# BMTFedNewsletter

## The Mother Lode

**by Richard Kazbour**

Over the last three years I've made it a point to attend at least one leadership or behavioral conference per year. Without failure, included in at least one speaker's presentation at each conference has been mention of a book by Marshall Goldsmith titled: *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. Naturally, after hearing about the book on three separate occasions I decided to shell out the $15 it cost me to buy it.

In his book, Goldsmith outlines 20 of our most common interpersonal "bad habits", and provides commentary on what we can do to improve them. To my chagrin, a number of the bad habits seemed to jump up from the text and slap me right in the face. Was it possible I was guilty of so many of these interpersonal miss-cues? I tracked down the two people in this world who probably know me best: My mother and my ex-girlfriend. Ok, so maybe my ex-girlfriend doesn't know me that well, but I knew the two of them could never agree on anything. Surely one of them could give me the benefit of the doubt on this one…

> *Bad Habit Number 16: **Not Listening,** the most passive-aggressive form of disrespect for colleagues.*
>
> *Bad Habit Number 18: **Punishing the messenger,** the misguided need to attack the innocent who are usually only trying to help us.*

I've never been so wrong! They both agreed that I was guilty of exactly six of the bad habits. After witnessing the minor miracle that was their conformity, and feeling somewhat sheepish at how easily they identified these interpersonal flaws of mine, I asked why neither of them had ever given me this feedback! They both directed me to bad habit number 16 and 18.

It's not always easy to receive feedback, and sometimes it's even tougher to respond positively to it. If you can find ways to do both of these things better you'll probably be a happier person for it.

*Behavioural Management Techniques (BMT) is a blend of applied behavioural science tools and project management skills. BMT is used to improve business and safety performance.*

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## Is Fear A Motivator?

**by Rachel Edwards**

*Yes*.  But it depends what behaviour we are trying to motivate.  In a recent article (*Larkin, page 139*), the authors discuss when fear-based messages are effective. They identify that using scare tactics are very effective when the behaviour is easy to do (like driving slowly in a school area), but likely to have the opposite effect when behaviours are more complicated and difficult to maintain (eating less and exercising more over time to lose weight).

When faced with a scary prospect, we feel uncomfortable, and try to take steps to escape the discomfort.  If there is no easy way to escape the discomfort, we try to rationalise away the message as being untrue/unlikely to happen to us/not requiring immediate action – in effect we try and ignore it.

So, if we are considering trying to scare people into action, we are likely to have much greater impact if we provide an easy escape hatch too.

For a copy of the article mentioned above, please contact Rachel@hollinconsulting.co.uk

## Loose Lips Sink Companies

**by Howard Lees**

There are a lot of companies out there where you would hear high levels of hyperbolae included in everyday conversations. I am not sure it's very healthy, no I am sure, it's really unhealthy, stuff like:-

"We are flat out right now."

"It's mad here, everyone is chasing their tail."

"I got a right bollocking at that meeting last week."

"I am really under pressure right now."

Reading these you'd think I was describing the war room for the Afghan war, or at least the box office of a busy theatre on opening night. No I'm talking about everyday workplaces populated by normal everyday people like me and you. Behaviourally, use of this kind of language is certainly a good way of finding reinforcement in the workplace where there is little or none, however the best thing you can do if you hear this kind of language is to have a think about what the downsides are. It could well be that a perfectly happy environment could be spiked by one or two individuals using hyperbolae for their own reinforcement.

There is a very common misnomer out there that we need to be seen to be busy in order to be adding value to the company, we need to be rushing around and we need to be using hyperbolae about how mad it all is. It's as if being seen and heard being busy is what's required rather than performing in your job. This is in organisations where people are paid for their brains not for shedding shoe leather. The effect of 'too busy' leaks out into language and hey presto someone has created a scary workplace where none existed before, and all by the careless use of language.

Perhaps we should think more about the words we choose and choose wisely.

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