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Critical Management in Practice

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Placements and degree accreditation

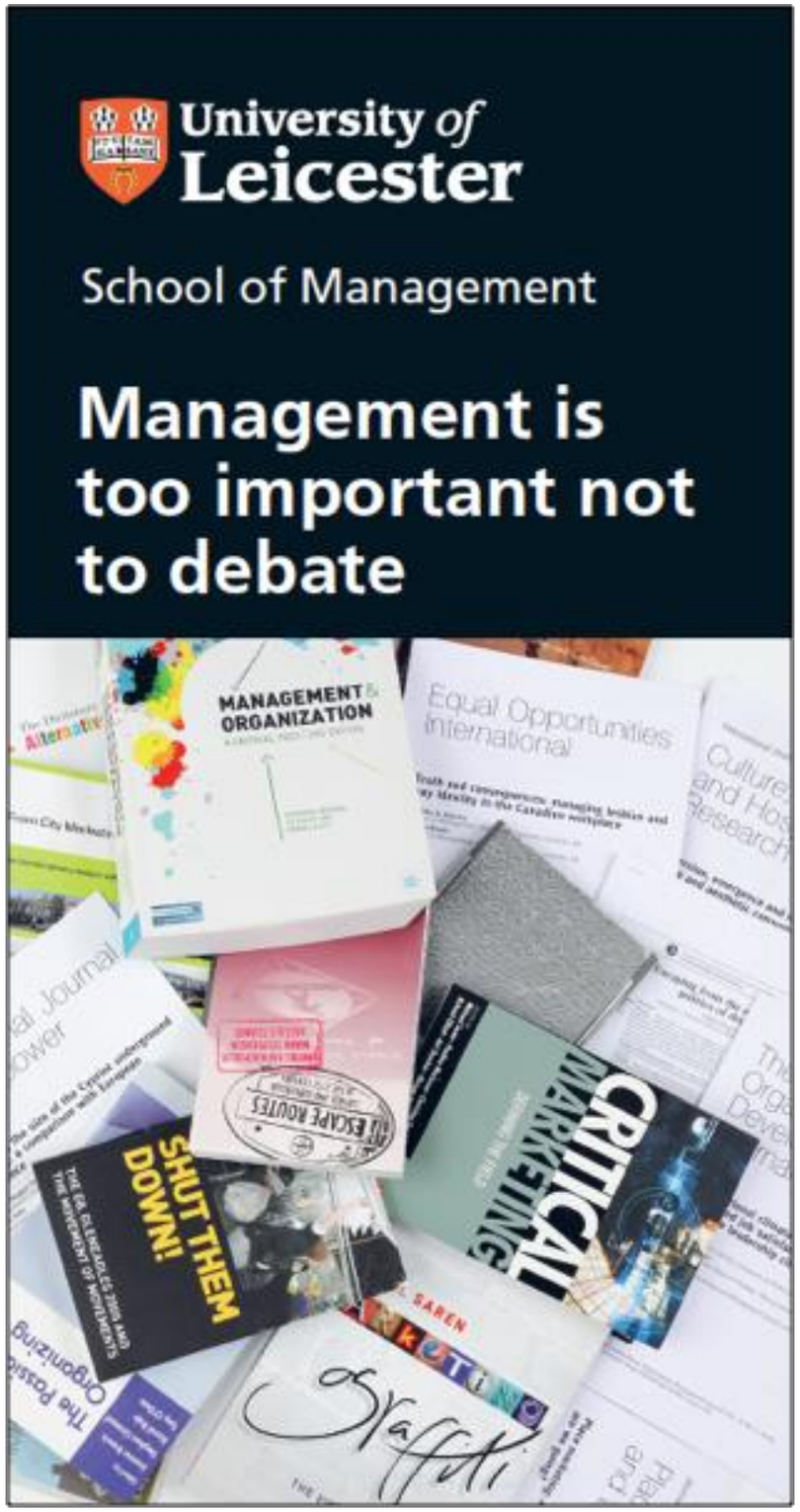
- Placements are important
- Pressure to support placements as part of the student experience
  - Enhances employability & support entry to employment
  - Intellectual growth by providing opportunities to apply classroom knowledge in practice (Inkster and Ross, 1995)
  - Many anecdotal reports of greater interest, stronger intellect
- Many students seek placements
- Credit for placements should not compromise degree integrity

Placements and degree accreditation

- Typically students conduct a project whilst on placement
  - This supports the application of existing knowledge or a practice-based assignment
- Importance of internship assignments with practical and reflective elements is stressed (Clark, 2003)
  - understand one's self and job context
  - gather evidence of experience gained
  - learn how to learn from experience
  - integrate theory and practice
  - critical reflection (Carson and Fisher, 2006)
- Department prides itself on a critical heterodox education

