

Behavioural Digest

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Escape the Too Hard Box:
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Collaboration

By Lynn Dunlop

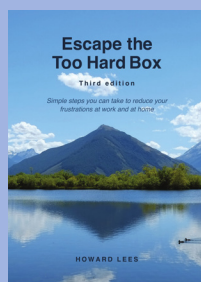
Collaboration can be defined as 'Working together towards a shared end goal'. Collaboration is not compromise, although compromise is an important part of collaboration. Some subjective indicators that relationships are collaborative might be:

- Relationships are robust - disagreements do not affect the underlying relationship
- Agreement is reached quickly
- There are high levels of feedback on the good and bad things that people observe

Most humans, when placed in a situation where there are no barriers to collaboration, will work together to achieve a greater goal. In most high performing organisations, the chances are high that people will collaborate naturally. Therefore, it is more effective to consider 'how to remove any emerging barriers to collaboration' than to consider 'how to get people to collaborate'.

Escape The Too Hard Box

The new book by Howard Lees is out now. [Click here to read a sample](#), and to order your copy.



What's the Value of Values?

By Collette Murray

In the February edition of this newsletter, Howard wrote about the potential for mis-using the value "passion" and recently I've noticed there's been a wide ranging discussion across my network on the purpose and value of organisations having "values". Views have ranged from "I don't need to be told how to behave" to "I want to know the organisation I work for shares my core values".

When organisations have espoused values but then allow senior leaders to behave in a way that is incongruous or contrary to those values, staff become disillusioned and confused as to what is really expected of them in terms of their own behaviour. Junior staff can start to emulate the contrary behaviour of their leader and the dissonance across the organisation between what is espoused and what is actually said and done becomes a chasm of uncertainty, disappointment and disillusion.

In one organisation I know of, when it came time to allocate the end of year bonus there was a portion attributed to being a "good egg" which basically meant that the recipient had lived the organisation values through their attitude and behaviours which was very reinforcing. There is no point in having a list of values if people are not held to account for their behaviour, consequences are key. Recently I saw a post on LinkedIn answering the question "how can my organisation stamp out racism?" – the answer, "if your organisation has a value around Inclusion and Diversity, sack all your racists!"



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Habit Loop

By David Lees

Charles Duhigg's book *The Power of Habit* is a great read and produces some very easy to remember principles about what it means to redirect habitual behaviour. The key point of the book rests on what he calls the "habit loop" which is cue, routine, reward. This loop perfectly aligns with what we would call ABC from behavioural science – antecedent, behaviour, consequence.

Because Duhigg is talking about habitual behaviour, he can ignore the consequences which would reduce behaviour - punishment and penalty - and focus clearly on reward. Often, the most successful changes you can make at work are to stop doing something you're currently getting rewarded for. For example, people dabbling in a job they were promoted from years ago do this because it's rewarding to do something you are a master at. Leaders who interrupt and provide answers before their staff can get a word in do so because it's rewarding to show people you know the answer; never mind the downstream impact.

Perversely, over time the habitual behaviour starts to deliver the dopamine hit before the reward is administered, even before the routine has been performed. This provides an opportunity to redirect the routine somewhere else for a different reward if you can find out what the cue is. The key to changing the behaviours is preparation. Considering ahead of time what the Steps Before Step One are will enable you to have an alternative behaviour pre-loaded. For example, in the example above when the leader interrupts, they could prepare before the meeting by saying "Any time I know the answer, I will write it down on my notepad and wait to see if any of the staff know it too." Cue: There's a question which I know the answer to; Routine: Change from "blurt it out" to "write it down"; Reward: Changes from 'I am smart' to 'look how I made space for my team to be smart so I don't have to do all the thinking anymore!'

Shades of BMT

- The workplace is full of badly executed good ideas
- Failing fast is brave, failing soft is clever
- Some workplace environments make it unsafe to talk about real safety. Any hint of dissention toward company safety standards is stamped on vigorously by people who should know better.
- Organisations often mistake reporting for feedback.

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The "Be, Know, Do" of Leadership

By Bruce Faulkner

Leadership solves the problem of how to organise collective effort. Effective leaders are skilled at building and maintaining relationships so they can persuade others to co-operate. This is active leadership, that shapes the environment to get the best out of people. We can use the US Army field manual on leadership, and the three words on its cover, "Be, Know, Do", to gauge how well leadership are doing at their tasks.

Be is about character, the type of person someone is; Are they honest? Do they have integrity? These are the foundations of healthy relationships. Without them, other effective leadership attributes don't matter.

Some organisations place a premium on technical expertise for people in leadership roles. Employing people who focus mainly on the details of the work. They view the behaviours that foster and maintain relationships as a lesser priority. They may see honouring obligations as less relevant, and with that their integrity is gone. They can appear out of touch, possibly even disingenuous.

Know is about making informed decisions. Does the leader know the customer, the work, the team, the environment and themselves? Effective leaders learn to see the workplace environment's influence on people's behaviour. Without that knowledge, decisions aren't informed.

Do is about the behaviours used to organise the collective effort. This starts with listening to others. Once people know that their opinion matters, it sets the stage for cooperation. Leaders that get the knowledge component right can articulate a statement of intent: 'We are doing *this* in order to achieve *that*'. The priorities that follow make sense because they fit with the environment created. The leader focuses on monitoring the environment. They work to identify and remove obstacles so people can get things done. This is leadership.