

Behavioural Digest

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Escape the Too Hard Box:
The latest book by Howard Lees is
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Automation By Rachel Edwards

Mindful fluency describes moving out of doing things 'automatically', into doing things deliberately, and with conscious thought. Brushing teeth is a behaviour so fluent and cued up by the environment, that the whole process from entering the bathroom to putting the toothbrush back in the cupboard can seemingly happen on autopilot. The brain has an astonishing capacity to automate behaviours; to learn patterns and guide us seemingly effortlessly through a complex series of tasks – driving a car and being unable to remember portions of the journey are testament to this. The brain is designed to automate as much as possible; the 'computing' power required to do otherwise would require our heads to grow so large that a natural childbirth would be impossible!

The downside to automation is a lack of 'deliberate' decision making; fluent behavioural patterns mean we tread the same path over and over again. Something worth remembering when eating a family size chocolate bar in front of the TV – simply narrating the behaviour in question moves us from automation to mindful fluency, although saying "another piece, another piece, another piece" for each mouthful definitely takes the fun out of it!

Hard to Envisage but Very Memorable By Howard Lees

I used to go swimming at Stockport baths in the 1960s. The only detail I can remember is drinking the hot Vimto afterwards, it was pure nectar. Fast forward to last weekend watching my grandson at junior cricket, when the whistle blew at the end he rushed over and asked "Can I have a bacon buttie?" Some events are memorable for just one notable thing, be it Vimto or bacon.

Great leaders can envisage what people will remember and they utilise that skill in getting their people focused on what needs to be in focus. A good friend took over a large power plant project in Wisconsin. His early attempts at getting workers' attention all failed. One day he hired in a large PA system and played Jimi Hendrix music at a very loud volume and slowly but surely the plant workers came over to see what was happening. When everyone was gathered up he took the microphone and said "Now I've got your attention, there's a few things I would like to say about the project."

It's these unconventional 'hard to envisage' things that make the great leader great. I guess every leader out there could do it but only a few seem to have the imagination. There's the boss that says "Hey let's just do 50 minute meetings," the boss that says "Let's read a book together and debate it at our leadership meetings." We remember these people for the unusual or off-beat things they did that got us to respect and like them.

"Most of us prefer to walk backward into the future, a posture that may be uncomfortable, but which at least allows us to keep on looking at familiar things for as long as we can." - Charles Handy



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The Future Belongs to Those Who are the Cause of the Effect They Want to See

By Bruce Faulkner

I recently read an article about innovation that struck me, so I thought I'd summarise it.

2500 years ago Aristotle invented the scientific method. He said that the purpose of science is to demonstrate that things cannot be other than they are. He pointed out that when you don't understand how something works, you use science to figure it out. You study to learn the causes of the effect you see. This then allows you to optimise based on your understanding of what you've observed.

But Aristotle noted that there are two parts of the world.

He said that there is another part of the world where things can be other than they are. In this part of the world, the job of human beings is to be the cause of the effect they want to see. In this part of the world, do not use science because it does not work here. It's inappropriate, often destructive to your efforts.

In this part of the world, you have to imagine possibilities and choose the one for which the most compelling argument can be made. This isn't about the idea for which there's the most data. It's the idea for which you develop the logic that makes it compelling. The beacon of this practice was Steve Jobs. He imagined possibilities and made compelling arguments for them.

The normal response from those who live in the other part of the world is: Just show me the data that shows this works. Data only works for 'what is'. At the point of analysis, 100% of the data is in the past. There doesn't seem to be any data about the future that is available to analyse.

Those who make a dent invest their time in figuring out compelling arguments for what could be.

Shades of BMT

- Perhaps re-read that email before sending it. Is there anything in there that may not get you the result/response you are looking for?
- It is asking a lot attempting to predict a potentially looming catastrophic event only using trailing measures.
- Qualifications are of temporary importance; getting opportunities to work with great people is the holy grail.
- Teaching is a lottery; it totally depends on what end of the scale you get to teach. You will be babysitting the distracted or inspiring enthusiasts and all points in between.
- If you've got pitch and timing it means you could be a great musician one day, it doesn't mean that you will be.

Save the Date: May 2023

The next Behavioural Leadership Conference and Workshop will be on **May 17th and 18th 2023 in Manchester, UK.**

Same As It Ever Was

By Lynn Dunlop

How often do you review your recurring meetings? It's really easy to slip into a pattern of running the same agenda in the same order every week/fortnight/month, even if it's no longer fit for purpose. I work with a lot of project teams, and even though the project moves through a lifecycle, it sometimes seems like the meetings are stuck the same old rhythm. Consider ways to change it up a little: Set time aside to ask what this meeting is really for, and if there's a way to achieve those goals more effectively. It might be that you shake up the agenda a little, or you might realise that there is no benefit any more to this meeting and replace it with something else, or simply cancel the meeting entirely.

Given that meetings are hugely resource-intensive, it's well worth spending time making sure that the ones you have are fit for purpose. If you're fully focused on how to achieve the end goals in the most efficient and effective way possible, you won't go far wrong.

Communication

By Howard Lees

1. Great communication is really important.
2. The better the relationships, the better the communication.
3. The better the listening, the better the communication.
4. Honest communications require trust and patience.
5. Impatience and aggression reduces trust and risks revenge.
6. Leaders are perfectly designed to get what they get now.
7. Great leadership can fix almost any unexpected blips along the way.
8. Great leaders get all this interpersonal environmental stuff right.
9. Processes do not deliver effective businesses or projects, people do.
10. Effective businesses and projects have great communication.