

# Behavioural Digest

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## Transformation Process

By Bruce Faulkner

New, sexy web based tools make designing a process simple. The productivity pay-off is tantalising and the barriers to entry have never been lower. A crisp, clean interface with its ease of use and flexibility lures people in. Everyone agrees, “Yeah, this will work, all people have to do is follow the process.” The productivity pay-off is tantalising. There is no discussion of deploying into the organisation’s current behavioural repertoire. When reality bites, there will be conflict.

There is talk about people being resistant to change and a need to change attitudes, but this is the wrong premise for framing the issue. Behaviours that were well suited to the old environment no longer work, but because there was no behavioural deployment plan for the new systems, the obstacles don’t get resolved.

New behaviours evolve to match the constraints of the new environment. Ways of working emerge based on the interaction between people and their systems. The more a particular behaviour is constrained, the faster a new one will evolve. Transformation isn’t a linear journey, it is an iterative one filled with experiments. Left unattended, it is this behavioural dynamic that takes us to places we don’t want to be. We couldn’t design that destination even if we tried.

## Leadership Is A Skill, Not A Talent

By Alan Kane

I was recently watching an interview with Ed Sheeran being complimented for his vocal ability. The singer was attempting to make a point about the years of practice and training that goes into having a commercially-friendly singing voice, while Jonathon Ross was commenting on his “musical talent”. Ed subsequently pulled up a clip of him singing 5 years previously, with a very atonal and croaky voice. He said “When people say artists are born with talent – you’re not. You have to really learn and really practice.”

It got me thinking about skills that we often look at in others and just assume they were born with the gift. How often are people referred to as a “natural” at public speaking, or people-management, or at giving feedback. Someone may possess some degree of genetic predisposition toward being a good speaker, a charmer, getting others to do what they want. But any degree of talent a person had growing up will only push you over the line. In order to really get good at anything, being a “natural” isn’t necessary. What is needed is to spend time working at it. Practice. Try things out. Fail hard and learn from it. Take in their feedback and work on it.

Leadership is the ultimate example. No one is a “born leader”. Leaders have had to work on their skills, face doubt, deal with people who didn’t want to listen to them, and develop as a result of it.

Talent may give someone a headstart, but practice and learning is where they develop their skill.



[Click here to join the BMT group on LinkedIn.](#)

# What To Drop And What To Hang On To

By Elizabeth Warner

Great leaders delegate the correct activities to other people and also hold on to the right things themselves. I ask, what do you suppose these 'right things' are? My observations reveal that some of the things leaders delegate they should probably hold on to. For example, I would like my leaders to respond to their own emails, and deliberately book their time out in their own calendar without 'help' from anyone else.

The thing I would really like them to delegate is everything that is already someone else's job. I would also like leaders in organisations to realise that they will have created a complex cascading workplace environment. The people below them in the hierarchy will be copying their activities to a tee. In order to effect any change in company performance, they must change the social consequences impacting all the performers. The place to start, I might propose, is their own daily habits: What they do and say and what they let others away with doing and saying.

## Chaos Theory

By Jonny Bennet

When it comes to what we do next, we frequently choose the nearest available reinforcer; the reinforcer that is right in front of us. The *right* reinforcer, the one that requires effort, the one that might be over the hill, hell, we rarely choose that one. Humans collect reinforcers; both pleasure and relief are sought out in random and unequal proportions.

Most of the easily-available reinforcers in the workplace support micromanagement. "I was good at my last job, that's how I got this job. I am not very good at this job yet, but I derive multiple reinforcers from my remembered successes from my last job. Also, the hierarchy effect in my organisation is very strong which means that no-one will say anything when their boss (me) interferes with their daily tasks; they will hide their irritation towards me."

For many leaders and managers out there, the nearest reinforcer means that they don't have to plan anything properly. They don't have to make notes of what they are doing. They can dip in and out of meetings as the mood takes them. They can make knee jerk phone calls, emails and texts. They can change their mind multiple times. They are in control of the chaos; they *are* the chaos.

## Shades of BMT

- You can't get anywhere different by doing nothing new; hope is not a strategy.
- If you have feedback from your colleagues at work, does it represent 100% of the potential feedback you could get? If not, what percentage does it reflect? How much more could you find out about your own behaviour?
- 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?

# Better Surveys

By Leif Andersson

I liked John Smith's irony around survey pop-ups in the latest digest. There is a lot of application of behavioural techniques out there without people knowing that they are using BMT, so it made me think about how we could improve them from a BMT perspective. I find it useful to look at what works for others.

Some kind of instant positive feedback when you answer a survey is the obvious reinforcer. The trick is to find a way to make it feel personal and not computer generated. An automatic note to the supervisor so he or she can give personal feedback could be used together with an autoresponder.

A "remind me later" button adds a way to get rid of the pop-up in a civilized manner. Then it can pop up later and after one or two reminders it won't bother you anymore, until next month's survey.

A "see results" button gives you the chance to get a benchmark, how others have replied. Presenting the survey randomly within an interval, say three to six weeks apart, reduces the repetitive feeling.

Last but not least, provide a regular presentation of the results, combined with clear examples on how the survey has been used in order to improve things for the people answering.

## The Adaptive Strategy

The new book by Howard Lees is out now. It 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.

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