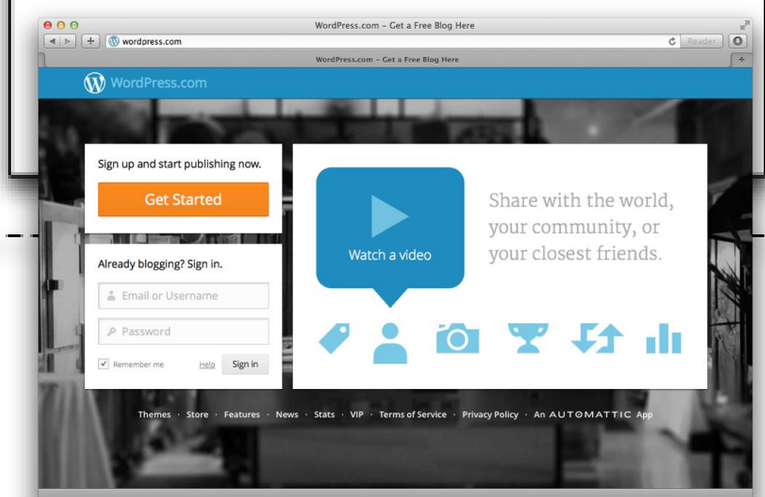
The solution: Critical Management in Practice

- Requirements for the module
  - Critique of management/marketing/financial practice
  - Gain accreditation for a module grounded on an internship
  - Encourage reflection and critique
  - Provide opportunity for peer reflection on experience
  - Assignment based on primary data collection
  - New theory introduced to form a basis for critique and provide inspiration towards critique
  - Provide interview collateral for jobs



The module

2nd year - semester two	Summer placement	3rd year - semester one
Introduction lecture Module outline & expectations Blogging support Reflection Critique	Placement must be of "significant period" Reflective Blog	Lectures & seminars Assessment: Blog (Formative) Assignment (80%) Presentation (20%)



Pre-placement lecture

- Unusual as it begins prior to the summer
- Placement expectations
- Blogging examples
- Reflect on experience, observations of organisation practice
- Emphasise building a body of data to enable critique

2nd year - semester two	Summer placement	3rd year - semester one
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Placement - blog

2nd year - semester two	Summer placement	3rd year - semester one
Introduction lecture Module outline & expectations Blogging support Reflection Critique	Placement must be of "significant period" Reflective Blog	Lectures & seminars Assessment: Blog (Formative) Assignment (80%) Presentation (20%)

- Set-up prior to placement
- Start with
  - expectations
  - experiences, pressures
- Agreement from organisation that they are aware of the module
- Private from public views - crucial!
- Open to peers
  - encourages reflection on each other
- Academic observes over the summer
  - module leader (me) keeps an eye on activity
  - Encourages critique and reflection

Blog - Columbo, Sri Lanka

About « transconpackaging

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- About

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About

This Summer I will be interning at Trans Continental Packaging & Commodities (Pvt) Ltd., si
Colombo, the commercial capital of Sri Lanka. To give the best overview of what the compan
quoted an extract from the company's soon-to-be-published website which I hope you will fin

'About

Established in the year 2000, Trans Continental Packaging & Commodities (Pvt) Ltd. is one o
trading/indenting companies in Sri Lanka with worldwide connections. We represent 12 overs
companies as exclusive agents. We are importers of food processing machinery, packaging ma
flexible packaging material, shrink wrapping material, tea processing machinery, inkjet printer
detectors, check weighers, metal caddys, hologram stickers etc.

Our Vision

To source quality products from around the globe and to provide the packaging industry in Sri
professional service.

Our Mission

We are committed to provide a total packaging solution.'*

**Information sourced from website (to be published in coming weeks).*

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about

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Wednesday 31st August

As preempted, today there were a few changes that needed making to the website; some of these I was able to change myself, but others will require the web hosting company to change. I went through the website really thoroughly once more, noting down the changes and correcting parts where I could. Mr. Abayaratne then rang the web hosting company to arrange for them to meet me in the office tomorrow, so that I can take them through what needs to be changed (only very minor things). Following this I began typing up the details we obtained from people at the exhibition using spreadsheet software, before e-mailing everything to Peaumi to continue.

Exhibition, Website | August 31, 2011 | Leave a comment

Monday 29th August

I arrived at the office this morning fairly tired from the exhibition, but feeling really positive after a fantastic weekend. With three days to go, I envisage that these will be spent bringing things to a close with the website and undertaking some smaller tasks as there isn't enough time for me to start a big project again before I leave. Having written out the email to our principals to announce the launch of our website and confirm that they are happy for us to use their information and images, I imagine there will be some replies over the next few days and perhaps one or two changes to make or a few things to add. Mr. Wijesinghe informed me that one of our suppliers had already sent positive feedback so that was good to hear. Most of the employees were at the exhibition centre today dismantling the stall; it was only Mr. Ravi, Peaumi, Shannon, Manoj and myself in the office, so things were slightly more relaxed which I was pretty grateful for after a busy weekend. So instead of telling you about my tasks which were mainly proof reading and

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Tuesday 16th August

Reverting back to my old routine, today was spent adding some more information and images to some of the product pages of the website, after being given the new user login and password for our domain. The missing information for some of the companies was difficult to find, so Peaumi, Shannon and Mr. Abayaratne had to scour through their own brochures/portfolios to find what Mr. Wijesinghe needed me to write up. Although all the companies have websites, they are of varying quality and some have minimal information about their products online.

