

# Behavioural Digest

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## Defining Culture By David Lees

An interesting conversation sparked at the end of a workshop the other day around culture. The facilitator asked, "What is a good culture" and we all had a go at answering, some people referenced pithy things that notable people had said and we moved on, proud that we'd put some paint on the issue. I realised afterwards, we spent 5 or 10 minutes on the issue of defining culture, and no minutes on how to create and maintain it. It was fun coming up with the soundbites, but was it valuable?

Culture is important, however it's not an actual thing. It's a word that aims to describe 'the way things are done around here' which is an aggregation of thousands if not millions of daily behaviours. Ironically, people know if they work in a workplace with a bad culture, just as they know if they work in a place with a positive workplace culture. Creating a good culture is not about coming up with the naggiest soundbite, but more to do with the ongoing discussion, agreement, and maintenance of daily behaviours that aggregate to an overall positive culture.

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## Mystic Magellan

The thing that mystifies me this month is the number of intelligent professional people that are allowing outlook calendar invites to hijack their lives. Why have so many people become slaves to their Outlook calendar? Before pressing 'accept' perhaps they could ask;

1. Why am I invited to this meeting?
2. What is its purpose?
3. Is there an agenda I can read?
4. What do you need me to do/bring to this meeting?
5. Do I have to attend the whole meeting?
6. Can it start at 10 past the hour?

This Outlook scenario has created a serious 'too busy' stand off for many people. Accepting all incoming invites means people can genuinely claim that they are 'too busy' giving them perfect justification to ignore other people's emails and phone calls as they now live permanently in Teams/Zoom calls. Is this paranoid businesses thinking that their remote people must be working if they are in meetings? Is this just an unfortunate result of people passively letting nature take its course regarding Outlook calendars? Numerous professionals are shredding their own integrity by not returning calls and emails; the message received by others is "I am hibernating, please do not try to contact me."

## Shades of BMT

- "Why is it that people that can't take advice insist on giving it." (James Bond)
- If you think someone else is a tiresome idiot, there's a good chance the feeling is mutual.
- If you did make time and space for doing the right thing, what would that right thing be?

# Please, No More Sports Metaphors!

By Susan Prebble

OK, so there is a time and place for sports metaphors. They are useful to describe lots of situations - principles around deliberate practice, how to deal with performance stress by practicing specific scenarios ahead of time etc. However, they are sprayed around liberally in situations where they are wholly inappropriate. Why is it that not a day goes by where someone doesn't try and teach a bunch of intelligent people at work that if they were more like the All Blacks, they'd be a more successful team. The two scenarios couldn't be more different in terms of consequence contingencies. Here are a few thoughts to illustrate the point:

- International sports men and women get to where they are by making it through a rigorous and ongoing performance monitoring system. If they perform badly for even a day they might be dropped from the team. It's brutal.
- Sportspeople get minute by minute feedback on their performance. This means that feedback and consequences on their performance never stops. How often do you get feedback on your performance? How would you handle being given real time feedback on your performance?
- If someone on a sports team scores, their performance is directly linked to clear and visible success – when someone scores a try in the world cup, thousands of people jump up and down and scream – how's that for reinforcement? How many people jump up and down and scream when you complete a great piece of work?

Often sports metaphors are used because people like sport, and they like imagining themselves being like the sportspeople that are referenced in them, not because the metaphors bear any resemblance to the situation at hand. Aside from the fact that people who like sport seem to think that everyone likes sport, which isn't true, the way that we train people needs to be relevant. Next time you're handed a sports metaphor, ask, what has this got to do with what we're doing here?

## Lazy Leaders

By Dave Lees

It's common to have situations where generally a staff is performing well but there are one or two people who are 'not on board'. Delving down into this a little in coaching sessions commonly uncovers two things; firstly, the amount of leadership that the staff has needed in order to be performing well is not that much, and secondly, the amount of time, thought, and activity applied to bringing the best out of the errant person or people, is also not that much.

Lazy leaders tend to use the same tactics with all staff and expect everyone to react to those conditions the same way. However, we know that people's reinforcers are unique to them and that diversity, if leveraged correctly, is hugely valuable to modern business. When faced with people who appear to be 'not on board' the right leadership move is to figure out how you can change how you engage with them in order to bring the best out of them.

# Promises, Promises

By Jonny Bennet

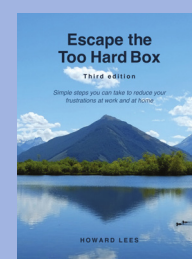
An old chap I used to work for would consistently over-promise and under-deliver. During one-to-one meetings he would religiously open his A4 book to make a note on whatever was agreed. This initially gave me some solace that things would get done - it was, after all, now recorded - but nothing ever got done. In fact, as soon as he reached for his pen, I knew the latest promise would be added to the list along with the many others he had given before.

The team started to share their personal experiences of meetings with him; most saw the same behaviour. It was a source of much hilarity amongst us. He was such a nice guy, no-one said anything to him about this habit. A classic office relational standoff ensued. His boss did not seem to be much interested in him, the boss would be talking, and our boss could be seen writing furiously. We recognised that the act of him opening the A4 book and writing stuff down was his escape, his sanctuary. He escaped all difficult conversations by opening that book and writing.

## Lincolnisms

By Howard Lees

Shakespeare appears to be the first to have used the analogy of our better angels about our two spirits that are both 'from within me'. The first, "a better angel that is right fair", and the second, "a worser spirit that tempteth my better angel from my side and would corrupt my saint to be a devil." The analogy also works for organisations; they can be full of praise and recognition or can be mean spirited and critical, and all points in between those extremes. Which angel prevails? The one that gets the most food!



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