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The Easy Way Out By Ali Ahmed

“Sorry, it’s just the way I am.” Is it? The working environment is populated with people who have convinced themselves that their routinely exhibited (flawed) behaviour is a by-product of their unchangeable, determined personality. However, personality is made up of a bunch of habits someone does over their lifetime. Habits can be changed over time meaning personality can be altered, and ‘bad’ behaviours can be transposed into more desirable behaviours. So why does this infrequently occur? People do not resist change; they resist moving from a comfortable environment to an uncomfortable environment. For instance, a person who is always late for work is habitually tuned to showing up late so showing up on time would be uncomfortable for them.

The solution? Humans are infatuated with reinforcement; we look for it in every domain of life, so it is unsurprising the key to behavioural change lies in positive reinforcement. This involves rewarding someone (or yourself) for demonstrating a desired behaviour e.g., giving the person who is always late for work a doughnut when they arrive on time! Importantly, the desired behaviour must be consistently reinforced, so fragile, new behaviours can be nurtured. Otherwise, people return to their old habits and say “Sorry, it’s just the way I am.”

The Ego Trap By Howard Lees

I is a first person singular pronoun. The word ego is a translation of I from Latin. The Collins dictionary defines the word ego as ‘the self of an individual person’, ‘the conscious subject’, ‘one’s image of oneself’. An ‘ego trip’ can occur in order to enhance the subject’s level of self importance. Ego trips can be fun for the performer and also for everyone else. Ego trips can also be destructive and run into difficulty for unsuspecting bystanders if correcting feedback does not steady the individual that’s ‘off on an ego trip’. Most folks deal with egotistical behaviours in their social peer groups by saying something to the performer that stems the annoying behaviour. Much of this pattern-correcting behaviour occurs when people are still children. These candid comments of youthful, sometimes brutal feedback actually serve a good purpose here. Not everyone receives it though, sadly.

Ego trips are difficult to contend with when operating within a hierarchy, for example, in the workplace. The much talked about ‘manager in leader’s clothing’ tends to attempt to manage everything via their ego. This reduces the workplace down to lots of people asking for permission at every turn or - even worse than that - not asking for permission because they are fearful. These victims dive into avoidance behaviours in order to quell their frustrations, often leading them to chase sticks for the leader. Less thinking, more shoe leather. This is one common way that eminently predictable bad things still go wrong; everyone can see what’s happening, no-one wants to speak out for fear of retribution, time is utilised in ‘too busy’, all reinforcement is derived via ‘too busy’.

Transporting the guilty back to early secondary school is not an option in reality, so what can be done? I guess it’s time for me to get researching and produce another book. Did you spot that ego burst there? I welcome suggestions for a book title.

The Impatient Tiger

By Ali Ahmed

Great leaders are like Sumatran Tigers - there aren't many of them about. Many companies fight over a handful of star recruits each year in order to fulfil their leadership needs, but that's just not necessary. The excellent book *The Leadership Pipeline* advises organisations to develop an internal pipeline. The question is, how do you develop people with potential into excellent leaders? One role discussed within the book was the role of an Enterprise Manager. Enterprise leadership requires adhering to a set of values that are fundamentally different to those required at other levels. Leaders at this level are in charge of a business rather than specific teams or areas.

Enterprise leaders must be strategic whilst simultaneously delivering consistent, predictable top and bottom-line results. This also means sticking by long cycle processes, coaching and initiatives, resisting the urge to give up on them before they've produced the desired results. It can prove difficult for any 'Type A' go-getter leaders who have been accustomed to achieving fast results most of their career.

Many Enterprise Leaders miss the immediate reinforcement they were receiving at the other earlier leadership levels. For some, this loss of immediate reinforcement is often the antecedent for a reversion to Type A, back to go-getter manager. Many people with great potential slip up at this milestone, hence the seeming-shortage of great leaders. Good leaders aren't born, they are expertly made, with care and coaching and reinforcement.

Why Doesn't He See What He's Doing?

By Joanna Smith

I encountered a man; he is a senior VP at one of our JV partners. We were attending a project 'on boarding' meeting. A better description of it would have been 'a hostage situation'. It was a two-hour blend of deadly boring, stultifyingly patronising, and something from an utterly fictional planet. This man spoke for a while. His role was to deliver the stultifyingly patronising section of the meeting and he had clearly carried out no preparation for what he was saying. When he wasn't talking, he was noodling with his phone. I, and others in the room, couldn't believe what he was doing. There were enough facial expressions firing around that any normal person would detect that feedback message in the ether, but not this man.

If he understood what was happening, I suppose there's a chance he could adapt his behaviour. This man is either in his 50's or did a very hard paper round when he was young. He is certainly old enough to know better. How come no-one has said anything to him about this lazy and rude style of leadership? Is it too late for him now? Surely if he knew that there was a better way to behave in public then he would behave that way; it can only be his ignorance that is holding him back. Someone should do something to help him. Hang on, I am someone; I could do something. Am I going to do something? Certainly not! I yearn for revenge. I am going to enjoy this fool as much as I can. Have I outed myself here, will he find out and punish me? No, I am fictional!

A Very Important Moment in Time

By Harry Bailey

It's been a strange few years, very strange indeed. The last few years is framed for me by the death of my older brother George. Our family were saddened by his passing, George was a very special person. He was by no means a special kid at school, he was mediocre at sports and did not aspire to anything grand. He was a simple man whose persona was marked vividly by his generosity and thoughtfulness; he never had a bad word to say about anyone. He always found the upside in any scenario; he saw the good side in everyone and everything. I wonder what this town would have been without him. Here's to you George.

Documentation Rules

By Walter Hufnagel

At a recent client meeting, their safety director said "We need some new documentation. I asked "How is that piece of paper going to improve safety in the workplace?" He thought I was being facetious but I said "It's a serious statement: How is that documentation going to affect safety, what behaviours are going to occur between the production of the document and any change in the workplace environment?"

"I accept that you feel that you need to have a new document, I am asking you to remember that it's not going to improve safety. What happens next is key to it having any impact at all."

I was made to feel like a trouble causer, like I was dissing safety in some way. It was a serious question, but he didn't seem to get the point. His next words were "Just get the document circulated." How's that for collaboration?

Shades of BMT

- Sunflowers follow the sun, no matter what contortions they have to perform.
- Even a dead snake can still bite you.