

### **Chameleon Skills**

When I am asked what I do by a stranger, my stock answer is that *I am an Accountant* (my first professional qualification). If I am feeling brave, that *I head up a Process and Change Management for a small consultancy*.

Experience has taught me that the first answer is a conversation stopper (Lion Tamer?). The second invariably results in an explanation, either a monologue or a dialogue, in which I have to translate into English. Even '*Connecting strategy to operations*' is gobbledegook (*note that word Darling*).

The problem is that business-speak, be it generic or niche (Six Sigma, Lean, Management Systems, even, ironically, Change Management) is *not* common speak. It is a barrier to change.

As a bringer of change to another organisation we have to become super chameleons and so be as far as possible inside the group in which we want to affect change. Simple chameleon skills will not cover it as skin deep is really skin shallow. I am currently in Qatar and believe me, wearing a *thobe* will just make me a bloke in a dress (at best). Not an esteemed Arab.

I would suggest that we need to reflect and enhance local values in behaviours, and then to demonstrate high value in our contributions. So, when you approach your next new group, targeted for change, take the time to meet their supervisor. Review their plans, and then consider the following steps:

Discover what you need to look like and sound like

- Avoid your own niche language like you would Swine Flu
- Learn a few local acronyms and basic local vocabulary

Discover what makes them proud

- Are they in it to win it, waiting for their pensions or there to save lives – each situation requires a unique approach

Discover what they value

- Cash, Shares, Bonuses?
- Handshakes, certificates, trophies?
- The importance of security and stability?
- The importance of dynamism and entrepreneurial skills (Boundarylessness)?

Then dress right, introduce your plans in terms of local skin, dialect and ambitions and listen closely as they provide you with the answers and facilitate well and as local resistance starts to create and own the change plan. The door may now be open for your high value contribution!

## **About the author**



**Name:** Ian Pinches

**Position:** Managing Director, Morpheus Consulting

**Background:** Ian is a certified Lean Six Sigma Programme Manager, PRINCE2 Practitioner and CCAB Chartered Accountant with an exceptional track record of delivery in diverse business cultures.

He has 12 years of successful project and programme delivery experience including such roles as: GE Capital Master Black Belt, AXA Life Joint Six Sigma Programme Manager (UK), Microsoft Senior Six Sigma Programme Manager (EMEA), Lloyd's Register Mentor to the Group Director of Business Assurance, Work Stream Leader and Programme Resource Supplier (Global) and Health and Safety Executive Managing Consultant for Process Excellence.

The work under Ian's leadership was recognised in the 2009 IQPC European Awards, UK Management Consultancies Association Awards and the British Quality Foundation Awards - being short listed and winning in a number of categories, including winning Best Start Up Programme in Europe for Lloyd's Register.

**Approach:** As Managing Director of Morpheus Consulting Ian works closely with his Clients to build and assure customised programmes of work. Ian partners with senior managers to identify and agree realistic and attainable programme deliverables. Ian then maintains a close working relationship to assure the quality of delivery throughout the programme of work and beyond.