

John Sturrock Podcast

(transcript)

Better Conversations, Better Outcomes

Session 12: PRUDDIE – A Valuable Structure

In this podcast, I'd like to talk about my friend PRUDDIE. Another device which helps me to remember the structure I have devised for all sorts of situations: useful in mediation, negotiation, communication, problem-solving and no doubt in other settings too.

P is for Preparation: what must we do in advance to enter this negotiation, say, and conduct it really effectively? Proper preparation prevents poor performance. Chance favours the prepared mind....and so on. I often use a preparation sheet with many questions which provide structure and compel in depth exploration in advance. Not just about content but also logistics, process and people, relationships. And preparation does not end at the beginning of course but continues throughout, as you revise and review in light of new information. As ever, flexibility is key.

R is for Rapport: We've talked in a previous podcast about separating people from the problem. In most situations, you need to be able to work with the people you are negotiating with, whatever you may think of them or their values – or even their behaviour towards you or others. So, building effective working relationships with your counterparts seems essential. You don't need to be friends with them but finding areas of common ground, showing interest in who they are and what interests them - and generally creating a constructive atmosphere will, in most cases, give you a better platform.

U is for Understanding: we've explored this in some detail in past podcasts when discussing the use of really good questions as you seek to get under the surface to find out what is really going on. Without that really good understanding there is a danger that we simply deal with superficial things, the symptoms and positions if you like, rather than the underlying needs and causes. You need to have built good rapport to do this well, and also have prepared appropriately. And, of course, it is an ongoing task, not a finite one. Like the rest of PRUDDIE, this is a fluid idea not a prescriptive linear process.

D is for Deliberation or Developing Options: I alternate between the two as this is the stage where, having really tried to understand things, we can consider the options for moving forward, assess these with good objective criteria, work out priorities, examine risk, and develop what are called BATNAS and WATNAS – the benchmarks or “what happens if we don't manage to sort this out amicably” tests. This is the rich learning from the seminal book, Getting to Yes, and other such texts.

D is for Decision: once we have understood the real issues, assessed the options and the alternatives, where does that leave us? What emerges as the most satisfactory outcome in the circumstances? How do we test that? We might ask: is it durable? sustainable? affordable? realistic? commercially viable? And so on. We need to record our decision in



sufficient detail to eliminate uncertainty and ambiguity. Who is doing what, by when, with whom and how?

I is for implementation: giving effect to the action plan. The who, what, when, where, how etc in practice. And we should have a process for doing so which has accountability and responsibility within it.

E is for Evaluation: How did we do? What worked? Why? What didn't work? Why not? How could we do it better? This is HPDREE all over again and applies both in terms of the process we have used and the substantive outcome we have decided upon and implemented. There is always scope to learn. Evaluation is not a blaming exercise but a genuine inquiry, as a result of which we should be able to do even better next time.

There it is: PRUDDIE, a recipe for successful outcomes!