

Behavioural Digest

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CVs - Part 1 By The Hollin Team

At Hollin, we see a lot of CVs, or resumé. From recent graduates to Managing Directors, we offer similar advice to many of the authors. Over the next few months, we'll share some of that advice. Applying behavioural science to writing CVs involves predicting the fastest routes, delivering reinforcers to the person reading the CV. It can also involve shaping one's own work to deliver reinforcers for writing, rather than extinction or even punishment. In part 1, let's start with the big question: Why write a CV at all?

A CV is a sales pitch. It is rarely framed that way, but that's the reality. This sales pitch has two important players: the *reader* and the *writer*. Of those two people, the reader is the most important person in the transaction. Everything the writer includes in their CV is there to help the reader see why the writer is the very best person for this job. Anything that helps the reader is reinforcing their behaviour of reading that CV. Anything that does not, risks the reader putting the CV into the 'no' pile and moving onto the next candidate in search of reinforcement. The purpose of the CV is to get the writer to the next stage of the employment process and nothing more.

Language in Leadership - Shaping Perceptions By Millie Bramley

Leadership is the art of guiding others towards a shared vision. The vehicle for this journey is language. Yet, problematically, language isn't neutral. It carries hidden messages that can either reinforce the status quo or challenge it. Language isn't merely communication - it's an ongoing battle of power dynamics. Discourse is "ideologically loaded", encoding beliefs and ideas into language choices. Leaders who grasp this can wield their influence with greater finesse and efficacy.

Leaders use persuasive language to frame issues, motivate teams, and secure support. Word choices affect how issues are perceived and acted upon. Language is a tool of power that shapes perceptions.

Language can establish social hierarchies. Factors like formality and tone can shape the leader-follower dynamic. Great leaders use language strategically to maintain or challenge existing power structures.

Successful leaders influence organisational cultures by aligning their language with values like inclusion, creating positive environments. Conversely, biased language damages culture and unity: This can be seen when CEO Steve promotes "Fitness Friday" to boost morale. The office becomes a gym, those taking part are deemed "fitness gurus"; those not, "couch potatoes". Whilst intended as amusing, the language choices inadvertently communicate bias and potentially harmful ideologies.

Effective leadership today means mastering language, acknowledging its hidden implications, and using it mindfully to promote positive change.



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Mindful Observations

By Bryony Sherry

The concept of feedback is mystifying to so many people. Perhaps they are scared of it, maybe they have been burned in the past. Delegates on our courses and behavioural training have told us, “We don’t do feedback around here.” They are displaying learned helplessness and have stored this problem in the depths of the “Too Hard Box”.

What if I told you that you didn’t need to ask for feedback? Your environment is filled with feedback, from body language to facial expressions and a plethora of ‘basic’ human actions. When you ask for something to be done, and you’re left hanging... That’s feedback. Feedback is so much more than speech, and the words used to critique/praise performance.

Next time you find yourself in a meeting or an interesting social situation, have a look at who does what when you are speaking. If Brian is looking out of the window every time you speak, it is probably time for a catch-up.

Fluency and Leadership

By Lynn Dunlop

“Knowing what to do” and “Doing what you know” are two very different skillsets. Take introducing a new behaviour to ourselves or someone else. Despite the behaviour appearing straightforward, it may prove difficult to execute simply because it is not yet a fluent behaviour. An example might be mental arithmetic – when asked to calculate a sum, I can do it, but it may take me a long time to dust off the mental skills to supply the correct answer.

This lack of fluency becomes particularly significant in situations that occur infrequently but carry high stakes. Such situations might demand behaviours that we haven’t done recently, leaving them to rust in the back of our minds. Whenever I hear about safety policies that require an operative to ‘stop the job’ when they perceive something potentially unsafe, I think of this fluency gap. Just about every environmental factor is aligned for that operative to ‘carry on with the work,’ unless ‘stopping the job’ is something they do sufficiently frequently. Without fluency, they will decide what to do by considering their own personal history, past experiences of others stopping a job, verbal messaging from their supervisors and the sense of urgency they feel about completing the job if there is only a chance of it being unsafe.

To achieve fluency in critical behaviours, leadership is essential. This is why, when the fire alarm goes off in a school, all the kids dutifully stop work, troop outside and line up neatly. The leaders hold drills to reinforce the learning and swift evacuation becomes a familiar skillset for the kids. Now think about what happens to a group of adults when the fire alarm goes off in an unfamiliar building. Even when we know where the muster point is, the likelihood that we immediately stop working and walk briskly to the nearest designated exit is slim – we look around and see what everyone else is doing. In the absence of a leader, individuals will make choices that reflect their most fluent behaviours, for good or ill.

How Long Is This Going To Take?

By Rachel Edwards

“I want my team to be empowered”. Why do you want that? “I want people to make decisions, and to make things happen”. What’s getting in the way of them doing that? “I don’t know, but it’s been that way for a long time...”

The leadership conundrum concerning empowerment rests on the person who knows what to do and having the answers readily to hand, trying to figure out how to get the people that work for them to also know what to do, and figure out the answer and act on it, without directly instructing and handing out advice. The expedient solution of stepping in to ‘move things along’ only pushes empowerment further away – the urgency to solve today’s problems gets in the way of improving empowerment over time.

Everyone has established behaviours in their repertoires; things said and done, repeated many times over. Whether they are achieving the desired outcome is another matter. Chivvying the kids to get out of the house in the morning doesn’t really seem to speed up levels of activity, but saying nothing is too frustrating! Could they get ready on time and we all have a calm start to the day? Absolutely! Are they going to provide some leadership to this situation? Absolutely not! Looks like it’s down to me to create the environment for success; I can’t sustain the current situation for the next 15 years!

Shades of BMT

- “It’s not the notes you play, but all of the notes you imply.”
- Madison Cunningham
- Your dysfunctions are not complex but for some reason you seem to be hell-bent on preserving them.
- We feed on the positive stuff from the people we like and the negative stuff from the people we don’t like.