

BMTFed Newsletter

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An Extract From The Forthcoming 'Notes on BMT - 4th Edition'

All behaviour, regardless of how dysfunctional it may initially seem, happens for a reason. To the individual performer, all of their behaviour serves a purpose. This means there is always going to be an effective consequence out there that can be observed. In turn, this means there is always an opportunity to change the environment in a way that supplants that primary consequence. In other words, if you are looking hard enough, there is always going to be an opportunity to change a behaviour.

In behavioural science, consequences don't have any moral or ethical value - i.e. there aren't good or bad consequences. This can be difficult at first as we are so used to thinking of 'consequences' being unpleasant. We generally think of an authority figure saying, "There will be consequences for your actions". In fact, there are always consequences for our actions, it's just that - outside the science - we rarely overtly interpret desired consequences (pressing a light switch and getting light, or eating chocolate and receiving a pleasant taste) as 'consequences'.

Consequences - what happens during or after a behaviour - simply explain why we get more of a behaviour or less of a behaviour occurring.

Notes on BMT - 4th Edition will be available to buy online from March 2018. Reserve your copy now by emailing lynn@hollin.co.uk

Celebrations By Lynn Dunlop

We always advise people to celebrate success, in particular the little successes along the way towards a large goal. I was asked the other day how to celebrate little successes. I explained that it's not about throwing parties every time some small achievement is attained; it's about taking time to reflect on the hard work and tenacity that led to that milestone being achieved. Thanking the people who helped us achieve it. Being consciously happy with ourselves and those around us before we move onto our next piece of work.

A celebration can be a big event; there's nothing wrong with a party now and then. But surprisingly often we just like our efforts to be noted and hard work to be acknowledged.

Deliberate Leadership By Rachel Edwards

Aversive cultures are often the outcome of dysfunctional behaviours that didn't get dealt with early enough – for various reasons. Nobody sets out to create them, it's just the result of leaving things unsaid.

Conversely, positive environments are usually the product of deliberate leadership. Every day behaviours accumulate and reflect cultural norms. Sometimes that means a great place to work, sometimes it doesn't.

Behavioural Management Techniques (BMT) is a blend of applied behavioural science tools and project management skills. BMT is used to improve business and safety performance.



The Cart Before The Horse

By Lynn Dunlop

Winning hearts and minds is often seen as the key to behaviour change.

Leaders want to win hearts and minds because it feels like the right thing to do. By doing so, they know that their people will work in the best possible way whether or not anyone is there to see. When everyone is 'on the same side' working together is pleasant and conflict is minimal. When people are happy in their work, they often work harder, so everyone wins.

While this is a situation that we might all aspire to, there are two key things we often fail to take into account. They are that a) it's incredibly difficult to change people's hearts/minds, and b) despite what we tell ourselves, our behaviour is only partially dependent on our beliefs and values (this is known as the Fundamental Attribution Error).

Famous experiments have repeatedly shown that people will behave in ways that go against their values and beliefs (those hearts and minds) whenever the environment they are in supports those undesired behaviours.

So, by all means make attempts to change hearts and minds. But be aware that it is effortful, takes time and is only half the battle. When you've won that battle, it's then just as important to make sure that the workplace environment you've set up supports the values and beliefs you've worked so hard to instil. In contrast, if the workplace environment is set up to elicit the desired behaviours from the people within it, winning hearts and minds is no longer necessary. It is still desirable and to be strongly encouraged, but it isn't necessary for performance. In fact, it is likely that hearts and minds will naturally be captured as a byproduct of your actions.

Changing the environment is the most cost-effective way to change behaviours. Attempting to change hearts and minds before changing the environment is just putting the cart before the horse.

Shades of BMT

- Some improvements in business are deemed too simple to be considered useful to production, such as turning up on time, or closing out actions (These improvements would require discretionary effort in a busy workplace).
- Some improvements in business are considered sufficiently sophisticated to warrant enthusiastic discussion. (This can be avoidance; it's more fun to talk about stuff that's in no danger of ever actually happening).
- There are people that talk about making improvements in meetings and then do nothing in between the meetings, probably ultimately achieving nothing.
- There are other people who talk about making improvements in meetings, divvy out some tasks and regularly review, probably delivering some improvements.

What If I Am Right?

By Bruce Faulkner

The researcher Rom Harré observed the behaviour of preschool children in the playground. He found that the single biggest thing they fight about is who is right. It isn't even who has the toy. Listening to the conversations in the workplace, we see this finding extends into adulthood.

We survey teams and often ask: What is driving the current agenda? Is it Aspiration, Opinion, or Data? Overwhelmingly, team's respond that it is Opinion. By definition, any dominant opinion will be a minority position. When one person asserts their need to be right, they hijack the agenda and rob others of the chance to participate.

Philosophers have long written about the difficulties of facts or truth. Our cognitive biases mean we don't see the world as it is, but rather as we are. One person only ever has access to an approximation of the truth.

What if we didn't aim to 'be right', but aimed to 'be less wrong'?

We know the environment is influencing the team's behaviour. The most sensitive instrument we have for detecting what is influencing the team's behaviour is the opinions of those in the environment. They decide what the environment means to them. They decide if they are being listened to. They decide if it is safe to share their opinion and ideas. Through anonymous surveys we use their opinions to help us be 'less wrong' about the environment.

3 Minutes on Safety



Watch Alasdair Cathcart, SVP of Bechtel, speaking about safety: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu84MUDb3Q4>