

Behavioural Digest

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Restraint Is The Key By Claire Waghorn

I recently attended a dinner with Eugenie Sage, our (New Zealand) Minister of Conservation, and there were a number of protestors outside the restaurant. They were yelling at us about the use of 1080 (a type of poison used to kill stoats, rats and possums, which in turn helps protect our native bird species).

These protestors had got their information from not-very-reliable sources, and were quite emotional about the topic. They had a megaphone, and came into the restaurant at one stage. There was a security guy that could have thrown them out. But Eugenie signalled them over, sat them down, ordered them some food, and unpacked the issue for them.

The restraint she showed was remarkable, and the way in which she talked about the issue calmly, and with great details, really disarmed the protestors. We ended up having a chat about how the internet creates 'road rage' in people, where actually if we sit face to face, it's a lot easier to discover what we have in common.



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

Core Skills, Part Three of Four By Leif E. Andersson

In the last Digest I presented my hierarchical model of what leaders should need to know. Over the next few articles, I will fill it with some useful skills from the bottom up.

The base level contains the basic things about humans everyone needs to grasp.

Responsibility, Perspective-taking, Behaviour
Focus, ABC

Responsibility is understanding of the fact that you are responsible for your perception of the world around you.

Perspective taking is associated with responsibility. Everyone's behaviour in every context is logical and functional for them, according to their perspective. Try to view situations from their perspective. Don't judge someone before you have walked a mile in his or her shoes.

Behaviour focus is about the fact that it is others' behaviour that matters, not their intentions, values, traits or other aspects.

A-B-C is the understanding that people's behaviour is governed by its consequences.

With this base level as a solid foundation we then need to define the task at hand. What is the problem and Who owns it? It is easy to focus too quickly on causes or solutions instead of staying with the definition until everyone involved has the same perspective.

When the 'What' is jointly defined it's time for ownership: Whose issue is it?

Define the task, Who and What

Responsibility, Perspective-taking, Behaviour
Focus, ABC

A Review Of Ray Dalio's Book 'Principles'

By Howard Lees

Dalio's book is packed with nuggets about how feedback is invaluable and in his company they go to the most amazing lengths to collect feedback; frequently and voluminously. They continually analyse their feedback to make sure they are getting the best value from their people. It works: They have been successful for a long time in a market - dealing in hedge funds - where long term success is difficult.

He makes some reassuring points about hiring talent, mostly around how difficult it is to do successfully. Introducing new people to an environment they have no previous experience of is a crapshoot, he says, why expect anything else. It seems to work best when new people dive in and give it a go for 3 months, and this is followed by a review. But the subject up for review is not the new hire but the organisation itself! Did we as a team perform well for this new starter?

A major tenet of his book follows the 'what do you want', 'what is true' and 'what are you going to do about it' paradigm. I am again reinforced by the stress he puts on finding out exactly what's happening right now prior to making decisions about the future. I am sure you will find his TED Talk interesting. It's here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXbsVbFACzg&t=1s>

Any Fool Can Be Uncomfortable

By Garry Sanderson

Whilst at university I dabbled in military training by joining the Officer Training Corps - an interesting experience in late 80's Belfast, but that's a different story... We subjected ourselves to training exercises in various remote and very muddy environments in which we had to cope with not much more than a plastic sheet and packets of amorphous dried substances. Whilst shivering and wet under a poorly assembled shelter, one of the instructors walked past, stopped and said simply, "Any fool can be uncomfortable," before walking on.

Maxims - short, pithy statements expressing a general truth or rule of conduct - can be incredibly powerful in shaping our behaviour and often become part of our personal narrative. I'm interested in how easily remembered and applied maxims can influence our behaviour, both in a planned way and in the moment.

The maxim, "any fool can be uncomfortable", has stayed with me since that day, challenging my decisions, choices and inertia. It applies not just to family camping excursions, but to the choices that we make regarding the environment we are in. Do we choose to accept an uncomfortable working environment? Do we seek to make it better? Or should we simply move to a better environment?

Misplaced Effort

By David Lees

Ken Robinson's book *Out of Our Minds* is about reform of the education system. He talks about how ironic it is that politicians tend to increase the very systems and approach (standardised tests etc) that stymie the skills and needs of the future; creativity, collaboration etc.

It's a question of misplaced effort. We see similar situations at play in business. People in leadership positions seem somewhat baffled by what is required to improve the performance of their teams, spending time on process creation and antecedent-heavy strategies. In contrast, the wealth creators (the people who do the work - deliver projects, order materials, collect rubbish, pour concrete, draw drawings etc) have no trouble with knowing how to make things better, and are able to achieve improvements very quickly given the room to do so.

Often the downstream impact of command and control processes don't match the intention, and in these cases the simplest and easiest fix for inefficiency is for the company to get out of the way so that people can do a good job. It's all they wanted to do anyway.

Shades of BMT

- Feedback can be one simple return message, however it can also become a conversation and ultimately turn into a robust and thriving relationship.
- It doesn't matter what difficult and awkward circumstances you might find yourself in at work as long as you are learning from these experiences. There are always lessons to be learned in every scenario.
- Creating a relaxed and friendly 'room' is likely to get the best results from a chat.
- Taking a task-centric approach when talking to direct reports could set up unwanted aversive conditions.