

Behavioural Digest

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Pining For Spontaneity By Rachel Edwards

Almost everyone I know in the world of work has seen a change to how they work due to the covid pandemic. People are reporting feeling busier and despite working longer hours, feeling like less is getting done. On the face of it, it doesn't make any sense – how can working more lead to achieving less? Well, our work environments have changed massively, not just in the sense of much more working from home, but in how we work, and how we interact and communicate with others. A day in the office used to mean the opportunity to capitalise on shared environments; planned meetings in a meeting room, but also quick discussions in a corridor, or bumping into someone and having a chat about a project that needs moving on. The serendipity of shared physical workspaces means a whole host of chances to speak, plan, catch up, or just make sure the people around us at work are doing OK. The virtual alternative is linear – one meeting followed by another followed by another... we're denied spontaneity and that's exactly what some kinds of conversations require.

Don't get me wrong, I am certainly enjoying wearing my slippers to work each day in my home office. However, I'm looking forward to putting on a proper pair of shoes and having some good 'old fashioned' interactions!

Esprit D'Escalier By Bruce Faulkner

It can be frustrating when someone gets the better of us, especially if it happens repeatedly. The real sting comes while we walk away and realise what we could have said. The French have a wonderful saying for this: 'Esprit d'escalier'. A direct translation is the 'spirit of the staircase', which means that very thought that occurs to us after we have walked out of the room and are on the stairs. A better translation is found by looking at the French definition of esprit - spirit, mind, intellect, sense, and wit. In our setting, wit is the word we want. The 'wit of the staircase'.

When we find ourselves in presence of this other person, we expect they will dominate us. It feels inevitable that the wit of the staircase will elude us in these moments. But a closer look reveals we are more talented than we realise. We know how to anticipate these environments and we *are* creative because it comes to us on the staircase. What we need to do is rearrange the sequence of events. Knowing the other person's behavioural patterns, their typical responses, means we can predict what they will probably say. Now, sitting outside the pressure of the moment we think up a few responses: If they say this, we could say that. Next time we enter the room, the wit of the staircase is already to hand, *poussée et parade!*

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Tea Without Much Sympathy

By Howard Lees

I had a virtual cup of tea with an old friend last week. He was troubled because he had finally mustered up the courage to go and see his boss to deliver some important feedback and was disappointed at his bosses' tacit responses to his genuine concerns. He said it felt like he was being 'wafted away' and now it felt like the end of the road for his career in the organisation. I asked him to reflect on his boss and asked if he had seen any other different responses from her in the past: Was this just his boss on auto pilot? He agreed that this could be the case, both participants were just in completely different frames of reference. I asked "Could you go and see her again only this time set the conversation up with some better 'scene setting' comments?" He agreed to think about it, which is great. Lots of people get emotional and think that they are at the end of their tether without having first herded the other person into their field.

For Better or For Worse

By Anne Radcliffe

One day someone might invent a technology that reported, in real time, the percentage of conversations going on in an organisation that were 'on point'. Of course, this would mean that the remaining percentage would be the irrelevant, distracting, or unhelpful conversations. The tech may also be able to collate the contributory events that led to the great or poor verbal behaviours in play. The tech may also be able to score and rate the various leaders in terms of which behaviours dominated under their purview. I guess that, thankfully, this tool is never going to be invented, however the behaviours are all alive and well - for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, in every organisation on the planet.

'Working From Home' or 'Living at Work'?

By Garry Sanderson

Last week I gave a keynote presentation at a conference - from my kitchen table. Just one more step in the global working from home experiment that most of us are participating in. I was nervous beforehand, as I am before any live performance. Yet, the fact that I was feeling this way in my kitchen, rather than in a conference room, gave me pause. Is it appropriate to experience intense and challenging situations, with all their accompanying emotions, in the environment that should be your safe haven? Have we crossed a boundary between 'working from home' and 'living at work'? As organisations wrestle with what the 'post pandemic new normal' will look like, we perhaps need to consider this question. We have proven what we can do in the 'WFH' environment, but what should we do and what should we definitely not put people through in their own homes?

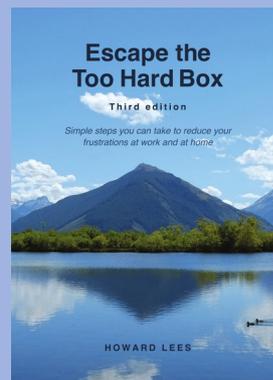
Feedback and Reporting

Feedback and Reporting have featured prominently in our discussions this month. Here is a short excerpt from *The Adaptive Strategy* by Howard Lees:

- Key information must flow up and down unmolested.
- If a business wants to make data-based decisions, then the data must be accurate.
- Beware of sycophants and optimists. They rationalise out the need for accurate feedback, and the worse things get, even more denial ensues.
- What are the one or two pivotal things you should measure? What are the simple litmus tests that can quickly predict what's going to happen?
- Key information must not be camouflaged by voluminous levels of unnecessary reporting demands. They can create 2nd, 3rd and 4th levels of unwanted camouflage.
- If your intention is to hit the ball, you must be looking at it..

Shades of BMT

- The higher up the organisation you get promoted, the easier it is to behave without getting any correcting feedback.
- Great leaders arrive early, they ask great questions, they are always attentive.
- If you stubbornly refuse to stand up to bullies, you will most likely continue to get bullied.



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