

# Behavioural Digest

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Tickets on Sale Now:  
BMT for Leaders Conference  
May 17th 2023  
Manchester, UK  
[www.hollin.co.uk](http://www.hollin.co.uk)



## Deja Vu Meetings By Howard Lees

I have talked about this habit previously and it seems to be appearing on the surface again. Deja vu meetings occur where the attendees work through the minutes of the last meeting but don't agree any actions by who by when etc. They go round and round on a subject then agree to review next month and move on to the next item.

How did this scenario likely become a norm? There's a good chance that some time ago one of the attendees was threatened by something that seemed to have become their responsibility and an action on them appeared, they responded badly to what they saw as a threat. Others in the room saw this as an unwelcome confrontation.

With an absence of leadership, over time and after multiple iterations with multiple people, all the actions disappeared from the workplace meetings, and they ended up talking about a subject and moving on to the next item on the list without decision or action. It's what one of my old bosses called 'the self licking ice cream cone'. A bunch of expensive people conspire to take up valuable company time and just have a safe social session then move on to the next session wide eyed and satisfied with their contribution to production, performance and purgatory!

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Photograph by Jean Lees. Editing by Nicola Griffiths.

## Defensive? By Lynn Dunlop

In their book *Radical Collaboration*, James Tamm and Ronald Luyet tell us that people generally want to feel Significant, Competent and Likeable. When these needs aren't met in the desired proportions, someone is more likely to be defensive, affecting their ability to collaborate.

If you are working with someone (or you are someone) who is exhibiting traits we might term as defensive, one way to begin tackling it is through empathy. We might ask:

- Significance: Do they feel sufficiently included in our discussions?
- Competence: Could they feel out of their depth?
- Likeability: Could they feel like their presence is resented?

If you're stumped about why someone appears defensive, using Tamm and Luyet's framework is an excellent first step.

## Behavioural Leadership Conference Event

This year, we are delighted to welcome back Alasdair Cathcart to speak at the conference. Videos of his conference speech in 2017 are among the most popular on [our website](#).

Dr Ryan Olson will also be returning to share the models and frameworks he has been using to improve safety and health outcomes, in particular for lone workers.

David Dickinson will join us for the first time, and he will speak about group intelligence and how he cultivates cognitive diversity and purposeful dissent.

The conference will be on May 17th at Manchester Airport, UK. Visit [www.hollin.co.uk](http://www.hollin.co.uk) to book tickets.

# Why Corporate Edicts Fail

## By Bruce Faulkner

'People are resistant to change, so what we need to create is a sense of urgency'. This says that avoiding bad outcomes motivates people. This is the dominant thinking model for change, and it doesn't work very often. There is little evidence to support "urgency" as a mechanism for behavioural change. Look at the entrance to a hospital, there you'll see people in gowns smoking. Failed change efforts continue to pile up, and no one asks questions, as they look to impose a sense of urgency.

By not questioning this assumption, here's what is missed: People's current behaviours have adapted over time to suit their environment. And those behaviours were selected and retained through consequences. Consequences created by the cumulative effect of management's past decisions. This means: People's behaviour serves a purpose. And that purpose is to navigate the bad outcomes, of previous initiatives. So, when today's behaviours are viewed as being resistant to change, it's a clear signal that the conditions for change haven't yet been created.

People's behaviour is based on their current context. This includes the meaning they're placing on what's happening around them. That meaning is defined by the sum total of their past experiences. Most of which remain unknown to others. This makes each person's response unique. So, it's not a sense of urgency that's needed, it's a new sense of meaning that's required.

The first step is to gather people's perspective on their day-to-day experience. Next, address one of the challenges they're facing. This changes the consequences that dominate their current context or environment. They'll notice that.

Opening up a new channel of communication - one that is responsive - creates the conditions for change. Now, people are ready to figure out new ways of working. But what could work remains unknown. They must discover and develop it themselves, through experimentation. Adopting this approach, creates a new sense of meaning for people. And that's a far more compelling source of motivation than imposing a sense of urgency.

# Bolts of Wisdom

## By Howard Lees

Over the years of my career I have occasionally received a message from a leader that stopped me in my tracks. These moments affected the rest of my career and in some cases changed its direction. I am calling these stunning life changing leadership messages 'bolts of wisdom'. I have selected a number of them for my talk at our forthcoming conference at Manchester Airport on the 17th May. I look forward to sharing these bolts of wisdom with you.

## Shades of BMT

- Great leaders never rummage around in the weeds, never, ever, ever.

# Corporate Punishment Part 2

## By Howard Lees

Poor leaders can create a considerable amount of torment for large numbers of their people that just want the freedom to do a good job and get some recognition from above. I was in a meeting yesterday discussing 'stereotypical leader types'. Whilst being completely unscientific and massively subjective, it was also a very entertaining session, lots of laughs. Here's some of the cartoon leaders we came up with. Of course, the chance of anyone new turning up and impacting these people or their organisations for the better is zero.

1. The endless list of CEOs that flip from one big organisation to another, taking all the nectar as they go.
2. The overly cautious bureaucrat that adorns government posts, local councils, privatised utilities.
3. The leader that wants to be everyone's friend and jumps down the hierarchy searching for positive reinforcement, confusing everyone.
4. The director that lost their ambition, used to be a star, got rich, no fight left, too comfortable, now retired in post.
5. The seat warmer that attends every meeting and presents as someone who is 100% meeting the brief, but on close inspection has added absolutely nothing.
6. The imposter that doesn't believe they belong, spending their days getting decapitated by the hungry fans of Machiavelli sat around the table.
7. The bloviator that insists on adding "value" whenever they can by throwing sticks for their staff to chase at varying tangents (good dog).

If this bleak scenario of organisations with zero potential for improvement is true, then how come there are so many management consultants blocking up all the drains!