

Behavioural Digest

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If They Don't Like You, They Probably Aren't Listening

By Sally Reeves

The “7%-38%-55%” rule was the work of an engineer-turned-researcher called Albert Mehrabian. He was researching our perception of how much we like individuals whilst they are talking to us about their feelings. The percentages relate to the relative impact of the spoken words (7%), the tone of voice (38%), and the body language whilst speaking (55%). These three measures are likely to account for whether we like or trust the person talking to us.

For example, if someone said in a very aggressive voice “I think that’s a very beautiful baby,” the effect of the words would be drowned out by the tone of voice and body language, and we would receive ‘aggression’, despite the words actually spoken.

Mehrabian’s rule is that Total Liking = 7% Verbal Liking + 38% Vocal Liking + 55% Facial Liking. It can’t be applied to all communications, though. Mehrabian said that “Unless a communicator is talking about their feelings or attitudes, these equations are not applicable”.

Personality Vs Reality

By David Lees

Increasingly, people are coming to the conclusion that using personality profiling as a tool for business is potentially not good value for money. There are HBR articles lambasting it, and books are starting to be published in the same vein. So what’s the issue? One regularly occurring impact of branding people with a personality type is that they start using personality as an excuse for all sorts of dysfunctional and uncollaborative behaviour: “Yeah that’s just what you get, I’m an ENTJ,” and the like. Then there’s the question of why personality is something worth considering anyway. Consider a symphony orchestra: The conductor doesn’t care if you’re introvert or extrovert, thinking or feeling - they care if you play the notes in the right order at the right time!

Natural Characteristics, your life story so far, and the environment you find yourself in are the things that govern behaviour. Of those, the environment in which people work is the one businesses have control of. If the receiving environment (office, playing field, school) is arranged to reinforce desired behaviours then that’s mostly what you’ll get, irrespective of the underlying personality traits that are borne from the other two.

There is much more value in designing a receiving environment where reinforcement is available for the desired workplace behaviours, than there is in using profiling, which has a high chance of giving a different answer depending whether you took the test on Monday morning or Friday afternoon.



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

Core Skills, Part Four

By Leif E. Andersson

In this final article, I will outline the top three tiers of our skills pyramid.



Confirmation is the basic positive reinforcer, the one tool that rules them all. People want to feel noticed, confirmed. Everyone wants to be perceived as the unique individual he or she is, not handled as just another resource.

"I"-message is using statements that take responsibility for your perception of the world. "In my view this kitchen is messy" compared to "This kitchen is messy."

Active listening is a composite model based on perspective taking, listening to the speaker and his/her perspective. Any thought, idea, recognition or personal experiences that come to your mind should be suppressed until the speaker asks for it. Tools for that include silence, mirroring etc.

Coaching, conflict management etc are the more complex practical activities the leader takes part in, with the skills lower down in the hierarchy in place and practised, this leader is set up to succeed.

The fifth and last level are for all the models and systems out there such as *Applied behavioural science (ABS)*, *BMT*, *Lean* and *Performance Management*. ABS is the science, packed full of tools and opportunities for learning. BMT is a blend of ABS and project management skills that facilitates practical application of the science within the world of organisations.

All the top level things are great stuff, but the idea with the hierarchical model is to show that the effect of those models relies on leaders having basic skills. Those basic skills are often missed or not trained enough with the result that the practical implementation fails.

Dr Leif E Andersson will be speaking at the Behavioural Leadership conference on the 20th May 2020.

Stay Awake!

By Howard Lees

I noticed last year when researching my book on strategy that a number of the gurus talked about 'a few key behaviours' making all the difference. They agreed that most dysfunctional behaviours in organisations are 'recoverable' however a very small number are critical, directly leading to brilliant success or crippling failure. We all spend our time observing people, one way or another. I spend a lot of my time observing the behaviour of one person and seeing if I can detect a non verbal response in an other person (or others in the same room). Every now and again there is a non verbal 'scream' of a response in others to something that a protagonist said. Maybe there's a few behaviours that emanate within each meeting that set the stage for the future direction of that particular group/team etc.

For example perhaps, the Chief Legal officer dominated the last board meeting and everyone seemed to passively reinforce it & in no time at all this team has a Legal Chief that dominates everything. Letting the first domination event go by unquestioned was everyone's mistake, they may not have noticed. Passivity among groups of people is the beginning of the end for a productive and happy workplace environment. Direction, good or bad, is dictated by people that turn up and take notice of what's happening around them.

Shades of BMT

- People don't need a course on active listening, they just need to listen when someone else is talking!
- People don't need courses on collaboration, people collaborate naturally. It's organisations that stymie collaboration.
- People don't need a course on time management; it's got more to do with arranging the workplace environment sensibly.
- People don't need a course on how to use email systems sensibly; the key is to actively avoid being a victim of it.