

ABSTRACT

This research is about relationship in organisations - and specifically the relationship between the manager of a customer service centre, servicing customers within the energy sector, and her team of eight managers.

It explores the extent to which Buber's philosophy of dialogue (1958) and (1965b), and its explication by Friedman (1955) (1972a) (1975) (1976b) (1985) and (1985a), which has subsequently been integrated into Gestalt Psychotherapy, as the 'dialogic approach,' in the writings of Hycner (1985) and (1987); Jacobs (1989); Hycner and Jacobs (1995) and Yontef (1981) (1984) (1993) and (1999), provides an effective model for relationship between the Customer Service Call Centre Manager and her team managers.

I trained the Customer Service Call Centre Manger in the 'interhuman elements' of the dialogic approach. She subsequently adopted the approach as the model for relationship with her team of managers. I conducted open ended interviews a couple of weeks after the end of an agreed period of eight weeks of experiencing the dialogic approach. I wanted to know from the team managers how their experience of relationship with the Customer Service Call Centre Manager was different to what it was before the research period. I wanted their words to be the source of my research data.

The findings show that the dialogic approach brought about fundamental changes in relationship - it changed from being vertical in its focus on task to being more horizontal in its focus on the person as an integral part of managing the task. It shows that the dialogic is a highly effective model for providing the support that the team managers need in functioning effectively as human beings and, in doing so, as managers. The Customer Service Centre Manager related to her team managers as human beings and, through the humanity of relationship, satisfied their human needs to a greater degree. The team managers raised their performance - not only in terms of achieving their performance targets but in terms of performing more to their true potential.

The dialogic is a human approach and the evidence is that it is a model for developing the humanity on which the effectiveness of organisations depends.