

## A Heuristic Look At A Small News Item From Which We Can All Learn Valuable Lessons



Daily Telegraph 28<sup>th</sup> April 2010

Once we have had a laugh at the story of this hapless nautical wannabe let us consider for a moment the parallels we see in our everyday work and life;

1. His way of measuring his performance was to measure activity rather than output

He assumed that if he simply **travelled** for a given number of hours with the land always on his right he would be advancing and succeeding; *in real life we often set ourselves and our people "activity" related targets and then reward them for that~ pay by the hour, time spent at university or in a job, hours of practice on the piano for kids. We are measuring and reward activity not output.*

2. He had no real way of recognising his goal when he got there

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/7640622/Aspiring-sailor-trying-to-sail-round-the-UK-circles-the-Isle-of-Sheppey-instead.html>

Though not mentioned in the paper-published article the online version makes it clear that he usually drove by car to Southampton so the likelihood is that he wouldn't have recognised the port from seaward anyway; *how often in life and work do we fail to clearly define how we will recognise the success of an endeavour?*

3. He had no way of measuring his actual progress towards his goal

Had he set some "milestones"; some landmarks along the way between Gillingham and Southampton, he would have noticed sooner that he kept passing the same bits of land and that he had failed to pass a single landmark. *So often we fail to reach life goals (eg I wannabe a celebrity) because we fail to set realistic milestones along the way, each milestone gives us a sense of achievement and spurs us on with the confidence we are on the right road and making actual headway.*

4. He was using inadequate and wrong tools

He was using a **road map** to navigate at **sea**, had he had a **compass** as well he would have realised that left and right are not the same as East and West. *In life we have to have the right tools for the job in hand, otherwise we fail, or make it harder for ourselves, or we damage the tools.*

5. He was making assumptions based on flawed logic.

He assumed that as he could drive to Southampton on 20 litres of fuel in his car, he would be able to "sail" to Southampton on 20 litres in his boat. *In work and life we often assume things similarly; it worked last time so it will work again, it failed last time so it won't work this time, he succeeded in his last job so he must succeed in this one, he has a criminal record so he will steal from us in the future.*

6. He failed to learn from his experience

Again from the online story, after being rescued he refuelled went straight back to sea...the only technical advice he wanted was to ask whether he needed to turn left or right when he left the marina. *If at first you don't succeed, stop, think, amend, plan....and only then, try again!*

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