Behavioural Digest

On Sale Now:
The Adaptive Strategy

By Howard Lees
www.hollin.co.uk

Core Skills Part One
By Leif E. Andersson

The primary focus of most management training is targets and results, and how a leader should act to get employees to behave in the right way to achieve these. Most employees already know that the organisation needs results to survive, focusing just on that is not very motivational.

In my experience the problem with that is that employees are not primarily focused on targets or results, they are primarily focused and motivated by relationships. Consider someone you care for: a friend, spouse, or family member. You are motivated to set your own needs aside and spend time and energy on someone you care for. Would your motivation be the same if it came to helping a stranger?

The same applies to a relationship between an individual and their supervisor and the organisation they work for. If people feel strongly about their company and/or manager, they are likely prepared to go the extra mile.

Positive reinforcement is also relational, recognition from someone you know is likely to be stronger than general organisational rewards. If people feel they are treated like just another resource, there is a chance that they will be demotivated by that. Leadership should focus more on relationships than results; relationships precede results.

Feeling Good
By Bruce Faulkner

Right before an important meeting, you get a text. It reads, "Remember - port is left, starboard is right". You walk in feeling good. Taken at face value, this text is a distraction, but the impact is that of an embrace. The sender cared enough to remember your meeting and reached out at the right moment.

The modern behavioural term for this is 'signalling'. It's a fancy way of saying, birthday cards work best when you invest the time to find just the right one that makes the person laugh out loud. We have all done stuff like this for friends and loved ones. It is an easy technique to master, but one that isn't practiced that often.

Work environments are distracting and filled with attention grabbers. Spending time in the weeds is an activity that erodes relationships because intentions, stored in the brain, show up as missed opportunities.

There is a simple sequence to convert intention into behaviour. People give off signals about what matters to them. Make a physical note to put place markers in your calendar. Each day review the calendar and set a separate alarm. This task is important so don't lose it by associating it with calendar alarms that are already being ignored. When the alarm sounds, call or text them something simple that would generate a smile.

This sequence might not feel spontaneous but it means the world to the recipient. It boosts their confidence and helps them relax. A simple shift in focus, from tasks to humans, creates the disproportionate benefits that come from building a trusting relationship.

More on One to Ones
By Howard Lees

If the organisational goal is to create sustainable and effective one to ones that enrich the organisation, then the choice is either a 'one size fits all' company process, or a 'bespoke behavioural solution to suit each individual environment'. Sadly for organisations, the first one does not work. It delivers what exists now, almost everywhere. The second solution works, but takes ages and requires lots of education and training throughout the organisation. It also takes excellent leaders, bucket loads of them.

The bottom line is that many people who find themselves in leadership posts do not have the skills to design and deliver successful one to ones. Most companies do not rate their leaders on their ability to bring out the best in their people, and that's key with one to ones and in a number of other critical behaviours that high performing organisations get right. Last month's article on one to ones generated a lot of feedback. All I can say is that our view on one to ones is supported by our data. If you have any doubt about the effectiveness, even the likeability, of one to ones in your organisation, I suggest you go and find out in a safe and reliable way.

The HiPPO Effect
By David Lees

When you are the highest ranking member of a meeting, especially if you are already senior in your organisation, you will find that your "ideas and suggestions" become "orders" whether you like it or not. This is known as the Highest Paid Person's Opinion (HiPPO) Effect.

What happens when you offer your opinion too early is that you reduce the responsibility of the other person for delivery of ideas and their overall strategy. Very quickly you'll be sat there thinking why you are always the one who has to come up with the answers. The way to avoid this is to ensure that the psychological responsibility for delivery of each person's part of the overall strategy rests with them and never gets transferred to you. What you can do about it is keep quiet for as long as you can bear it. When you do speak, calmly ask questions rather than making statements or sharing your opinions.

Shades of BMT

- A genuine sense of urgency makes people feel anxious. Forming a plan with other people will ease that anxiety.
- When a department is on a fall in performance, it's important to recognise it early and quickly find a way to press the reset button.
- What spoils collaboration? Control freaks!
- Some people focus on counting the eggs and others on looking after the hens. I know which one I want to work for.

Celebrating Diversity
By Lynn Dunlop

I work with a lot of organisations in the engineering business. Something that the industry is keen to tackle is the lack of diversity in the current workforce.

There are whole books to be read (and written) on this topic, but there is a consensus that tackling the lack of diversity in engineering can only be good for the industry. Thankfully, the companies I work with don't simply promote people beyond their capabilities just to provide a 'diverse' demographic, but I question if companies are looking hard enough at their current environments to see what other factors might prevent people in the minority demographics (at least, the minority for UK-based engineers) from joining - and then remaining in - the industry.

For example, I often ask how people celebrate success in their organisation. The answer usually involves a night out with alcohol and maybe a meal, especially if an award ceremony is involved. This style of celebration increases the likelihood of excluding some people whom, if we were focusing on increasing diversity in our workforces, we might wish to ensure felt included. Consider: People with caring roles who cannot easily attend after-hours events (and research indicates this disproportionately affects women). People who do not drink alcohol, for personal or religious reasons. People who find it difficult to get around, whether through physical disability or any other reason. People from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, in particular young people.

If you cannot easily attend this 'traditional' style of night out, it can affect your career prospects. How many careers are built on relationships; how many mentors are found because someone said, "Oh, come with me - you must meet…" How many opportunities to really bond with clients are available only in these circumstances? Encouraging diversity is about understanding and tackling structural inequalities that have been built over generations.