

# Behavioural Digest

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Manchester, UK  
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## Where's The Value In Qualified Praise?

By Howard Lees

Feedback is great; it's the best prompt for an adjustment in behaviour. I have been sent examples of feedback that people have received from their boss, a peer and a client, with the same question in each case: "Why does this not feel like praise?" Here are the examples:

"What you delivered on the project was really good, for the most part."

"What you said in the meeting was great, with some exceptions."

"I felt that you hit the nail on a couple of things you said at today's project meeting".

It begs the question, why not full-throated praise? Why add, "For the most part?" Why withhold praise? Is this just an unconscious bad habit? Perhaps these hoarders of praise need some feedback?

## Behavioural Leadership Conference, May 17th/18th 2023

The Hollin team and associates will be at the Hilton at Manchester Airport, UK, on the 17th and 18th of May to share insights about strong and caring leadership. [Book your place here](#) for the Conference and Workshop.

## Influencing Without Authority By Dr Bill Redmon

Leadership is hard to define simply. Many people have done it a disservice by making it seem more complicated than it really is. That is why I like behavioural concepts so much... not just for formal leaders, but for teachers, parents, and anyone who has to deal with other humans to achieve a goal. I think leadership becomes clearest when people must influence others, but don't have the formal power to use "force." So, the idea of influencing without authority leaves some people flummoxed. People have asked, "How would I get them to do anything if I wasn't in a position of power?"

As an exercise, I have suggested that people imagine their direct reports are peers or others over whom they have not formal authority and to consider if they would lead differently. Some folks seem dumbfounded at first. Unfortunately, not everyone is able to reflect on their experiences and take away lessons they can apply to themselves and others. There is no learning without reflection and many people fail to reflect effectively to consider what each of their experiences mean. However, a number willingly reflect imaginatively on this experience and take forward some new rule-governed behaviour into their repertoire.

Reflection is critical to learning and the key catalyst for change (not just experience or observation).



[Click here](#) to join the BMT group on LinkedIn.

# Passive Culture Trap

## By Joanne Benjamin

During a recent workshop, we were discussing unintended cultural norms and took the opportunity to create a conditioned response to demonstrate our discussion in real time. This wasn't something we had initially planned to do, rather an opportunity to offer some insight into how easy it is in a short time frame to create dependencies on people/reminders.

So how did we do this?

At the first break we set the expectation of it being a 25-minute break and wrote the time to be back on the flipchart as a visual prompt. Once we got close to the 25-minute mark we reminded them of the time and called them back in the room so we could restart on time. The second break arrived, and we reset the timescale expectation and wrote the time to be back on a flipchart as we had before. During the break we realised we had an opportunity to create an example, so removed the reminder and call to return. As you have probably guessed, very few people returned ready to start at the set time (7% of people, to be exact). Though the experiment was interesting and enjoyable, we also had an agenda to get through. We decided to use the visual cue of us hanging around the doorway, hoping that someone would notice and begin the mass return into to the room. This worked! Once everyone had taken their seats, we asked them what time they'd been asked to return. An uncomfortable murmur spread round the room as people started to notice it was now 15 minutes after that time. We explained what we'd done and offered the following insight into creating cultures.

Workplaces rarely set out to create passive cultures. It happens gradually over time, often through 'helpful' prompts. These are usually intended to remind someone they have a commitment, speed up response times or increase the chances of something getting done/completed. The initial prompt was never intended to create a dependency but unfortunately that's what happens. It creates a reinforcing loop and a comfort that, in a daily battle to remember a growing list of things, someone else can be relied upon to nudge some of that list. The downside to these seemingly helpful reminders is that it creates an environment where people switch off and allow someone else to take the responsibility that should lie with the performer.

## Shades of BMT

- If you change your past behaviour and suddenly become interested in your people at work, there is a chance they will become suspicious of you.
- If the goal is to get people to realise/accept that there might be another way, the initial step is to get them to start observing what's happening now.
- Responding - Set yourself up with some high, medium, and low strength retorts. Check to see which ones work. Start with the safe ones.

# That's The Way It Could Be

## By Bryony Sherry

What does learned helplessness look like in the workplace? Many leaders have found themselves holding positions of power without first gaining the necessary leadership experience and training to succeed in the role. As a result, they are unequipped to provide a psychologically safe environment for their team. They see themselves as too small, too powerless, and too busy to make a change in what is probably a longstanding culture of bureaucratic torpor.

Leaders have a choice - they can feed the system of bureaucracy and pass down the aggression and pressure which is being passed down to them. Alternatively, leaders can shelter their team from unnecessary negativity. It is possible to break the cycle of bureaucracy and to influence the environment for good. Becoming strong and caring can be a difficult transition for some, however, it's a major tenet of leadership. A good starting point is to drop the temptations of learned helplessness and develop the skills that support moving forward with learned effectiveness instead.

## Remove the Barriers

### By Lynn Dunlop

Dr Ryan Olson's Performance Equation says that barriers to performance must be removed before we have any realistic chance of people successfully completing a task.

In the safety world, that might look like ensuring that the amount we communicate with people doesn't overload them. Make it consistently easy for people to know what's important. Otherwise we risk the really important things getting lost in the mix.

*Dr Olson will be speaking at the Behavioural Leadership conference and workshop on the 17th and 18th of May in Manchester, UK. [Book your places now.](#)*