Website

August 16, 2011

1 Comment

Monday 15th August

Today I spent some time shadowing Peaumi, the Secretary, which really opened my eyes to how much information she has to process…

To begin with, Peaumi was sending out the invitations I had put together to our principals and customers, which I fully appreciated was a mammoth task. However, I never actually witnessed the completion of this as in between sending she had to attend to her usual duties of sending all of the correspondence in the office backwards and forwards, which I was really surprised to see! Every employee sends their emails through to Peaumi, who then proof reads it to check that the English is satisfactory (she does this by copying and pasting it into a Word Document to spell check, although she still has to read everything for those grammar errors that go astray…) She then sends it to the desired customer/supplier and Ccs it to the MD so that he can keep on top of all correspondence. As you can imagine, when the suppliers/customers then reply, Peaumi has to forward this to the desired employee. Essentially every single piece of correspondence goes through her.

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Blog - Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

What makes a manager?

5 August 2011

By ry15

Through my time here, I have seen and worked with a variety of managers. Some are continuously busy, while some have all the time in the world to wander, some are always jolly, while some are irritated at all times. This vast diversity of management styles used within the organization led me to believe that there are three key factors, which can make an individual either a remarkable or incompetent manager. The qualities are as follows

1. Characteristics and traits
2. External factors
3. Internal factors

The *characteristics & traits* of a person is what make him/her unique. For example we all know (in standard) a close friend needs to have loyalty, honesty and reliability as part of their characteristics. Hence for a good manager they will need to have a set of qualities that will distinguish them and define their management style and depending on the qualities they acquire they will interpret the internal and external factors in a different way.

The *external factors* are the current situations that cannot be controlled and cannot be changed, such as the market, the economy and laws. The manager must be able to change when current situations change and the managers should also be able make plans with the constraints they face. All external factors make up the current situation.

Dairy Herd Management System -This system keeps track of the cows attributes such as milk count, temperature, health status and where it is currently located.

Milk automation systems – This system is an automated milking system.

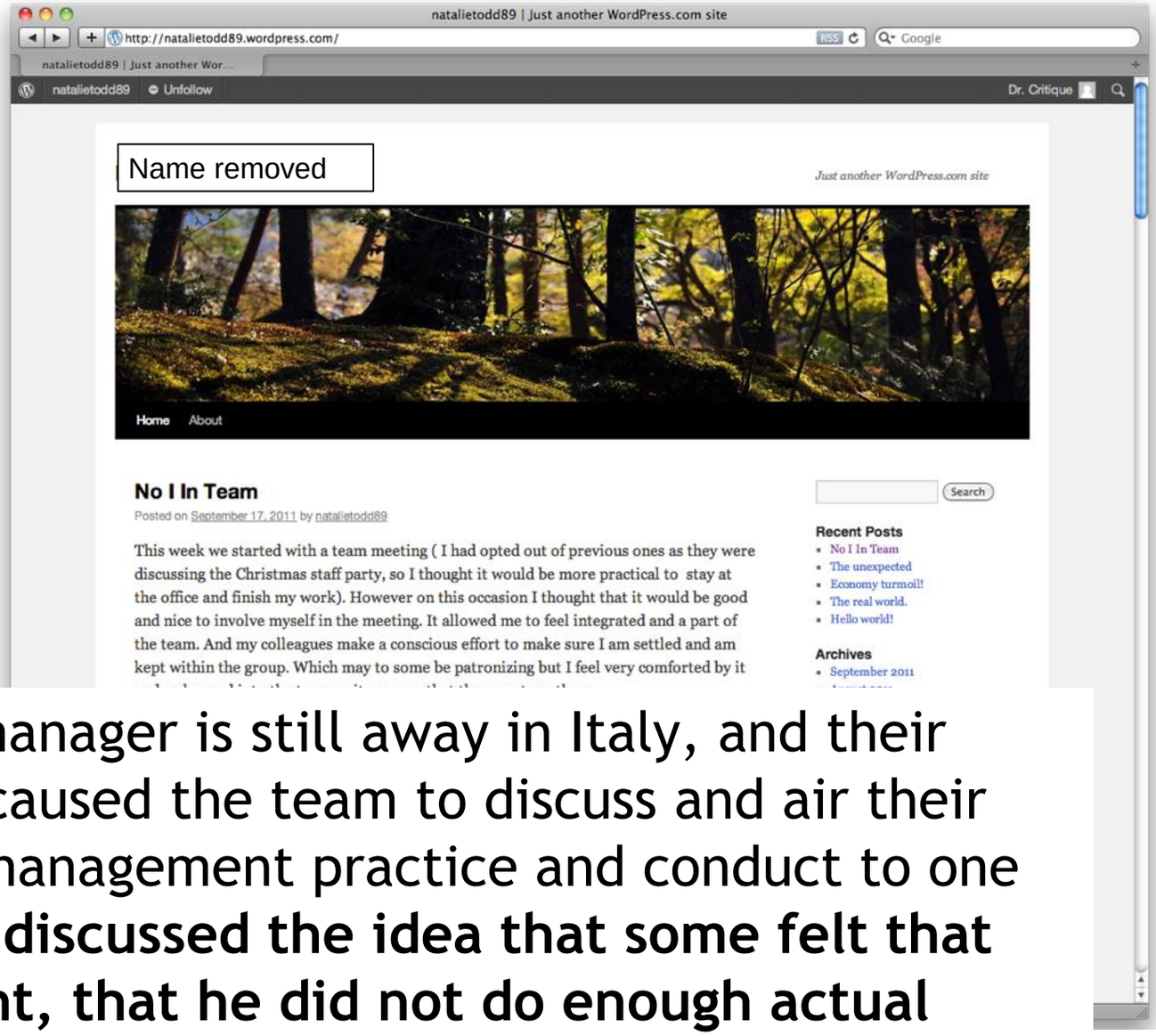
Then we met the operations account manager we visited the Central Processing Plants (CPP) and seen how the production is mostly automated and he showed us how it is integrated with the rest of the company. He gave us an overview of the following systems;

