

# Behavioural Digest

No. 160 December 2023

Book Now:

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



## Real Safety – What Again? By Howard Lees

I was asked twice last week to help organisations create safety dashboards. I have only recently switched from hay to straw and was particularly grumpy. I am afraid that my less-than-diplomatic response was akin to a rather shouty “SAFETY DASHBOARDS DO NOT CREATE SAFE PLACES - THEY ARE THE VIRTUAL SAFETY DEMANDS OF BONE-IDLE LEADERS TRYING TO SHORTCUT REAL SAFETY.”

At one of our leadership conferences in Manchester, Dr John Austin said that exposure to risks in the workplace is a multiple of frequency and severity. This means how many times in an average day a worker encounters a specific risk and how serious the injury would be in the worst case scenario. He proffered the wisdom that mitigation of risks is achieved by leaders working to create a safe workplace environment and the workers practising mindful fluency by internalising a narrative of the safe way to complete each particular task. For example, “I am climbing the ladder and I am tightly holding the rungs,” or “I am taking the ignition key out of this bus before I work on it.” Discussions between the leader, the supervisor and the worker that make safety as simple as possible is the Real Safety way forward.

## Too Busy Brigade By Bryony Sherry

Behaviours are happening all the time, all around us. Some (if not most) people spend all of their days on this earth frustrated by other people’s behaviours. These people will likely avoid the science of measuring behaviours; they’re too busy for that. They’re too busy to comprehend the outcomes or rewards the performer attains by stopping the behaviour they want to prevent. They’re too busy to plan a schedule for measuring the desired behaviour and definitely too busy to even think about reinforcing it.

Behavioural Science isn’t brain surgery. Its terms can be confusing and in our too-busy world it only takes a hint of confusion before you have an avoidance behaviour on your hands. In courses and workshops, we aim to simplify this science so that even the busiest of the too busy brigade can be helped by implementing Behavioural Science.

## Behavioural Leadership Conference and Workshop 2024

Our two-day event comprises the Conference (15th May) and the Workshop (16th May). To mark the 20th year of Hollin, the theme in 2024 will be ‘longevity’.

Visit [www.hollin.co.uk](http://www.hollin.co.uk) to book tickets.

*“When someone shows you who they are,  
believe them the first time.”*

*- Maya Angelou*

# Feedback

## By Howard Lees

Many people say they are robust when it comes to feedback, but in truth hardly anyone is. In fact, most people are sensitive to hearing anything that might go against their self-image. It's very difficult to accurately hit the mark with feedback. What works best is just enough of the right feedback, on cue. The purpose of feedback is to either help someone get better at what they do, or to help them realise that something they currently do is not having the desired effect on the people around them.

If opinion-based feedback is written down, it is open to misinterpretation, no matter how well-crafted. It's more likely to hit the right mark if it is data-based and skilfully delivered in person. I favour delivering feedback whilst walking, so that we are both looking forward; conversations are easy and relaxed. The receiver of potentially bad news does not have to worry about a facial expression giveaway that may be embarrassing.

# You're So Two-Faced

## By Millie Bradley

In Linguistics, there's a social theory around politeness, where everyone has two social 'Faces': Positive, and Negative. Now, I'm not suggesting you're talking behind my back, but rather that you adapt your behaviour depending on how you want others to perceive you.

Face, in social terms, is the image we project to others. Positive Face is about the desire for approval, to be connected and liked, a 'part of the group'. In contrast, Negative Face relates to the desire for autonomy and personal boundaries, seeking freedom from interference and respect for individual choices. Saving Face is the art of navigating challenges to maintain a positive image and preserve relationships.

'Saving Face' refers to how we manoeuvre our behaviour and language to avoid threatening these faces. It's our social survival kit. If you were to threaten someone's Positive Face, they may feel ashamed or embarrassed. In order to help them 'save' their Positive Face, you might say 'That's a good idea, BUT....' to soften the blow of a 'no'.

If you were to threaten someone's Negative Face, they might feel offended or imposed upon. To save their Negative Face, you might say, 'sorry, I know you're busy...', to show you don't enjoy imposing on their space.

Saving Face is a bit like social acrobatics – dodging awkwardness with linguistic somersaults. It's a verbal Cirque du Soleil, minus the safety net!

# Shades of BMT

- Wear protection if you choose to uncover company hypocrisy.
- Wouldn't it be great if you could just reboot people?
- Everything I didn't do, I didn't do it for you!

# Minimal Viable Product

## By Bryony Sherry

Last month I wrote about 'optimal arousal' which is the 'just right' zone for brain stimulation, where we are sufficiently challenged without feeling excessive stress. It is worth noting that this does not refer exclusively to workplace tasks. The everyday stresses and strains that each person faces contribute to the mental load that they are managing. Being aware of our own circumstances and planning appropriately will help to manage work-related stress. It is important to communicate when approaching 'max out' territory. Sometimes, we need to understand our own 'minimal viable product'. What are your most basic outputs and what needs to happen for these to be completed?

# CVs - Part 4

## By The Hollin Team

A sad-but-true truth of the CV-reader is that while they really, genuinely want to see the CVs of brilliant candidates, they are also using the CV-reading process as an easy elimination process. Here is our advice to avoid your CV being discarded without your skills even being considered:

- Use a relevant filename. If your file is called CV.docx, your perspective-taking skills and your attention to detail is immediately in question. Instead, use your full name and the role in the filename.
- Spell-check. Use an automated spell-checker, but ask another human to read your CV as well. Some typos are real words, and won't be picked up by a spell-checker.
- Formatting. If your CV is difficult to read - with tiny text, crammed-together paragraphs or unexpected changes in the font and word size - you increase the chances that the reader will discard your CV in favour of the next one.