

# Behavioural Digest

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The Latest Book By  
Howard Lees Is Out Now:

'The Adaptive Strategy'

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## Safe And Unsafe Moments In The Workplace

By Walter Hufnagel

If there was a factory site with 200 operatives or a construction site with 200 workers, they would most likely all be able to carry out a safety audit. I would suggest that most of those audits would be similar in content. What's actually happening on any site can be seen and heard by everyone present. In terms of usefulness of any audit, the key factor is the amount of psychological safety that exists for the auditor to speak up about anything that looks unsafe.

The workplace environment is created by the leadership. If the leaders work hard to encourage 'open and honest' and do not punish 'speaking up' then there is a good chance that risks can be identified and removed without emotion.

Situational factors can get in the way of people observing risks and honest reporting. Strong and caring leaders encourage all the eyes and ears on the site to get this balance right. Of course this does not only apply to safety: "What can I say out loud? What can't I say out loud?" It all depends on how good the leaders are at setting up and maintaining a workplace environment that reinforces honest feedback. All roads lead to the quality of the leadership!

## Desensitisation

By Elisabeth Warner

I was invited to a meeting at a partner supplier of our company last week. There were 8 people in the room and their area manager turned up (late) and started berating one of his people in the room. I was shocked; this would never happen in our company. I was also surprised that the others in the room not only said nothing, there were no facial expressions of disapproval either. My goodness, I thought, they have all become conditioned to this level of bullying. I suppose you can tell which leaders don't get any feedback. They say or do something quirky and nobody in their team bats an eyelid. They are demonstrating that they have all desensitised to his quirks. I did say something to this protagonist after the meeting and he came out with the classic "That's how we do business around here" – priceless!

## Lean Cuts, Short Cuts...

By Howard Lees

Some leaders have a nasty, slack-ass habit of performing short cuts in order to tick off the things on their list that they know they should be doing. Instead of creating an environment where all the right things happen, they travel down a familiar road taking short cuts. For example, they visit parts of their business and postulate, perhaps on the basis that if they say things out loud, over time, they become true - at least to themselves. It doesn't matter who is listening; it's now been said. It's a perverse version of 'spray and pray'.



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# The Voices In My Head

By Bruce Faulkner

“Why am I doing this?” asks the voice in my head. I observe my behaviour and try to explain it to myself. I step back to gain perspective. “What purpose does this behaviour serve?” When I am on point, the answer feels great. If not, the answer is disheartening. If my curiosity ends here, I am reliant on the voice in my head to provide a judgement-based explanation for my behaviour.

Extending my thinking, I can ask the question, “Is this the way I intended to behave?” In doing this, I am comparing my behaviour to something I value. Am I moving towards what I value and believe in, or away from it?

The voice in my head will respond with new explanations. Just because I have a thought doesn't mean I have to accept the premise of that thought. After all, it may not contain the type of information I need to be able to change my behaviour. My behaviour was prompted by something in my immediate environment. To identify what was going on I run through my check list;

- Where am I?
- What time is it?
- How am I feeling?
- Who am I with?
- What were we talking about?

These questions capture the context. The cause of my behaviour lies in the answers. From here I can experiment. By changing elements of the context I will change my behaviour. Over time I am curating my environment to ensure I behave as I intend.

# Why Are One to Ones So Unpopular?

By Howard Lees

Our climate surveys keep flagging up the unpopularity of one to ones, i.e. a boss and subordinate having a chat about the subordinate's development needs. I don't hear about many fulfilling that intent. One to ones are unpopular not because they are a bad idea, but because they are often poorly executed. The concept is great, the execution is poor. There a number of other workplace concepts that are great ideas but in practice, poorly executed. Maybe there's a case for leaders to focus more on methodologies not just publishing processes?

# Shades of BMT

- If a risk is observed and then ignored then the folks in that environment are going down the road of desensitisation, once you start that, its very hard to stop until everyone is awoken by a calamity of some kind.
- Will someone speak up when they see something wrong? It all depends on the 'baked in' consequences within that environment.
- People within any workplace choose whether they will be a participant or an observer.

# Evolutionary Dangers

By Dr Richard Kazbour

Maslow's hierarchy of needs postulates that as humans, there are basic needs we seek to fulfil for ourselves above all else. Only once our basic needs are met do we even consider spending our valuable energy on more advanced psychological needs. Our ancestors needed food, water, and rest because their survival depended on fulfilling those basic needs. The faster those needs were met, the better the chance for survival. The cave-dweller whose actions led to reinforcement faster was the cave-dweller who kept their family alive.

It's no wonder that today with the thousands of possibilities for reinforcement at our literal fingertips we struggle to choose the action that is less satisfying right now even though we know how detrimental those decisions can be for us long term. We've evolved to seek reinforcement as immediately as possible... That can be dangerous for 21st century homo sapiens.

# Focusing on Results

By Rachel Edwards

There is a growing inclination in a number of organisations to just focus on results and 'hard data'. It's potentially very harmful, and leads to some unwanted outcomes.

In order to create and sustain high performance, people need space and opportunity to make that happen. Exclusively result-focused businesses tend to 'lock down' the environment and withdraw opportunities for choice, with the misguided expectation that it creates a greater guarantee of performance. In reality people find it aversive and spend more time finding routes to escape these unwanted circumstances than actually focus on doing the behaviours that deliver key results for the business.

The fact that it's hard to measure and quantify the insidious impact of this kind of culture, only makes it harder to challenge.