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## 2011 Conferences

The UK BMTFed conference will be held on 11th & 12th May. Details coming soon.

The US BMTFed are hosting a BBS and Behavioral Leadership conference on the 24th & 26th May. For more details on these events please

[click here](#)

*Behavioural Management Techniques (BMT) is a science-based approach focused on using behaviour analysis for the improvement of business and safety performance.*

## If only saying it made it so...

by Rachel Edwards



**For those of us who make New Year's resolutions, it's the time of year for a fresh start and approaching self-improvement with renewed vigour.** Whether we're trying to cure our bad habits of 2010 or just repent for our over-indulgences over the festive period, January is the traditional time to do it. What's

going to make it more likely that we'll change our behaviour for the better in 2011? It has been said that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, so whilst New Year's resolutions are helpful to define what we're aiming for, unfortunately they're not usually sufficient to cure our bad habits for good. If only saying it made it so...

Having a plan for what we're trying to achieve might sound formal when dealing with New Year's resolutions, but will help us figure out what conditions we need to change in our environment to make our efforts more successful. Some things to consider when planning a change in behaviour:

1. Choose a results target.
2. Decide which behaviours will help achieve the target result.
3. Ask yourself "In living memory, have I ever achieved anything close to my target result?"
4. Review the plan whilst considering point 3; build in more shaping steps if necessary, paying special attention to a manageable first shaping step.
5. Establish a simple way to measure progress, no matter how small.
6. Commit to the goal publicly (people who share self-improvement goals with friends or relatives are shown to be more successful in achieving them. Encourage these people to regularly ask you about progress).
7. Decide what prompts you can put in your environment to help you do the right thing.
8. Ask yourself "How can I make it more likely I'll continue with the new behaviour, especially if I'm trading immediate reinforcement for delayed reinforcement? What punishing consequences can I put into the environment to help avoid going off piste with the plan?"

## The magic number – for good guys only

by Allison Reynolds

The ability to develop meaningful relationships and to successfully influence the behaviour of others is dependent upon establishing ourselves as a source of positive reinforcement (R+). Sounds straight forward enough, but it's not just the volume of R+ that counts, more critically it's the ratio of positive interactions to negative interactions with that person.

There is plenty of research to back this up. When analysts recorded the ratio between parents and their children, Aubrey Daniels reported that they found professional parents provided their children with a ratio of six positives to every one negative, whereas welfare group parents provided a ratio of approximately one positive to every two negatives. Psychologist John Gottman found that successful marriages averaged a ratio of 5:1, with the likelihood of divorce increasing as the ratio moved towards 1:1. Grenville found that high performing business teams demonstrate a ratio of approximately 6:1, just take a look at a poor performing team and pretty quickly you can see the ratio reversed.

If you want to understand more about your relationships, view your interactions from the other person's perspective. You can do this simply by sampling them over the course of a day, an evening or a week and coding them up. Just keep a log in a small notebook, on scrap of paper in your pocket, on a post it at your desk. Every time you interact with them ask yourself, from the other person's perspective, do you think they considered the interaction to be positive or negative? Over the course of the sample you'll be able to calculate your typical ratio for that relationship.

Plenty of people have given this a go and every one of them has found it an eye opening experience, be it at home or work.

Of course the twist in this tale is that only a good guy would ever consider how someone else perceived them, if they didn't they would not be the good guy.

## It's the environment, stupid!

by John Austin, Ph.D.

**I should preface this by saying that I am not a novice traveler.** However, on a recent trip I was once again reminded of just how much the local environment influences our behavior.

Because of the severe traffic and congestion, the car that dropped me off at the airport had to stop in the middle of traffic. Since we were in New York City all of the cars behind us were required to start beeping. This created a pressure to rush, which caused the driver to forget to return my credit card (and caused me to forget as well).

Two automatic check-in kiosks did not work, so I waited in line to check in. The airport appeared dirty, disorganized, and the lines were long. I stood in one of two lines both facing a very long counter of customer service agents; they were organized in such a way so it was never clear which customer was next. Customers looked around nervously; agents seemed disengaged.

I got to the security line and as I approached, the agent who checked my ID said, "I wish they would turn this music off!", with disgust, "this is the 10th time I've heard this song today!" She sent me through to a security line that was empty. No people, no signs, nothing. So, I had to jump in front of someone else in another line.

Once through security, I encountered the most confusing array of signs and arrows I have seen in a long time. There was even a restroom sign that pointed to a boarding gate!

When boarding the plane, they allowed people on the jet-bridge only to discover the bridge was misaligned with the plane and they had to move it with the people on it. Not a good idea. The gate agents and customers alike appeared very stressed by this.

***What kind of stress, frustration, and performance problems do environments such as these create for employees?***

***What kind of experience does it create for customers?***

The point of all of this is not to complain about my travel experience, but to say that the local environments we create drive behavior, results, and even job satisfaction (and sometimes job dissatisfaction!).



## Email Etiquette

**Email is an increasingly important means of communication in business and therefore it is critical to make sure we are using it in the most professional, effective way.** You may only send a stupid, rude, or unintelligible email once but it can be read thousands of times and passed to people you did not intend to see it. Here are a few suggestions for writing emails with etiquette.

### Use Mixed Case Letters

Do not let emails from your 14-year old nephew fool you into thinking that writing all lowercase, three word emails is acceptable or even cool. It's not. On the opposite end of the spectrum, do not use all caps because it indicates yelling. Even if you do feel like yelling at someone, remember, after you calm down, YOUR EMAIL IS STILL IN ALL CAPS.

### Write Considered Emails

Include only relevant, concise information, stick to one topic per email and make sure you only include information that you do not mind having shared with more people than the receiver. In addition, re-read your

emails and correct spelling and grammar mistakes, too many errors indicate that you have sent your email without much time or thought. Remember, 40% of emails are not read in the tone intended, it's difficult to succeed with sarcasm, irony, or humor, so don't try.

### Communicate In Person when Possible

Research says that in-person communication is much more effective than email. Some people prefer to talk about tough subjects over email because it allows them to think about what they will say (and avoid surprise reactions from the participant). Think about what you will say in advance, and then be brave and have that tough conversation in person. Email should be a last resort.

### Avoid Misusing the cc

I often coach people who admit to using cc in email to intimidate people into action. This is like waving a big red flag and saying, "hey, I am totally ineffective on my own." Seriously, only use the cc when the person you are including in the cc needs the information. If you can't get someone to do something, go have an honest conversation with the person about the issue face-to-face or find a way around it.

