

# Behavioural Digest

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## Preparation

By Dave Lees

Before you coach someone, preparation is essential. You're probably going, 'well duh', but often we let our busy lives get in the way of spending 10-20 mins before we have a one-to-one.

Here's why it's so important:

- It allows you to figure things out in a no-pressure situation. We're talking about social pressure here - even if you're the boss, reacting quickly is something you will feel pressure to do to avoid the dreaded uncomfortable silence.
- You can analyse how you think the person will respond to how you say the same things in different ways. Nuance in delivery is often the difference between success and failure.
- Practicing beforehand allows you to build fluency in saying the right thing, rather than how you would react in the moment.

Often successful people succumb to the knee-jerk reaction of "winning" the conversation, whereas great coaching, and indeed great leadership overall, requires you to say the thing that brings the best out of the person in front of you.

## Field of Dreams

By Howard Lees

I have been making notes on what happens to the rich and successful as they gingerly set out on that inevitable retirement journey from Executive stardom and all its trappings to something else, somewhat less grand. In some cases, it's the ultimate lifestyle transition from being much revered, every day, all the way to learning if they really do like growing prize-winning zinnias. I have had a number of conversations with people making this transition, some going willingly, some with their arm up their back. "What can I do?" they ask. There are some tried and tested clichés to consider. Become a non-exec director of a company or two. Become a visiting lecturer at a University. Get an allotment and accidentally die from inhaling weed killer.

The newly retired folk that talk to me always complain that no-one responds to their emails and phone calls anymore; I have a special ironic smile for that one! They also seem surprised that life without the trappings of high office is as different as it is: Being an ordinary human being again (if they ever were before). People are living longer, so it's conceivable that they could have another whole career; it takes new thinking. Most people retiring now are of an age where pensions are likely to still be good. We are going backwards in the UK pension-wise; the retirees of the future will not be enjoying the largess of the current crop of retirees. I leave you with one thought – have you considered what your next career will be as you transition past your 50s and into a new fresh field of dreams?

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# 'Have To' or 'Want To'?

By Walter Hufnagel

Some folks initiate meetings, and some sit back and wait for others to do it. What's going on? Is this all about reinforcement for some and lack of reinforcement for others? Perhaps this is an over-simplified example of 'want to' vs 'have to'? After all, I have friends that I am always happy to see that never initiate a meal out, trip to the pub etc. They appear to be happy to spend time with me but I have to initiate every encounter. Does that mean that spending time with me is a 'have to' behaviour on their part?

I guess all I can say for sure is - some folks initiate things and other folks don't. Making assumptions about motive is probably a fatuous endeavour. I don't need to hear people's excuses; I can just observe their behaviour.

I suppose I am on a safer assumption when I allocate motive to the fact that 'some folks do the next task straight away and some folks leave things to the last minute'. We are in reinforcement land now for sure, positive reinforcement (R+) for the stuff that gets done quickly and negative reinforcement (R-) for the stuff that gets left to the last minute? You can rely on me to do the things that I want to do, you can also rely on me to prevaricate on the stuff I find a chore. Of course, today's chore can be tomorrow's exciting challenge!

# Instant Pudding

By Jonny Bennett

"Do you guys do safety courses for workers?" is a common enough request to our office. Our reply is often "What's the problem?" The response to that question varies but it's usually a variant of "We are having too many injuries and incidents." Our response to that statement is often "I would suggest it's worth finding out precisely what's wrong before spending any time and effort on something that may not effect a cure." Any respectable health service professional would want to closely examine the patient and run some tests before proposing a course of action, we are the same.

We think it's important to go through a discovery phase and learn something about the local workplace environments of the people who are 'having too many injuries'. It's also useful to learn what the organisation has done over the last few years regarding safety initiatives - simple stuff, what did you do? What subsequently happened? Sometimes the requesting organisation wants a lump sum to fix their unspecified problem from the get-go, and that is a very difficult request for us to uphold. On the one hand we would probably enjoy the challenge of carrying out the work. On the other hand, would we want to work for an organisation that simply wants to buy instant pudding?

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Photo by Jean Lees

# Hear Hear

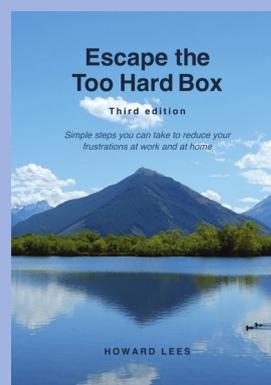
By Arne Knaben

"Culture is best built indirectly." I remember saying that a while back when we were doing our behavioural training courses. What I was trying to explain to our team was that in order to build a great working culture you must have the patience to let the impact of good behaviours grow. You also need to be willing to continue to try to behave in the right way when little apparent impact is emerging, it takes time to see the results, sometimes, no, most times you have to be very patient indeed!

I was very interesting to see the quote of Sir Ken Robinson in your last digest: "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." Hear hear!

# Shades of BMT

- "Technologies are neutral. A felt tip pen or a word processor can be used to compose great literature, or a list of groceries." - Sir Ken Robinson.
- "You can walk into a classroom and instinctively detect if there is a good vibe. You can also walk on to a site or factory floor and detect if it feels safe. Stop and take a look at what the people are doing, those are the pinpointed workplace behaviours." - Susan Andersen
- "The most common cause of executive failure is the inability or unwillingness to change with the demands of a new position." - Peter Drucker



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