

Behavioural Digest

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The Opposite of Courage is Conformity Pt. 2 By Bruce Faulkner

The secret of our success as a species has been to explore the edges of our territory. Humans didn't make a great leap out of Africa; they made gradual progress. They kept expanding outward, but remained in touch with the resources they needed to survive. That relentlessness means humans now live in even the harshest of environments.

Courage is an active response to a situation; conformity is the passive response.

Courage begins by pushing near the edge of the comfort zone, and that pushing is assertiveness: Expressing your needs, wants, and feelings directly and honestly. It's not about being right or needing others to experience these same feelings. It's about sharing those feelings aloud.

Do that, and someone will comment on your display of courage. Do it often enough and you think, "Well, not really. I knew what had to be done in that situation. I've done it before."

"A great part of courage is the courage of having done the thing before."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82)



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Time Wasting Monologues By Howard Lees

It's been an especially long week. It's 3pm in the afternoon and I am sitting in this meeting room waiting for the last 4 people to turn up. The boss finally arrives and embarks on another of his often repeated and utterly time-wasting monologues. I look around the table; everyone has the same pallid look of surrender on their face. I muse to myself 'what would happen if I just emptied the contents of this water bottle over his head?' It makes me smile. We all need little victories; it's nearly time to go home...

What Do You Mean? By Bryony Sherry

In *The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time*, the neurodivergent main character struggles to understand idiomatic language. As a result, the use of metaphors becomes confusing and stressful. Whilst this concern may feel arbitrary for the majority, it is worth discussing the importance of clarifying understanding in the workplace. Fournies wrote that one of the most common workplace performance problems is that people don't know how to do what's expected of them, so limiting confusion and stress is worthwhile.

Next time you say, "all hands on deck," "full steam ahead," or "let's bite the bullet," think about what you really want to achieve. After stating the goal/result in plain English, consider the contributory behaviours and what steps you could take to increase the likelihood of them happening, whilst mitigating potential obstacles. That way, you might just avoid overshooting the mark/failing miserably.

Revolving Doors: The Essence of Western Corruption

By Howard Lees

A number of recent high profile miscarriages of justice have shone light on some leaders in Governmental and other monopoly organisations. These are the 'revolving door' leaders, the ones that don't give two hoots about society, the public, or their own workforce. They contrive to give large contracts to their buddies in their chummy circle, only to slide over to that organisation when their bureaucracy tenure comes to an end. So how do these clandestine masters of bureaucracy end up at the top consultancies? Firstly, they get rid of all the smaller local suppliers using a number of sneaky schemes. These ploys remove all the competent and cheaper suppliers.

There are only so many large consultancies with a substantial turnover so they fix a procurement rule that their pending contract tender cannot be worth more than 20% of the supplier's turnover. If the average quality consultant/supplier will not turn over much more than £5m, this means that they cannot bid for a job more than £1m. That's most of the quality suppliers snookered, so the finishing touch is to announce 'this is a £1m contract and must go out to at least 5 tenderers'. Then all they have to do is fix the scoring system to suit their favoured chum and they are off to the races, figuratively and literally!

Flying Cars and Mind Readers

By Princess Robinson

In the workplace, understanding why individuals do what they do and say what they say is crucial for creating a healthy and productive environment.

Netflix's Black Mirror follows the experiences of a doctor who is convinced to undergo an experimental treatment, implanting a device in his brain that allows him feel what is happening in another person's body. When they feel pain, he feels pain. This allows the doctor to diagnose patients without them having to say a word.

Although this storyline goes down a dark and extreme path, it is thought-provoking for the potential benefits of understanding the motivations behind people's behaviours in the workplace. It would be truly something if we could understand people's behaviours in this same way. Unfortunately, we can't, although I am sure there are leaders out there who regularly attempt mind-reading.

Until we get to the age of flying cars and telepathic devices, developing an effective feedback loop in the workplace is a great place to start!

Shades of BMT

- The hierarchy effect in business stymies the transfer of honest feedback.
- When you get feedback, don't confuse how you respond to it with what you will do with it.

Personality Isn't Everything By Bryony Sherry

Last month I wrote about personality profiling. After feedback from one of our readers, I thought it might be helpful to clarify my stance.

My line about the extrovert ("Would an extreme, happy extrovert still be that way when getting mugged?") was a little facetious, but my point is that a person's environment is the strongest driver of their behaviour. I'd guess that the person who got mugged (extrovert or not) would feel their behaviour was punished – they probably wouldn't walk down that alley again. This is because consequences drive behaviour.

Personality profiling offers generalisations that can be helpful in some contexts - and our reader highlighted the importance of ethics and training for practitioners. My concerns lie with using profiling as a form of professional evaluation. We don't know what is happening in another person's head, soul or wherever else personality resides; it is none of our business. It shouldn't matter if Susan is high on extroversion or conscientiousness – if her environment contains sufficient reinforcement for the behaviour of interest, she will do it.

Behavioural Leadership Course Spring 2024

We are running [Behavioural Leadership courses](#) in Birmingham and Glasgow this spring for individuals or small teams to join. This course is suitable for all levels of management – anyone interested in how to better manage themselves and others would benefit. The 4-day course is made up of two 2-day sessions, covering the tools needed to practice and refine a behaviourally-sound leadership approach.

If you would like more information, or to discuss future training opportunities, email info@hollin.co.uk.

£1495 per person (excl. VAT)