

Behavioural Digest

No. 156 August 2023

Book Now:

Behavioural Leadership
Conference and Workshop
May 15th & 16th 2024
Manchester, UK



It's All In A Name By Howard Lees

Organisations give the game away regarding things they don't respect. A classic example is the merger of QSHE – it is so beautifully marginalising. It is a much complained-about convenient sweep up of all the things the main board think are tiresome and so they lump them all together and stick the HR director in charge. I never saw a company that prioritised Environment, Safety, Health and Quality as separate entities and simultaneously created the 'HCFL' post and made that all part of the HR director's responsibility – HCFL = HR, Commercial, Finance, Legal. Why not lump these departments into one?

I have suggested to many companies that Health and Safety is the preserve of the Operations director or whoever else is in charge of the people that can get hurt.

Commercial/Procurement should hold 'quality' because they are the ones that typically spoil 'quality' by tinkering with contracts and create revenge behaviours that lead to quality problems. Finance should be in charge of environment; they would then have to find the money for the fines!

We have four children, Steven, Susan, and two others!

Dreams of Perfection By Bryony Sherry

With practice, comes perfection – isn't that what we're always told? Feedback acts as a catalyst for behavioural change. Without it, hopes of perfection – or even improvement, are a far away dream. It is crucial to gain high-level feedback to understand how and why behaviour must change. A simple "you could be less brash" won't help you understand that it is your unhelpful habit of interrupting people that is pernicious to relationships. Asking people to be specific in their feedback, or investing in a behavioural coach could help you identify – and solve – all of the problems you never knew you had!

Leadership By Walter Hufnagel

Warren Bennis defined leadership as "the capacity to create a compelling vision, translate it into action and sustain it." Peter Drucker believed that "managers should, above all else, be leaders." Margaret Wheatley said, "Leadership is a series of behaviours rather than a role for heroes." Charles Handy said "Leadership is getting the most out of people." Aubrey Daniels wrote an excellent book called *Bringing Out The Best In People*.

There is a clear message here: These wise people agree that Leadership is a very important skill. It is a key competence that should be learned and practised in the workplace in order to create successful, productive, safe and happy workplaces. Great leaders focus on creating a workplace environment for everyone involved that supports the desired outputs of the organisation. These people also make it inevitable that the workforce will, for the most part, enjoy delivering their tasks, day to day.



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

Everything Will Change, So Stay Awake

By Howard Lees

How fast can people learn? How fast can people develop their skills? Anders Ericsson said 10,000 hours of deliberate practice in a positive coaching environment can realise success, but this will be onerous (bloody hard!). The consensus regarding speed of development of workplace skills centres around recognising the day-to-day opportunities that pop up and grasping as many of them as you can. Learning a language or learning the piano is arguably easier. A question of study and practice; if you can play a two-octave scale in C sharp in time and with both hands then you know that you are on your way.

Workplace skills are more ethereal and interactive. We are responding to other people and what they are doing and saying, we need to be observing and analysing and experimenting with our responses and watching for consequences within that distinct environment. Reflection is paramount so we can adjust our response next time to see if we can create a 'better' consequence/response. I have an app on my phone that tells me where speed cameras are on the road network. Perhaps it would help us if we each had a pair of 'awareness goggles' we could wear that would flag up the big learning opportunities that pop up, right in front of us, every day. Imagine how much faster we would learn!

Learned Helplessness -

A condition of a human in which it has learned to behave helplessly, even when the opportunity is restored for it to help itself by avoiding an unpleasant or harmful circumstance to which it has been subjected.

- Martin E. P. Seligman

Change-Makers

By Bryony Sherry

Learned helplessness is common in all walks of life, whether it's "There's nothing I can do around here to make a difference," or "I've eaten one cake, so I may as well eat the lot." Passivity is the enemy of progress.

"Behavioural activation" is a term introduced to me by Dr. Ryan Olson, who spoke at the Hollin Conference in May. It is the antidote to learned helplessness. Behavioural activation techniques can be used to pull yourself and/or others out of learned helplessness.

By pairing appropriate consequences with very specific behaviours - and ensuring the environment is set up to maximise the likelihood of the behaviour occurring - new behaviours are activated. Measuring the frequency of the behaviours will tell you if there is sufficient reinforcement in the environment for the behaviour to be sustained over time.

Small Acts, Big Consequences

By David Lees

"Stacking tiny improvements over time will equal significant change over time."

That's an easy to digest statement, easy to understand, and easy to discount. So easy in fact, that it is often followed with no small changes and people go and do what they've always done. So why could this be?

Firstly, habit does play a part; we are habitual animals after all. We will often default back to the habits we had beforehand, because that's what the environment supports. However, when the simple changes make things easier for people to achieve what they want, it makes no sense that this would not stick - one of the fundamental laws of behaviour is "if you want a behaviour to happen, make it the easiest thing to do."

So, what else?

From experience of running courses for 20 years, which result in a small improvement delivered in the workplace, the level of stickiness is measured almost entirely by one factor, which is the behaviour of the leader of the receiving team.

If the leaders in the receiving team show an interest in the changes/improvements, more will follow. If they ask, "That's great, what else could you do with that?" more will follow. If they ask, "How could we scale that to achieve more with it?" more will follow.

Shades of BMT

- If your people could draw caricatures, what do you think yours would look like?
- Thought transfer is not an efficient vehicle for feedback.
- Great leaders feed off the potential of their people.
- If you had given me this feedback two months ago, I would have responded two months ago.