- Fleet Management – Controls the vehicles, as what driver can driver which truck and at what time connected to which refer
- Automated Stock Retrieval System – It is an automated system that manages the warehouse for produced goods.
- Yard Management – Controls the vehicles through radio to show the current location of the truck or reefer.

Blog - SME, UK

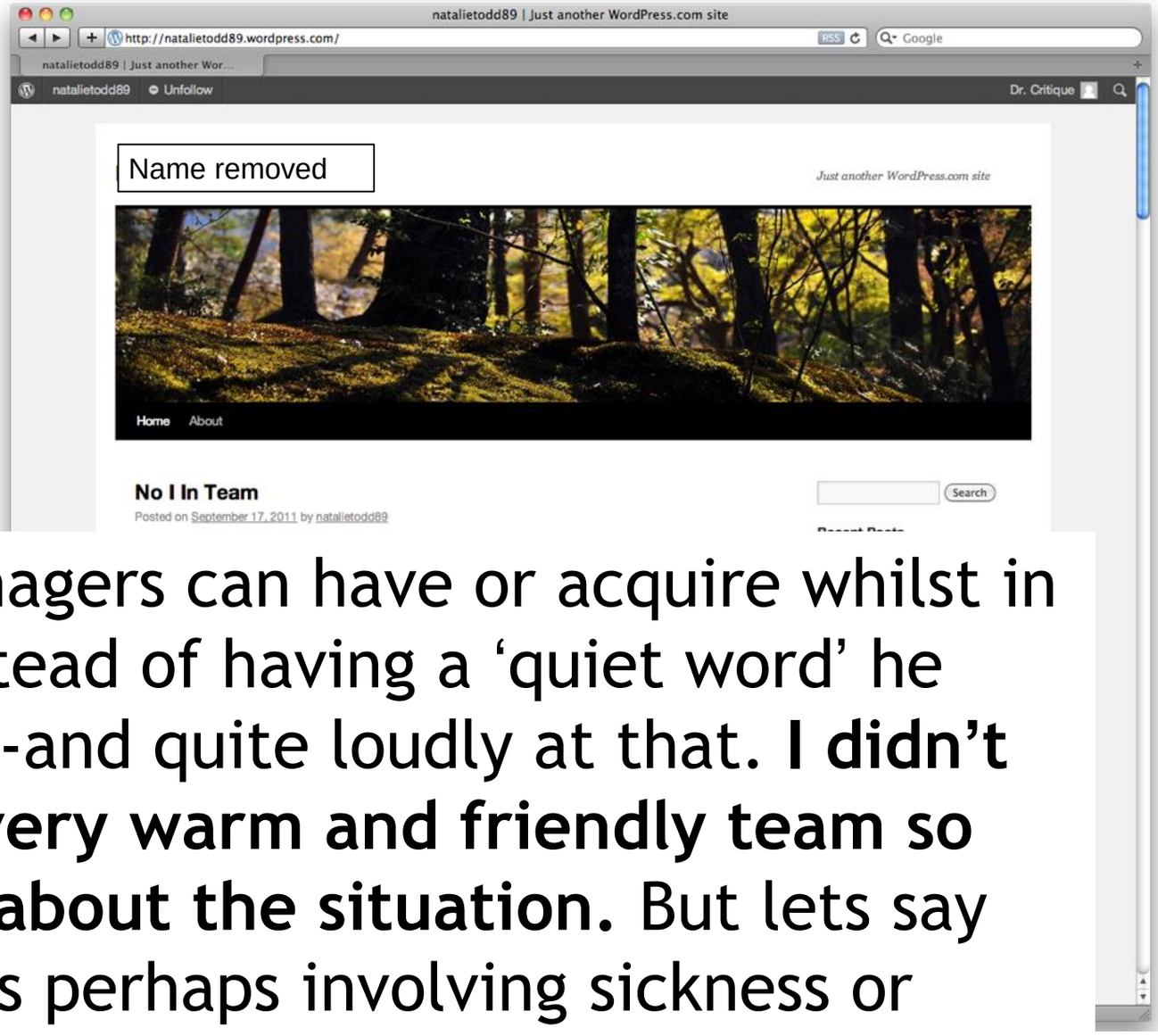
- “None of the decisions are simple, all of them are really rather complex. More so than I imagined. For example, a key market strategy decision is one of the issues that I have been included in so far. Currently Company X are reselling products from another company based in America, however, they have recently been approached and presented with an alternative portfolio of products that perform the same functions but are available from China- the profit margins on the exchange rate here are more lucrative and as a result it would mean being able to charge a lower price for these products. **Price it appears is the main driving force for customers in this marketplace, who don’t appear to hold any sort of brand loyalty – but a large degree of company loyalty (this is due to the large amount of follow up support that needs to be maintained as many of the products sold to the clientele are very technological and the clientele themselves are on average over 70 years old or younger and completely blind).** Of course, this is a key decision, one that could prove very lucrative, or alternatively, very costly.”

