

Behavioural Digest

No. 158 October 2023

Book Now:

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



Vomit Consultants

By Howard Lees

Sometimes I weaken. I get stuck on a thought and have to abandon my thought stream. I feel befuddled. What do I do instead? Sometimes, I scroll through LinkedIn; I know!

There are some staples, some folks are always good for a pithy read (e.g. Dom Cooper and James Pomeroy). There's the obligatory company posts with "I am so proud" comments. There are the awards ceremony pictures featuring men in black and white and women in colour winning some award and accepting it off a comedian I thought had retired years ago.

The biggest emetic, however, are the vomit consultants; the people espousing 'be good people, do good things', 'good is good and bad is bad'. They profess McNuggets of over-simplified quick fixes and urge people towards their solutions that will heal over any conundrum in rapid time.

Anyone in the business of business improvement knows that those cramps that stalled effective business were developed over many years and most will take that long again to clear out of the workplace, and even then will need a furious tail wind. Institutional repertoire cannot be cleared with 8 tablets a day for 4 days.

His Own Goldfish Bowl

By Lynn Dunlop

An actor was grumbling to Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards about having to go outside to smoke in an NYC music venue. Keith asked why they had to go outside; he had been smoking indoors in public NYC venues for years and no-one had complained about the smell. "Yes," the actor explained, "No-one complains *to you*." Keith had no idea that indoor smoking in NYC had been illegal since 2003. No-one had wanted to approach the legend and ask him to stop.

CVs - Part 2

By The Hollin Team

Last month, we said that a CV is a sales pitch: Its purpose is to persuade the reader to want to learn more about you. This time, we'll talk about ways to achieve that. Each reader is looking for a particular cluster of skills or qualities in the CV that will make a cluster of neurons go 'ping!' - I will read the CV again. For a writer, the goal is to predict what those reinforcers might be and compose a CV to suit. This might sound like a lot of work, but in reality most employers want a lot of the same skillsets: e.g. MDs need leadership skills and recent graduates need initiative. Even better, a close reading of the job description will usually state exactly what the employer actually wants.

Once you've found those skills, your job is to prove that you have them. Common advice for writers is "show, don't tell." For a CV writer, that means: "Tell the reader something you have actually achieved that demonstrates you have that skill." Anyone can say "I'm an excellent salesperson," but only you can say "I increased sales in the Widgets Department from £500k to £850k over six months."



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

Avoidance: The Path Dreams Take To Die

By Bruce Faulkner

You're sitting at your desk listening as the voice from the Teams meeting drones on. You gaze out the window with a touch of sadness. A sense of loss. Work doesn't engage you the way it once did. A growing sense of dread has been creeping in. You know you're just coping.

If you were to look back, you wouldn't find a dramatic event that put you here. To understand what happened, you'd have to look closer. Then you'd discover there are a few small choices connected to your sense of loss. Choices that, the moment you made them, you knew you didn't agree with.

Put together enough of these moments, and you'll end up in this unhappy place. But this is a surface level understanding of the problem. Real insight comes from understanding the purpose, or function, of these decisions.

Each decision moves you towards what you want, or away from what you don't want. Your sense of sadness and loss confirms you've moved away from what you valued. But that still doesn't explain, "How the hell did I end up here?"

By understanding the concept of "avoidance behaviour," you'll find that answer. Avoidance behaviour is the technical term for seeking to escape a perceived threat. For example: If you don't like confrontation, you avoid certain topics when you're talking to people. Why? Because you're unsure how the other person might react.

Virginia Satir said, "Most people prefer the certainty of misery to the misery of uncertainty." She nailed it. It's misery either way. If only we could find the courage to sit in a moment of misery. Instead, we choose avoidance and the path dreams take to die.

Are You A Leader Or A Manager?

By Ben Care

Management is about control. Leadership, on the other hand, is about inspiring and motivating others towards a common goal. Leaders may not always be in an authoritative position, but they influence their team through their actions and ideas to accomplish the company's vision. This is why we follow good leaders.

Managers using an authoritative style can create negative work environments resulting in high-stress levels and low satisfaction. Leaders can do the opposite, leading to high engagement levels and job satisfaction.

Fortunately, managers can also be leaders. By fulfilling leadership responsibilities such as communicating thoughtfully, giving inspiration and guidance and empowering others; by understanding each person's strengths and abilities; by bringing out the best in everyone around them. A focus on behavioural leadership is a focus on better results for everyone involved.

Hegemony

By Millie Bramley

Hegemony is a concept introduced by Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. It offers a profound perspective on how power dynamics operate in society. It's more than just dominance; it's about the silent control over beliefs, behaviours and societal norms. It explains why sometimes evil people get elected to high office with incredible power over the masses (the rest of us).

Gramsci defines "common sense" as the dominant ideas and beliefs that people hold in their consciousness. These ideas are often accepted uncritically and serve as the basis for how individuals justify their own version of reality. Culture, as Gramsci sees it, encompasses the totality of ideas, beliefs, and values that shape an individual's environment. In other words, culture is the air we breathe in our everyday lives, the messages and conditions that surround us, moulding our perceptions and views, we reinforce our biases and we ignore facts that challenge our view of the world.

In a work setting, the prevailing culture is set by the part of the leadership that dominates and maintains the culture. Hegemony, in this context, represents dominance over everyone; it is all about power and control. Over time this becomes normal - what we call institutional repertoire - what you should expect if you work here.

There are organisations that continually examine and challenge any emerging unpleasant hegemony. It is possible to encourage, influence and support environments where diverse perspectives and ideas flourish. Ask yourself: How much company money can I spend without asking someone for permission?

Shades of BMT

- Uncertainty prevails with low levels of engagement.
- Making a mistake is just another opportunity to get to know other people better.
- Wear protection if you choose to voice company hypocrisy.