Behavioural Leadership
Online Course - Spring 2022
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Leading or Just Managing?
By Howard Lees

It has been said that managers manage and leaders lead. Leadership brings with it occasional management duties, but the best leaders resist all temptations for giving instructions or orders; they focus on a strong and caring supportive style and the occasional 'big meaningful message'. People are commonly promoted to leadership positions with minimal education in leadership. Often, people that are thrown into leadership jobs don't appear to be given the space to make the time to learn the skills for the new job properly. Many folks in leadership positions have been stuck in the too busy trap since the day they got the new job. Many haven't yet even developed the authority of a 'do not tumble dry label'!

I suspect that numerous leaders behaving like managers work for people also in leader roles that are also behaving like managers. This domino environment will inevitably create a lot of verbal activity but little real production. Leaders in managers' clothing nagging for deliverables is akin to them throwing sticks for their people to rush off and bring them back. Perhaps it's time for some leaders to ask their people 'how am I leading'?

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Delusions of Collaboration
By Garry Sanderson

Many initiatives intended to improve collaboration are less than effective. Below are a few examples of such delusions of collaboration that I have experienced (and perhaps even been guilty of). These are well intentioned and potentially positive contributory factors in support of collaboration. However, some misguided leaders risk assuming that such initiatives are the primary ingredients of a high performing collaborative environment.

Co-location
It makes sense to bring all the members of a team into one location, but co-location does not necessarily equal collaboration. I have worked in co-located offices in which representatives from each organisation sit quietly in their own area, emailing people who sit 20 feet away. I have also been in highly effective teams spread around the world. The Covid-19 dynamics may have shifted the default leadership view that people must be in the same physical space to operate effectively together.

Offsite team building days
Golf days, paintballing, escape rooms and ten pin bowling can all help accelerate relationships and give people well deserved time away from the coal face. However, such sessions often do little to foster real and sustained collaboration.

Mission statements on the wall
We've all seen the signed team charters, vision statements, values posters etc hanging on the wall. We may even have been involved with creating them. But there is often a gulf between what's stated on the wall and what's happening on the ground, each day.

What can you see in your work environment that is a delusion of collaboration?

Generous Leadership
By Ian Atree

In response to a suggestion from a staff member, a leader says "yes I've already thought of that."

What does that statement achieve?

On it's own it's merely a fact. If it's a pattern of behaviour then it can be stifling for a team. Here's why.

The staff member has tried to add value, and their attempt to do so is what you want to occur in the future. This is discretionary effort; the golden goose. The boss has now said that the idea is not needed because they've already thought of it, so in future there is the chance that the staff member won't bother, because the boss will have already thought of it.

Why is the boss pointing this out? Because it's the truth, maybe, or maybe it's the boss pointing out how smart they are. Maybe it points to some other deeper seated insecurity that the boss has? Whatever it is, in terms of leadership, thinking about what it achieves helps us understand what the smart move is.

The point is, what could that leader gain by being generous, and keeping the fact that they've already thought of it to themselves - saying, "Thanks, that's a good idea, we should try it"?

Real Safety vs Virtual Safety
By Howard Lees

Real safety occurs where leaders intelligently and deliberately create a safe place for their workforce to operate. They frequently solicit feedback from the eyes and ears of their workforce, and they take this information and blend it with the law of the land to create a 'real safety' culture. Coaching on real safety occurs at all levels within the hierarchy. Leaders work to respect the creation and maintenance of a psychologically safe workplace.

Virtual safety is more about governance and processes. This often involves a strong statement from the top of the company regarding the legal minimum acceptable level of safety performance. The virtual safety scenario often comes with high levels of publicity, voluminous all-encompassing safety processes, lots of talk regarding compliance, numerous old and now discredited safety initiatives.

Real safety feels laced with integrity and care for the employees. Virtual safety reeks of loud statements and hope for the best!

Shades of BMT

- People may base their decisions primarily on removing threats, even though some of these perceived threats only have a minute probability of happening.
- Sometimes there is no rational explanation for behaviour that was just irrational.
- "All the best things live on the other side of fear." - Actor Will Smith's grandmother

'Tis the Season
By Rachel Edwards

Christmas is nearly upon us, decorations are getting put up, and I have seen a few dodgy festive jumpers already. Supplies are being bought to facilitate seasonal overindulgence, and presents to hopefully gift in person this year. I love the few weeks before Christmas, the anticipation of fun times ahead is great to think about. Focusing on a positive future is enjoyable indeed; relishing what things will be like when we get to that moment in time we've been working towards is a nice daydream to have.

At some point during this cheerful haze, however, the usual panic hits me; how will I possibly get done all the things I need to in the time available? I scoff at people who start getting organised for Christmas in November as excessive, overeager planners with too much time on their hands. As I'm sledging at speed down the slope to Christmas however, I feel envious of the smug people whose early efforts have paid off.

What should be fun or at least was when I wasn't paying attention to the detail becomes stressful; survival mode kicks in and it's all about reaching the finishing line of Christmas Day. However if all I am doing is surviving rather than enjoying the process then it's an opportunity lost. It's a predictable situation though; Christmas is a fixed point on the calendar! Too much time spent on 'now', with occasional considerations about the future is missing a vital ingredient; deciding what needs to happen to bridge the gap between those two situations.

Call it what you want; a plan, a strategy, a countdown or a to-do list. Whether in the context of Christmas or something else entirely, a well thought out set of ideas to get from where I am now to where I want to be can only be helpful. One of the best pieces of advice I've ever received is "the secret to life is to enjoy the passage of time", maybe this year I will learn my lesson and do just that!