

Behavioural Digest

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The “Gotcha” Trap

By Laura Wilson

The ‘Gotcha’ Trap refers to an approach where leaders choose to focus on catching employees out when they are making mistakes, rather than proactively supporting their successes. It feeds avoidance, and creates a lack of trust, which in turn promotes a culture of fear and anxiety. This can manifest itself as excessive surveillance. Leaders who work this way usually display these behaviour traits: micromanagement, negative narratives and passive-aggressive behaviour. Examples of ‘Gotcha’ tactics could include surveillance software, hidden cameras, timesheet frauding and broadcasting ‘safety first’ when it’s clear to everyone that it’s not even close to being first.

A culture of fear and anxiety can stifle creativity, reduce productivity and make employees less likely to offer useful suggestions or speak freely. Employees who feel constantly scrutinised often experience stress and job dissatisfaction, leading to higher turnover rates. ‘Gotcha’ tactics use threats of punishment in order to increase productivity – this is a toxic strategy and is only going to achieve the opposite. How can people avoid the ‘Gotcha’ Trap?... Run? Run like the wind! Get out of there, find a proper job, and find an enlightened boss in an enlightened organisation.

A Moment in Time

By Howard Lees

When challenged in the moment to be creative, many people will react with a ‘freeze’ response. It’s just too much of a shock for some people to ‘come up with something imaginative’ in that instant; it freaks them out. It’s not lazy or stupid, it’s the impact of being caught off guard.

There comes a moment in our courses where each student is asked to take some time and think about how they can use their new learned skills to fix something simple that will have a small but observable impact in improving their organisation. Trainers will then observe a specific ‘look’ on the face of some of the students. That ‘look’ says, “Oh gosh, I have to think of something really fast, something that can make a difference.”

Often what happens next is that students suggest that they fix a notorious company work process that has never worked properly and is never going to work properly in a month of Sundays. If there was a chance that the said process could work, it would have worked by now anyway. The skilled trainer has already predicted that this would happen, they have prepared something that will ‘ease their pain’.

There may be a speech describing a fresh green field of possibility, they will recount examples of simple improvements that past students made that went on to contribute to major improvements in their organisations. In that key moment, a great trainer can inspire a whole class, one person will speak up with an idea, the trainer will pounce and ask for other contributions and ideas, a discussion ensues. The whole class breathes in relief of the discovery of a way forward. There’s only one way success can be achieved in these circumstances: Create an environment where people feel that they can make suggestions, gradually turn those initial suggestions into reality by adding the collective brain power of the group.



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

Sir Ken Robinson 1950-2020

This is the 5th anniversary of Sir Ken Robinson's death. He was Professor of Arts Education at Warwick University for 12 years and during this time he led a national commission on creativity, education, and the economy for the UK government. He made the point that outdated methodologies in education hinder the development of children, and beautifully articulated this in his TED talk "Do schools kill creativity?" It is still the most watched TED talk.

I went to see him talk in London some years ago. His lecture weaved in and out of education, creativity, and learning methods. Everything he said was accentuated with his brilliant sense of timing and his use of classic scouse humour. After the show he gifted his book, teasing people with typical charismatic anecdotes. If you have not seen his TED talks, I recommend them wholeheartedly.

12 Quotes from Sir Ken Robinson

1. "If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original."
2. "Imagination is the source of every form of human achievement."
3. "Human resources are like natural resources; they're often buried deep. You have to go looking for them, they're not just lying around on the surface. You have to create the circumstances where they show themselves."
4. "Creativity is as important as literacy."
5. "We have to recognize that human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it's an organic process. All you can do, like a farmer, is create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish."
6. "I meet all kinds of people that don't enjoy what they do. They endure it rather than enjoy it. I also meet people who love what they do. They say, 'This is me, what I do speaks to my authentic self'."
7. "We should be teaching students, not subjects. Teaching is more like gardening than engineering."
8. "Life is not linear, it's organic."
9. "A three-year-old is not half a six-year-old."
10. "We have sold ourselves into a fast food model of education, and it's impoverishing our spirits and our energies, as much as fast food is depleting our physical bodies."
11. "Do organisational leaders know if they are making the best use of the talents already available to them?"
12. "Every day, everywhere, our children spread their dreams beneath our feet, and we should tread softly."

Shades of BMT

- If you had given me this feedback two months ago, I would have responded two months ago.
- Before you deliver that killer feedback, just reflect on how robust your relationship is and how much you care about it.

Not So Common Sense

By Ben Care

"Come on, it's common sense." We have all heard this before, I am sure. Personally, when I hear this, it doesn't make me feel all that empowered. Someone is saying that it is so blatantly obvious or simple that you should, or must know this because why wouldn't you, right?! Wrong: Common sense does not exist. Simply, it is previous behaviours that we have learnt. Yes, a lot of people may well have been taught the 'thing' but that knowledge has to come from somewhere. (Not so) common sense is reflective of people's individual experiences, and everyone's learning history is different. Management by common sense is futile, spending countless hours without a comprehension of why strategies are/are not working.

Behavioural leadership creates a stronger organisational culture, equipping employees with the right knowledge, leading to "common knowledge" in the workplace. Leaders must never assume someone knows something because it's "common sense" to know it; they are there to support and guide people's learning. Remember, to assume makes an a** out of you and me.

Signals of Success

By Laura Wilson

Scorecards can be applied to many different situations – sports, offices, departments, businesses – basically anywhere with a purpose of achieving a goal. It is a sure-fire way to ensure the team understand and agree on the strategy, and they are able to successfully measure performance along the way, allowing those involved to celebrate successes as they happen.

[Click here to listen to Alasdair Cathcart discuss scorecards.](#)