

# Behavioural Digest

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Behavioural Leadership  
Online Course - Winter 22-23  
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## Shaping

By Bruce Faulkner

Behavioural textbooks describe shaping from the perspective of a journey from here to a known outcome. The path to achieving that outcome is well understood, tried and tested. For example learning piano, golf, driving a car, or swimming. These are complicated activities. The cause-and-effect patterns are directly understood from the outset.

Developing a team is filled with more uncertainty and ambiguity. Environmental challenges and constraints show up in a unique combination. For the practitioner, the path to the outcome is obscured by fog, as these are complex activities. The cause and effect patterns can only be understood retrospectively. This is an iterative process - conduct an experiment, get back together and reflect, adjust/adapt and then set off on a new path.

There are a wide range of components necessary for 'teamwork'. Some are base behaviours (emails, meetings, phone calls). Others are selected based on the situational workplace challenges the team faces. Trying to get these base behaviours going isn't straightforward. Someone has to be observing the interactions between the people and their workplace environment, thinking, experimenting, and reflecting. Then running this loop all over again, and again, and again.

Perhaps learning the piano is the less stressful option?

## No Response

By Joanna Smyth

I think we've all experienced asking for something and getting no response. Small children and household pets seem to have selective hearing, but what excuse do adults in the workplace have for seeing someone make a request and electing not to respond? As far as I can tell, it tends to be rationalised as 'I'll get to that later' and then later never comes.

The effect of this is that the requestor spends their time in limbo, and in business that can be an expensive exercise. 'Extinction' is the behavioural science term for the process where someone expects a reinforcer (in this case a reply) but they don't get it. It's not that they get a refusal – in fact, a refusal would usually be more useful – it's that they get no response at all. As a result, uncertainty kicks in. Now plans must be made for when to chase the request, when to simply go ahead with a decision regardless, when to bypass the roadblock – all of which should be unnecessary labour for the requestor.

Breaching etiquette in this situation can be fraught. Social norms can dictate that a requestor who is seen to be pushy is committing a greater crime than the person who is ignoring or deprioritising a request. Time, money and relationships are all eroded when a workplace communication is left in the to-do pile. How much time do you tolerate spending in someone else's 'to do' pile?



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# If We Are Not Responsive, We Are Not Collaborative

By Garry Sanderson

Increasingly we are delivering major projects and programmes through collaborative 'enterprises' comprising multiple organisations and functions. One of the biggest frustrations in such enterprises is the unresponsiveness of others to their requests for input, information, approvals etc.

Conventional time management philosophy encourages us to focus our limited time and attention on that which is important to us. That which is not is relegated to the list of things that we will never get round to. The problem is that many items on this 'to-not-do' list are key to the most important activities of others with whom we are supposedly collaborating. If we are not responsive to them, we may be being productive, but we are not collaborating.

## One to Ones – No Thanks!

By Howard Lees

When I read company values that contain presumptive statements like "All our leaders carry out one on one coaching" it makes me shudder because I don't think there are that many leaders with the natural competence or training in how to skilfully carry out a useful/enjoyable one to one. One to ones frequently get voted as unpleasant or unpopular by each party in our opinion surveys, which is why I suspect that the much vaunted one to ones rarely happen at all. If there is zero reinforcement available for both people, excuses for postponement or cancellation will come dripping out. The people that benefit from excellent one to ones work for organisations that provide competent training and adroit feedback in order to curate successful one to ones that benefit both parties and ultimately the organisation and its customers.

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## Joining the Dots

By Lynn Dunlop

"I want you to learn more about leadership. Spend money on it; this is important."

I was told recently of a leader who said this to their team. I was incredibly impressed at the message. It has the same sentiment as "I want us all to work safely; I don't care how much it costs." I would bet that in neither instance will those teams go out and blow the whole year's budget on either leadership or safety. What they will have, however, is confidence to invest some time and money. They will feel trusted because that leader joined up the dots and removed a key barrier. Leadership training might cost some money, but feeling trusted is priceless.

## Dialogue Between Two Angels

By Howard Lees

"If people want to talk to me, they know where I am."

"If they did want to talk to you, they would. Maybe they tried talking to you and got shouted down? Why would they want to talk to you anyway? If they are not talking to you, they may have a reason why. I tried giving you feedback twice and both times you responded with defensive rationalising. If you do get feedback off someone, just thank them and move on."

"That's great feedback, thanks."

*(In homage to CS Lewis)*

## Shades of BMT

- If you are 50 years old and just chasing sticks for your boss then you could very easily be replaced by a much cheaper 30 year old that will also chase faster!
- The verbal abuser of many years does not make it better by saying "Hey everybody, I am sorry," but it's a start!
- The easiest way to please no-one is to try and please everyone.