

Behavioural Digest

No. 123 - November 2020

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The Self-Licking Ice Cream

By Anne Radcliffe

Lots of Executives seek a model, something that helps explain their organisation and how it works, they want a one page attractive graphic. They want something that can be published in a handbook, something printed in the walls of their reception. Something they can proudly glance at on their way in and out of their offices. By the same token, many leaders like a complex spreadsheet people can fill in and have subjective greens and reds to represent performance – green good, red bad – simple, easy to jump to a conclusion and act decisively to improve the scores.

These people live in a parallel world where aspirational statements are batted back and forth in large meetings with steep power gradients. These meetings are inevitably followed by more meetings in the same vein. The troops in attendance will likely be fearful of speaking any dissent and this will reinforce the whole event for the Executives. This is the self-licking ice cream, for sure.

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I'll Only Go If You Ask Me To Stay

By Jonny Bennett

Companies that have a share price often commonly struggle with staff surveys. Their dichotomy is that they would like to understand their worker's perceptions about what's going on in the organisation. However, they don't want anything published that would risk lowering the share price. Most of these large organisations have to revert to voluminous online surveys with multiple ways that people could be identified. This solution adds fuzzy questions and attendant fuzzy results with an overriding (but unspoken) threat that should discourage people from saying anything bad about the company. The tell-tale signs that this scenario exists are:

- The voluminous multiple-choice questions asked.
- Their apparent 'happiness factor' goes up, albeit gently, every year.
- The very high scores published, compared with other company surveys that are honest and fair.

It is obvious when reading the results of a realistic company survey. They contain zero identifiers; the questions are behavioural, and the surveys are run anonymously. At first sight when reviewing an honest and accurate company survey it is common for people to think that things are bad. This paradigm is caused by a confirmation bias that is impacted by the norm that 8/10 is good and 5/10 is bad. If surveys are formed from behaviour-based questions it means the answers are 'opinion' based and likely to be true. When Dr Amy Edmondson first researched surgical teams in numerous hospitals, she thought the teams with 25 'errors per operation' were poor performers compared to others with 3 'errors per operation'. Of course, the opposite was true; if problems are identified it's primarily because the psychological safety to speak out exists – that's the key.

Remember Who You Meet On The Way Up

By Chris Jacques

The 'Field of Dreams' piece in the last digest is very apt for me. When I left my company last year, I wanted to carry on working and spent six months preparing for my new career. I went into my network and discovered that there are different types of people out there:

- The 'job offerers'. The most surprising category were people who had actively courted me for a role. Once I was available, they suddenly didn't have anything for me. I hadn't necessarily looked for these offers, and I believe there were three things in play:
 1. Timing – some of these people genuinely didn't have something at that point.
 2. Ego – they play the 'I can sort you out' card but don't actually have the power (or budget) to make it happen.
 3. Insincerity – they previously used you as an insight into the company you worked for and had no intention of offering you anything.
- 'Ex-colleagues' – this is a mixed bunch, some people like you and some don't. Your new lack of apparent 'power' makes these parties easy to spot. Some surprises here.
- 'People who can make money from you' – the head-hunter community see that you could earn them a fee. A new stream of 'friends' emerges.
- People who remember our good relationship – These generous people with integrity stand out in this new chapter in your life.
- 'The good people' – They actively opened doors, returned my calls and checked in. Again, it's difficult to predict who these people are going to be when in the midst of the all-action Executive job.

What I discovered was that some people I thought I liked and knew, it turned out I didn't. I had fallen for sunflower syndrome. Others have been a really pleasant surprise, in a genuinely humbling way. People should consider their network and who would fall into which categories. Believe me, you will guess some wrong – positive and negative, have a think, make note of who you think they are going to be, put the note in a drawer (at home).

When I left the corporate world, I realised that I was infected by it. I had to undergo a very healthy rebalancing of my ego. I am carrying on working and I am enjoying it. To quote Jimmy Durante, "Be kind to the people you meet on your way up because you might meet them again on your way back down."

Shades of BMT

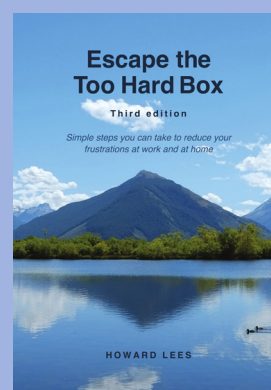
- When I ask someone a question, I like to get an answer. If I don't get an answer, I stress. If I don't get an answer it means I haven't created an environment where I would get an answer, and that fact makes me even more stressed!
- Competent knowledge workers struggle to deliver discretionary effort in aversive workplaces.

'They Go Together Like A Horse And Carriage'

By Howard Lees

Safety has two distinct pillars. One is safety compliance - the law, all the legal details and requirements. The other is safety leadership - how to create a workplace environment so that safety compliance can thrive. Safety professionals cannot be responsible for all workplace safety in every location, every day. They are never a direct-consequence provider to any of the performers in those workplaces (apart from other safety professionals under their purview). They are, however, responsible for giving safety leadership advice to the leaders, directors, and anyone who presides over people that are potentially at risk in a workplace.

It is Company Directors and all the leaders down the chain of command that are responsible for safety. These people create and maintain the workplace environments. It is crucial that safety professionals keep good records of what they say to whom - it is a risky job for sure, the primary risk being that many Company Directors think that their safety people are responsible for safety. When leaders view safety as having two distinct parts - compliance and leadership - safety thrives and everyone goes home safe, every day. The people are transported in the carriage, pulled by the horse!



The new book by Howard Lees is out now. [Click here to read a sample](#), and to order your copy.