Blog - UK high street retail



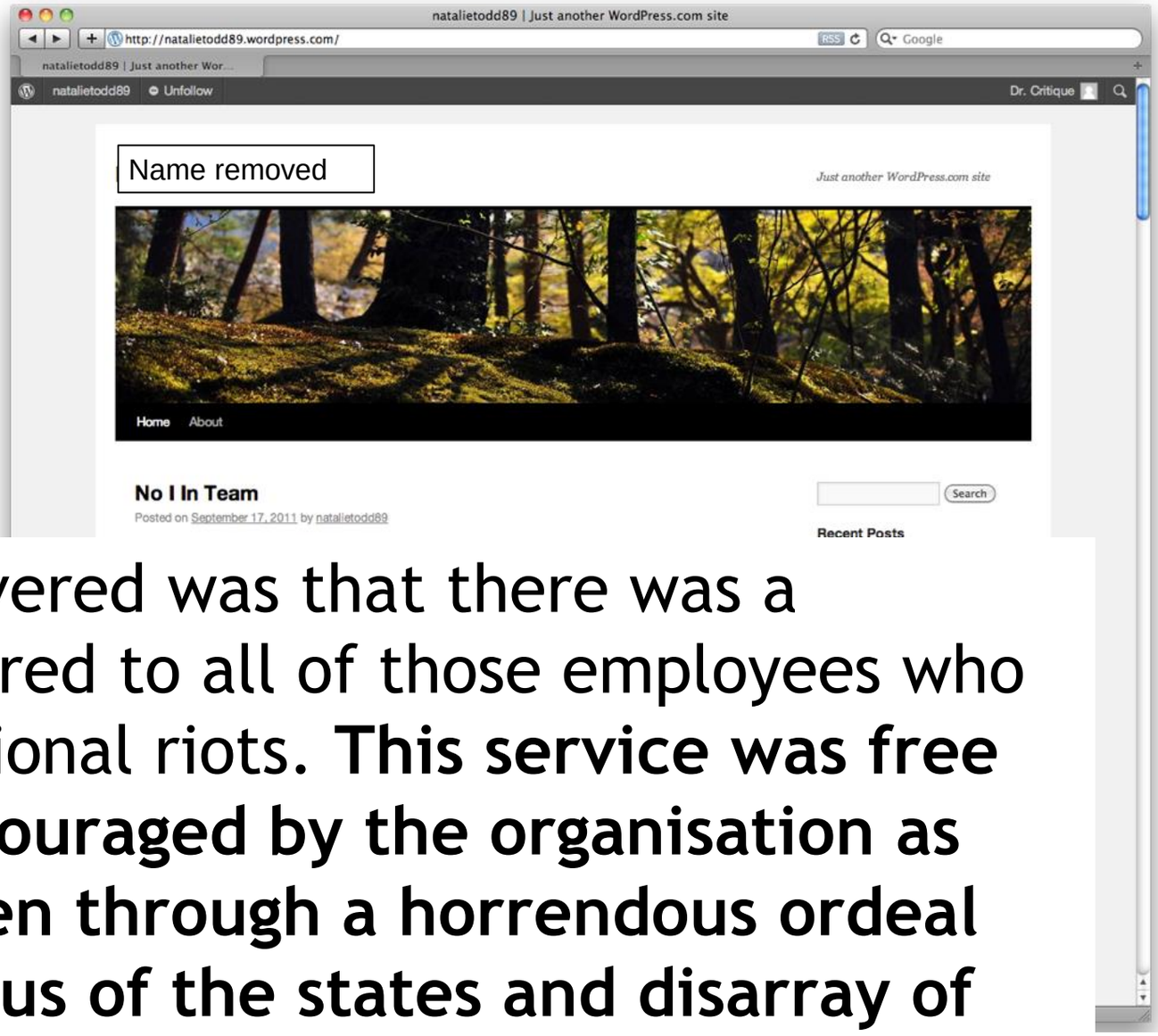
- "But in my other office news, one manager is still away in Italy, and their break away from the company has caused the team to discuss and air their views and frustrations about their management practice and conduct to one another. **The heavily female team discussed the idea that some felt that the manager did not pull his weight, that he did not do enough actual work as in getting 'stuck in' with what his team were doing and perhaps even taking on some of the work load.** This division he created is something that he should keep an eye on as it could be disastrous for him to become segregated and view himself as superior as workers may be disgruntled, complaints may be made and people may decide to leave, or change departments. Overall this manager does seem to be fairly disliked already as he does not deal with team personal issues well."

