

# Behavioural Digest

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## The Ghost In The Machine

By Howard Lees

During tendering processes, a number of clients are asking bidders, “How are you going to incentivise to ensure high performance?” The inference is that money will be the primary route for high performance to occur; either money delivered to the bidding organisation or money shared amongst the wealth-creating workers involved with delivering the enterprise at hand.

Most early solutions I have seen appear to focus on devising ways of making people do the right thing with threats of punitive outcomes for non compliance (R-) rather than focusing on creating an environment where people want to do the right thing each and every time (R+).

The scientific solution, and key to high performance, is down to how much discretionary effort leaders can generate within each local workplace environment. Every punitive threat removed is a step closer to success and high performance.

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## It's Simple, But It's Not Easy

By Collette Murphy

We are able to control more in our personal lives now than ever before; we have greater access to education and information to help us and we are ably facilitated by advances in technology (i.e. we can access our banks and change our central heating settings via our phones, meet people on the other side of the world without leaving our homes and monitor our own health through our watches). So it's not surprising that autonomy (a sense of control over what we do) at a work is a key motivator for the majority and that moving away from being subjected to a “command and control” style of leadership and moving towards a more coaching leader style feels like the sensible and desirable thing to do.

There are some leaders in post today that still rely on an old fashioned autocratic style and there are some simple things they could do to adapt, but they're not necessarily easy because they would require a desire to change and an enhanced level of self-discipline:

- Set clear unambiguous expectations and lead rather than take on any operational tasks themselves.
- Let go of the notion that leaders should have all the answers, ask more questions.
- Be consistent, solicit regular feedback about obstacles to performance, recognise good work.
- Trust that people want to do a good job, focus on outcomes not methods.

The best leaders solicit feedback, the best leaders ask great questions, the best leaders rarely assert their views first, these elements engender trust.

# Enter the Dragon

by Dr Tim Ludwig

I enjoyed reading Howard's piece on Mirror Neurons where he suggested that leaders need more empathy, but I'd argue that "empathy" might be a misleading label. We all have mirror neurons, but they don't impact our emotion or behavior as the term "empathy" suggests. Instead, they simply allow us to experience others' movements and sensations in our brain near the same structures that control our own movement and sensation.

Behaviorally, leaders who act like tyrants become associated with respondent behaviors that make your body feel like it is experiencing fear (your amygdala fires up, the stress hormone cortisol is released etc). So when that leader comes around - even without them saying a thing - this reaction happens. It's a perfect example of respondent or classical conditioning. The operant behaviors that employees demonstrate as a result are typically 'avoidance' and 'subterfuge'.

Other leaders who, through their own behaviors, become associated with dopamine, norepinephrine, and oxytocin (the feel-good neurotransmitters) as a result of their behaviors. Those leaders have the advantage of producing these feel-good reactions when they come around. The operant behaviors triggered in employees are 'approach' and 'reinforcement-seeking'.

Mirror neurons could therefore be a feedback loop to leaders so they can experience the employee reaction to their tactics. The result may then direct their leadership behaviors to be more tyrannical over considerate or vice versa. Crucially, both are behaviourally very functional, as they reliably elicit reactions from others. Let's not forget that many, many leaders find the fear reaction quite functional with their negative reinforcement strategy. Their mirror neurons pick up the fear in others and it is exactly the reaction they are looking for... reinforcing their tyrannical behavior. Enter the dragon!

## Shades of BMT

- "Punishment is like a nuclear bomb. If the blast doesn't get you, the fallout certainly will." Steve White, police dog trainer
- "The more you use [punishment] the more you want to use it. Because punishment is reinforcing to the punisher. Why? It makes the annoying thing stop, even if it's just for a brief period." Steve White, police dog trainer
- Professional independent behavioural coaching gets to the places that 'in house' coaching can never discover.
- There needs to be some observable value attached to a behaviour for the performer, if there isn't then it's difficult to see where the R+ to maintain it would come from.

# The Pricing Conundrum

By Percy Fitzwallace

A client is someone that wants something to be supplied, built, or have some level of service provided in some way by someone else. That someone else is called a supplier. They may also be a contractor, a wholesaler, a teacher, a retailer etc. The client wants to know if the product proposed will do the job, how much the product is going to cost and other related quality areas of interest. The supplier has a lot of knowledge regarding their particular product; they understand all the upsides and potential downsides of discussing their product with client people.

How does this transaction begin? The client asks a supplier for information and costs of a product. The client wants a solution that works, they want it on time and to price. They ask for a lump sum price for the product and this is fine if they are buying a fridge. The client can choose from a menu of products and select the one they want, have it delivered and installed, bingo. The same is not true for something like a new bridge, a railway electrification scheme or a new workplace safety programme. The desire from the client is still to have a fixed price, on-time delivery and installation and a period of faultless production resulting from the product.

Some products are best developed over time by the client and the supplier in collaboration. The 'right' price and delivery time is a matter of negotiation regarding the specification and scope of the product desired by the client and created by the supplier. If this negotiation takes place with everyone's interests equally considered, then that's the fastest way to get the right product at the right time and price. This is the moment; this is the opportunity to gain the benefit of behaving in a collaborative manner. These collaborations produce great products, the creator and the user working hand in hand. Relationships are built and this model is replicated many times producing a history of great collaboration.