

# Behavioural Digest

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Behavioural Leadership  
Conference & Workshop  
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Manchester, UK  
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## Christchurch

By Howard Lees

The photo above is a picture of Diminish and Ascend by David McCracken. It is in the Botanic Gardens in Christchurch, New Zealand.

My family have spent a good proportion of time in the Garden City on the east coast of the south island of New Zealand. We have a real affinity for the place, in fact, the whole country. Eight years ago disaster struck with the earthquakes and now weeks after the 8th anniversary of those fatalities, disaster strikes again in the hands of a sick mind. Stories of bravery emerge; some people actually running into the gunfire to save others.

New Zealand is a peaceful country, it carries few of the 'security' embellishments we have to wisely endure in the UK with our sad history of terrorism. Their excellent Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said 'it's time for compassion' shortly after the shootings, and she has shown great leadership in the face of this bewildering event.

My family and their neighbours cooked food and delivered it to the food banks set up for the families of the victims. When they delivered the foodstuffs to the mission they were told that they could also do with some toys for the children. My 4 year old granddaughter went back to the car and collected up all her toys and handed them in. She has no problem with compassion.

## Leader Visits

By Lynn Dunlop

We run behavioural climate surveys for clients around the world in a variety of industries. A common piece of feedback we receive is around 'senior leader' visits. These are leaders stepping out of HQ and making visits to factories, sites, offices etc. For some, a leader tour is treated as a royal visit and that's where a number of problems can emerge.

Our feedback commonly centres on what these leaders have said and done when they visited: Some leaders attempt to solve problems, some make inappropriate comments, some even get angry. Of course none of these acts is received well, although in many cases no-one says anything there and then. Words used to describe these trips include 'frustrating', 'embarrassing' and 'cringy'. Many leaders - quite rightly - want to see what's going on for themselves in their businesses. They want to find out the effects their decisions are having on the people at the coalface. Visits could be great for everyone involved, and some of them are, but they have to be artfully planned and carried out to achieve that desired goal.

Leader visits should be an opportunity for leaders to demonstrate good leadership, in a modest and humble manner. More Jacinda Ardern than Gordon Ramsey. These tours can be a connection with the staff and workforce that results in a positive impact for all, something that clears away any 'hierarchy effect' that may be festering and something that cements the notion that 'we all have a job to do'. Organisational hierarchy does not indicate 'wiser', 'better' or 'more important', it indicates that everyone is a wealth creator. It can show that leaders can be caring as well as strong. Leaders that tour artfully and professionally get the results they deserve.

# “But... That’s Not How We Did It Before...”

By David Kelly

“In life, change is inevitable. In business, change is vital.” (Warren G. Bennis). A daunting task to even the most seasoned leader, we all have struggled with change in some respect within the workplace. The Harvard Business Review noted that over 66% of change initiatives fail to achieve their desired business outcomes across a variety of industries.

As someone responsible for getting long-term unemployed clients back into the workplace, I found myself scrolling through many Behavioural Science forums looking for insights into using the science to improve engagement, motivation and reduce resistance to change. We’ve had some outstanding results using science based solutions; open communication with staff concerns, increased training and coaching through our new systems. Staff reported a clearer understanding of why change was important for the development of the new skills and knowledge required to implement changes in their daily tasks.

The benefits of taking the time to do these things included rigorous avoidance of re-working, and of course reduced financial waste. Utilising the scientific principles behind behaviour was a key advantage in managing change in our workplace, and one that all businesses can adapt. It’s not rocket science, but it does require some determination to succeed.

## Avoidance Behaviours

By Dave Morley

I was working with a team last year that had a milestone report looming and had come to the realisation that they had given no indication to ‘upstairs’ over the past 3 months that anything was amiss. They were worried that the truth coming out this late would irritate their masters. They remembered the last time they had delivered bad news; it was followed by excruciating meetings with various bosses and a repeat of that scenario was to be avoided at all costs.

The solution they decided on was to tweak the figures so they all magically fit inside the boundaries that lit up a red light. They would then spend the next period working out how to fix the problems so that no-one would ever know this had happened. Guess what?

## Shades of BMT

- If you have feedback from your colleagues at work, does it represent 100% of the potential feedback you could get? If not, what % does it reflect? How much more could you find out about your own behaviour? Do you care?
- Have you walked around your office/workplace and taken a look at what’s actually happening recently? Who is talking to who? Who is listening? Who is distracted?
- You can walk onto a site and detect if it feels safe. What does ‘happy, safe and productive’ look like to you?
- Come off it, you’re not too busy, you just chose to do something else instead.

## Hierarchy

By Janice McLaren

Many businesses desperately use lots of time, energy and money to get their organisational hierarchy to work. I can imagine lots of money is spent trying to get hierarchical ‘systems’ to work. Sometimes it must feel like nature is fighting the desire of these leaders to make something work that in itself is unnatural. Is it in the name of control, or maybe just order? It could be to create a salary and payment mechanism that can be managed and will not go out of control.

I can imagine that hierarchy creates threats (and therefore distractions) in plenty of organisations: “I like her,” “I don’t like him,” “I could work for her but not him” etc. Whatever is going on out there, I’m often tempted to ask, is it worth it?

## The Adaptive Strategy

The new book by Howard Lees - *The Adaptive Strategy* - is out now.

This book provides a new take on strategy - one that actually works. It explores the background to strategy, a brief history and some techniques that will help you to create a successful strategy using simple, proven scientific tools.

Its author, Howard Lees, is a British Chartered Civil Engineer.

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## Upcoming UK Events

Learn how to use behavioural science to improve your own performance and your workplace results:

BMT for Leaders Conference,  
Manchester: **15th May 2019**

BMT for Leaders Workshop,  
Manchester: **16th May 2019**

Behavioural Leadership course: **5/6th and 19/20th June 2019**

For more information, visit [www.hollin.co.uk/events](http://www.hollin.co.uk/events), email [nicola@hollin.co.uk](mailto:nicola@hollin.co.uk) or call Nicola on +44 (0)7788 252410.