

# Behavioural Digest

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Workshop:

Building a Post-Lockdown Culture

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## Narcissisma

By Leif Andersson

Narcissists are often charming, confident and charismatic. It might be because they have an overblown ego. There are notable world leaders right now that fit this mould. They lie, and they do this shamelessly. In their view they are not lying. They thrive on their charm; people around them work hard for them and will even blame themselves for any problems. Narcissists are tricky to spot because normal people cannot imagine that anyone could be that strangely egotistical. They think that no one would lie so lightly in a full range of scenarios, that no grown-up person could be so childish. The rest of us may believe that we simply misunderstand them. In spite of their downsides, having a narcissist as friend can be really nice; life can often be fun and interesting.

The narcissists you find in high office are often driven, goal-oriented and skilled in telling the board or their boss what they want to hear. Achieving career highs as a leader can be more about how good people are at selling themselves than about how good they are at creating actual results. For narcissists, unconscious incompetence regarding leadership is alive, well and very common indeed. By comparison, honest leaders exhibiting integrity are the illiterates of the game. They look weak by comparison. No wonder that the narcissists get away with it.

## Interesting Yes, But Useful Too?

By Howard Lees

Back in the 70's, many managers were asked to complete the Belbin team role survey at work. The answers were presented as 9 different team role types - the plant, the shaper etc. During the 80's the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator became the 'go to' personality test. It is loosely based on the work of Carl Jung. It uses 16 'types' including the mediator, the giver etc. These are simple tools that seek to identify people's preferences and stereotype the participants into 9 or 16 types. Yes, it is stereotyping, and it can be great fun.

There are multiple stereotyping products available today, computers have made production of these online tools very easy. Sellers of these products are working hard to achieve their share of the massive amount of people out there that want to spend £20 and find out what type they are. Companies spend millions on stereotyping tools - they get coloured graphs depicting their people and can debate whether they have enough type A's or type B's or the 'right' blend of types.

Behavioural scientists, on the other hand, will assert that the local workplace environment drives behaviours. It is also likely that people's preferences will only come to the surface in workplace environments where people can express them.

My preference? Well, I will take any form of transport to get where I want to go and sometimes I find models are useful tools to help frame scenarios. Of these, I prefer Maslow or Hertzberg; overall I would suggest that science is best.

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# Rare Opportunity

By Joanne Benjamin

As we slowly move towards the possibility of the world reopening and life returning to 'normal' a time for self-reflection has begun. Many people encountered some tough times while appreciating some of the advantages of working from home. For me, when the nurseries closed, I was able to spend extra time with my daughter. My husband enjoyed the opportunity to pick her up from nursery every day once they reopened. When talking to clients, some appreciated not having to drive to meetings, some liked the solitude of the drive, giving them thinking time, some say that the downside of being at home leads to increased time spent in meetings.

When speaking to clients about offices reopening there is still uncertainty surrounding the 'when' of it all. This time between now and return date offers a rare opportunity which should be grasped. How often do people get the chance to really analyse their working environment while there are so few people there? It's a chance to consider what aspects of remote working are worth continuing or adapting to create a new working environment. More importantly, this time offers the time to discuss and highlight the improvement opportunities, the things that everyone complained about but never felt they had the opportunity to fix. Wouldn't it be great to use the technology to make the working environment better rather than allowing technology to be the distraction to real leadership? This window of time is currently available and worth using rather than letting nature take its course and simply going back to 'this is how it's always been'.

# How Deep is Your Well?

By Walter Hufnagel

Someone recently asked me "How do I make myself more useful to other people? How do I increase the chances that people will employ me? To be blunt, how can I become more popular?" People will probably ask for your help if they think that you say things that they find useful or interesting. The real test for stimulus control on your ability as a confidante, counsellor or advisor is how often people come back to ask you for your advice. I suppose it also depends on what they do with the interesting and useful comments. They may simply be repeating your pithy sayings in company and believe that it is making them more popular in their world. I suppose it may mean that they have a genuine interest in improving their personal competences or even their organisation.

One thing is for sure, counsel can be incredibly valuable, in some cases priceless. If you can say "Have you thought of xxxx" and the response is visibly enthusiastic then you might have just seeded a million-pound idea. I would guess if that happened then this person is going to keep coming back to the well as long as they think that their thirst will continue to be satisfied.

# Enriching our Habitats

By Howard Lees

My friend Bill Redmon pointed me toward the behavioural research that is going on to make life for animals in captivity more fun and interesting. I read about behavioural enrichment, which involves using various stimuli such as food, sounds or movement to encourage captive animals to behave more like they did in the wild. There are drawings of contraptions that will fire food across a pen or fire fish above the water. One zoo discovered that if they blew paper bags across a Big Cat pen, the cats would chase them and rip them to pieces, as they would in the wild. They use auditory methods to replicate the natural habitats, swapping animals between different pens to introduce change to their lives and take advantage of the interesting new scents. The results are quite compelling. Of course, these are animals that have been bred in captivity, but the experiments have produced more natural behavioural patterns in the animals. The work has also made zoo visits more interesting for the punters.

I couldn't resist but shift my thoughts to the workplace and the captive humans whose behaviour is also contingent on their environments. Is it fair to assume that their natural (safe) behaviour will occur in the home and that workplace behaviours are to some extent unnatural? Perhaps some of the poorer workplace environments would benefit from the installation of a fish catapult.

# Shades of BMT

- We see things through the lens of our own unique frame of reference. Our perspective is formed through these personal day-to-day experiences.
- Having a client focus is all very well but not if it is to the detriment of your own company.
- Micro-management is a thing, micro-leadership is not a thing.