Blog - UK high street retail



- "I also saw the flaws that managers can have or acquire whilst in their work establishment. Instead of having a 'quiet word' he openly discussed my situation-and quite loudly at that. **I didn't mind too much as i am in a very warm and friendly team so didn't feel too embarrassed about the situation.** But lets say the situation was more serious perhaps involving sickness or personal matters at work. Would the same approach be appropriate? Im guessing- probably not. And it is these considerations and personal interaction that managers seem to be losing. Maybe its down to stress, workload, or head office requirements, but it is still ever present and perhaps somethung worth remembering if i am ever a manager."

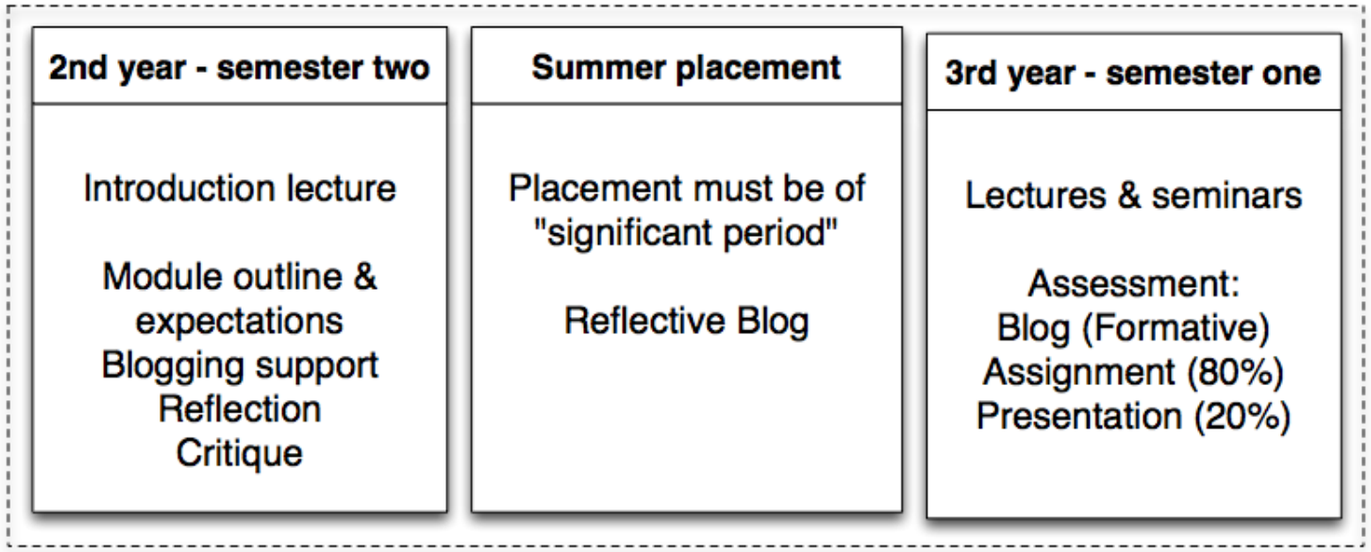
Blog - UK high street retail



- "One useful thing that I discovered was that there was a counselling service being offered to all of those employees who had been affected by the national riots. **This service was free of charge and was being encouraged by the organisation as many staff members had been through a horrendous ordeal (pictures were also given to us of the states and disarray of the stores which reaffirmed the danger that employees were in).** Nevertheless this counselling service had always been available to Company X employees. **Yet no one in the office had ever heard or used this service.** So maybe publicising such services would benefit the company as it could equate to happier and more effective employees."

