their personal development plans. The latter is about ensuring we have an idea of participants' backgrounds and what they want from the course so we can think about tailoring the event to their needs.

It is definitely the kind of work that I need to do at home. I'm just not one of those people who can focus for very long in the office before joining in with whatever important conversation is taking place (see Wednesday's blog).

Besides, I like the flexibility of working from home. I can take my kids to school and after being freaked out by how quiet the house is; crack on without interruptions, assuming I don't let Jeremy Kyle distract me. A few hours of work, a spot of lunch, a few more hours of work and all done just as my wife gets home with the kids about 5.30pm and I get to pretend not to be interested in children's television until their bath time.