the meaning of an event is 'given', as opposed to 'negotiated' between the participants (Craig, 1999). Other critics have suggested that it does not take account of business realities – it suggests one sender and one receiver, whereas most business communication involves 'multiple senders and multiple receivers' (Waller and Polonsky, 1998). It is not sufficient, though; we also need to emphasize the social and cultural background and look at how meaning is developed and negotiated through interaction – we need to interpret the meanings. Another response is to complement the process model with a more transactional account of communication (Mohan et al., 1997). INTERPRETING THE MEANINGS In order to fully understand how people communicate, we need to understand not just the immediate background but the much broader social context and history of their relationship. The case of the confused trainees A colleague of ours was invited to run residential training events for managers in a large manufacturing organization. He came back from the first of these looking very dispirited, and complained that he could not understand the reactions from the group of managers, who were supposed to be very committed to personal development. When he did this, he found that none of the managers had been explicitly told why they had been nominated for the training – their 'commitment' was a senior management assumption. The first group of managers thought it must be some kind of test which might influence their next promotion or regrading – they were doing all they could to impress the trainer. One response to these criticisms is to create a more complex model (as Waller and Polonsky do). The following two examples illustrate some of this complexity. Some managers looked really interested and spent the weekend frantically scribbling notes. We suggested he questioned the managers more closely about why they had come. As a result, they had tried to devise a meaning based upon their own experience, which then coloured their reactions to the event. There seemed to be at least three different reactions from different sub-groups: ?Some managers seemed over-anxious and did not seem to be concentrating on the events. They were convinced the trainer would be reporting back on their progress. The second group were worried that this training might indicate some problem with their performance and were mentally checking what they had done over the past six months to work out where or how they had failed; their minds were not on the training at all. We take this latter approach as the process model does offer a useful starting point. Not only do we have to examine how people come to agree on what is happening, but we also have to look at how they feel about events. Some managers seemed to see the event as a 'bit of a holiday'. ??