Lectures and assessment

- Broad ranging academic content
  - encouraged to draw on previous and new academic sources
- Discuss Blog entries and observations (in small groups or seminars)
- Presentation on the experiential side of the placement (20%)
- Assignment demanding critique of organisation observations (80%)
  - Draw on the Blog as a primary data source



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Assignment -example 1

and, thus, portray themselves in the workplace. Elaborating on this point, Martin and Siehl (1983: 57) draw on empirical evidence from a case study of General Motors, arguing that an organisation's values can be expressed through 'visible cultural artifacts', such as dress code and office layout, which significantly impact how employees relate to the organisation and position themselves in the workplace. In support, Cunliffe (2009: 13) acknowledges that 'Symbolically, management is often differentiated by dress, physical space and office decor, the type of technology, equipment and 'tools' used, parking spaces, and so on'.

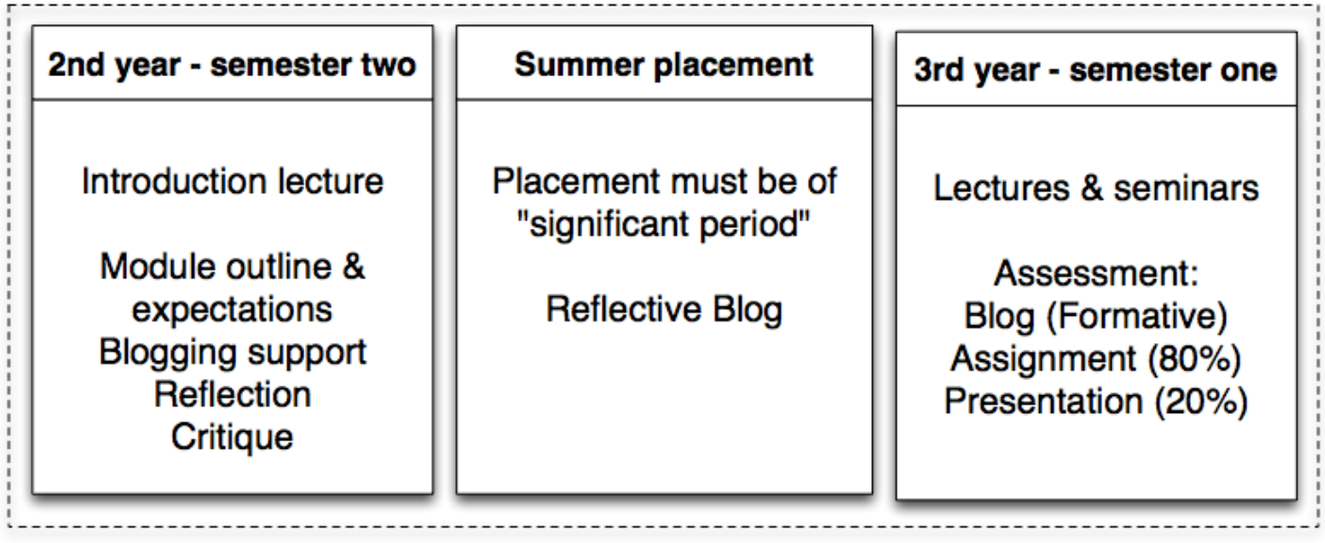
In this sense, one interpretation of the example from practice could be that it is merely part of an underlying system of hidden cues and symbolism that aim to shape the identities of the employees and to tactfully impose the hierarchical system envisaged by the management team onto the workforce. Further empirical data could be seen to support this idea, as the spatial layout of the office is considered: 'Upstairs is kept separate [from the Operations department], with the remainder of the employees working in Marketing, Accounting, Administration and Management, all with their own booths. The General Manager's office is located at the end of the same floor' (Whitehouse, 2011). This description outlines the office plan, with the Operations department (i.e. 'Engineering' and 'Technicians' in Figure 1) on the ground floor, the Marketing, Accounting and Administration (i.e. the 'Secretary' in Figure 1) located in separate booths on the first floor, but physically separated from the General Manager, who has a separate office at the end, or the top perhaps, of the same floor. Before moving onto a critique of these interpretations, it is noted that the above do not aim to function as an exhaustive list of the various modes of understanding, but as two distinct examples of the implications of the practice at hand with the aim of allowing for a more detailed deconstruction.

Assignment-example 2

will believe us if we just play the game!'. By quietly critiquing within the classroom, and entering the workplace with skepticism, we may think that we are a new type of manager, but by participating in the same organisational practices as those who naively accept Management as 'just there' we no more break the cycle than our predecessors. Having the lined up behind the Constructionists, we must use our actions and interactions recreate the world of Management to incorporate new cultures, rather than just the same old North American, individualistic tradition. We must, as practitioners, value perspectives which differ from our own, in contrast to the rejection of original thinking which has been customary among Management theorists. We must allow for intangible measures of success, like more ethical practices and happier employees, rather than the traditional quantative measures like profit and market share. Only by acting in business the way we have argued in University, can we truly break this cycle of Management being so unsatisfactory to the discerning student, by creating new situations and practices to be studied by future Management students. Otherwise we will be guilty of the same offenses that we have accused textbook theorists, our arguments found to have no legs: being all talk and no walk; all mouth and no trousers.

