

Behavioural Digest

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RESCHEDULED:
Behavioural Leadership
Conference and Workshop
4th & 5th November 2020
Manchester
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Read What You Love By Howard Lees

When I was young, the newsagent shelves were stacked with comics. Young school children would get shushed away from them by the proprietor. Comics were popular; it was like reading but not reading. In time we were encouraged to read *The Famous Five* and then some moved on to *The Hobbit*, some to Alastair Maclean, some to *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Animal Farm* and *Of Mice and Men* and then off to a lifetime of reading enjoyment.

Reading is at the heart of education. We learn dialogue in books that we can then try out in our world. It is comfortable and safe because it's just the reinforcing relationship between us and the books we are reading. As I look up from my book on the train to London, some people are reading a book on a tablet, and most have their head in a computer, ipad or smart phone, or are alternating between all three. Some look ambivalent, some happy, some look frustrated.

It may be me being old fashioned but today's fixation with electronic devices just feels wrong. Social consequences are being squeezed out of life and work. My book doesn't squeak when I put it down; it waits patiently for me. And there are plenty of comics out there still! I like this adage: Read what you love, until you love to read.

Rescheduled Behavioural Leadership Conference and Workshop - Now November 2020

In light of the COVID-19 coronavirus, we have taken the decision to postpone the Behavioural Leadership Conference and Workshop, which had been planned for May 2020.

The conference will now take place on Wednesday 4th November 2020, with a follow-up workshop on Thursday 5th November 2020.

A Negative Capability By Walter Hufnagel

Many engineers like problems that can be solved. They tend to like maths; something with a right answer that can be calculated and not challenged. Creativity is more subjective, more like English literature, subject-wise: There isn't one answer. Instead, up ahead is a whole field full of exciting possibilities.

Artists have to have what the poet John Keats called a Negative Capability. That means they go into things believing that something new and great is going to happen, without having any solid evidence to support their expectations. It is the combination of their experience, hard work and a strong belief that delivers the great outcome.

People without that negative capability will likely want to know all the parameters before they agree to set off on a creative journey. It is therefore unlikely that a number of engineers will have that required base level of negative capability. Unfortunately, this can mean that engineers have to work much harder to achieve creativity. Creativity, for some engineers, is just too hard to control.

Deliberate Safety

By Lisa Kazbour

If people find themselves resorting to punishment in safety, it is probably a red flag that there are some things going on in the environment that need to be examined further. Why? Because if behavior is occurring, there is reinforcement happening. And if risky behaviors are happening, it means that someone's failed to create an environment where the right behaviors are being reinforced.

Natural law is about our tendency as humans to just let things happen and opt for the easiest path to reinforcement - in safety this sometimes means taking short cuts, skipping safety checks, avoiding confrontation with co-workers about unsafe behaviors and not taking time to wear the proper PPE, etc. This natural tendency is something that great leaders are constantly fighting against when creating a safety culture, especially when so many leaders are overly deadline-focused. Leaders should be cautious about how they communicate time pressures and how they reinforce 'meeting the deadline', because left unchecked, this will inevitably lead to natural law contingencies for their people, including short-cuts and some other unintended riskier behaviors.

Creating a safe environment is about creating engagement with a workforce, so that they want to do the slightly harder, but safer, behaviors. Creating engagement requires that leaders reinforce the right behaviors, that they focus on relationships and push against the natural law contingencies that so often shape the workplace. It also requires that leaders move away from a stance of punishing people for breaking safety rules, as unnatural as that may feel.

Remember:

- Morale gets hurt each time leaders resort to punishment.
- People will hide unsafe behaviors each time leaders resort to punishment
- Reporting gets driven underground each time punishment is used.
- Safety gets hurt each time punishment is used.

Shades of BMT

We are encouraging people to observe verbal behaviours in meetings, making a note of each occurrence and tracking the resulting data. The headings we're using are:

1. Advocacy
2. Supporting
3. Enquiry
4. Prompting
5. Interruptions
6. Inactive listening
7. Sarcasm, marginalising etc.

Once the baseline data has been gathered, it is possible to begin making measurable improvements.

Coronaviral Decision-Making

By Garry Sanderson

We are all working to cope with the uncertainty associated with the current global coronavirus pandemic. We each have to make our own decisions regarding meetings, travel, holidays, social events and a multitude of other 'business as usual' events. Many companies have curtailed international travel and large meetings. Yet there are still many day-to-day decisions for which there is no clear guidance. We must make these decisions in an environment in which the most extreme views are the ones with the loudest voices, from those predicting the end of the world to those who are saying we are massively overreacting. So how do we make the best decisions?

I have attempted to address this using a high/low matrix of business criticality and the costs associated with changing plans. The definition of business-critical activities will be the specific top priorities for each organisation, including things such as health and safety, key client interactions, project delivery and production plant 'tick over'. The 'cost' of change could be financial or in other areas such as reputational or environmental. Importantly, decisions should not be influenced by unrecoverable monies already spent; these are sunk costs and should not factor in any decision-making.

- If both business criticality and cost are perceived as "low", then I suggest cancelling or avoiding the event.
- If business criticality or cost is perceived as "high", then you might postpone or adapt your plans, perhaps delivering work remotely.
- If both business and cost are perceived as "high", then I suggest proceeding with caution and a solid Plan B. There will be things that must get done - but they can be done differently to mitigate risks, with a clear backup plan in place.

I'd love to get your feedback on my attempt to bring a little order decision making in the current turbulent environment!