Conclusions

- Critical Management in Practice may be a module you could adopt
- It credits placements within the degree without compromise
- Encourages reflection and critique of management practice
- An alternative to a company report or project
- It encourages students on placements to engage with each other through the Blog
- Produces genuinely interesting student assignments



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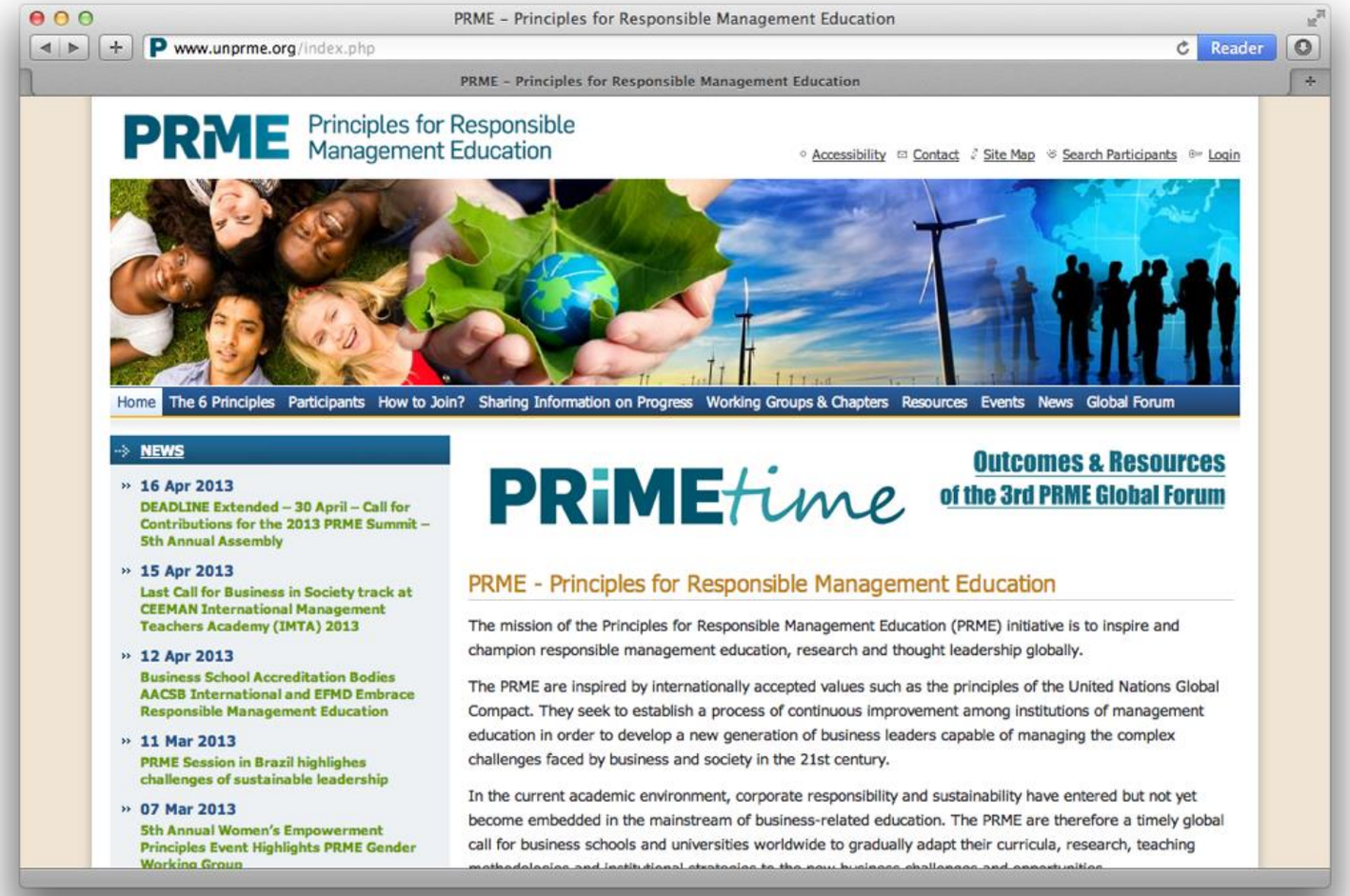
Future developments

- Signatory to the PRME initiative (http://www.unprme.org/index.php)
  - United Nation's Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)
- Actively encourage consideration and reflection on sustainability and corporate responsibility as part of the Blog & assignment



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