



# CUTTINGS...

Number 114 December 2014

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Welcome to the final edition of Cuttings in 2014 and greetings for the upcoming holiday season - which ever you celebrate. In the articles below, there is some information on some of the 'other' seasonal celebrations from the Northern Hemisphere, which have gotten entangled into our more usual ones for this time of year.

The other articles are of a more serious nature, reflecting what has been in the professional media recently, with two themes - improving innovation and workforce participation; and performance management.

Enjoy Cuttings and the forthcoming holiday season...

*Geof Cox*

## Waigaya

In the last edition, I shared Dick and Emily Axelrod's ideas for more effective meetings. Now, I have come across the Waigaya meeting process at Honda which applies a lot of these ideas to liven up team meetings in an update of TQM on the shop floor.

The word 'waigaya' is actually a nonsense Japanese term for blah, blah, blah or hubbub, but in Honda usage it is a uniquely powerful tool that drives innovation and productivity from teams.

Waigaya are spontaneous meetings, in which no one has rank and everyone's ideas are welcomed and encouraged; they can be about an assembly problem, a design flaw, implementation of a new strategy, performance issues, a new idea or anything else that has a potential impact on the performance. Waigaya meetings can last an hour or five minutes - or they can be adjourned and resumed later until an issue is fully addressed.

While these sort of spontaneous meetings occur in many organisations, it is the relentless use of the tool that sets Honda apart. Just like their implementation of TQM and Kaizen, Japanese organisations reap the maximum benefit by total immersion in the process. Waigaya is what

## In this edition

**Waigaya** How Honda harness worker knowledge to improve performance in spontaneous meetings

**Time to Kill Performance Ratings** Our traditional performance management methods don't help to improve performance!

**A Mindset for Success** How we can build on neuroscience research to improve performance

**Public Course** course programme dates for 2015.

And a bumper collection of **Snippets** to provoke your thinking and reflecting over the holiday season.

## Snippets

*A collection of thought provokers and quotations...*

""An obstacle is often a stepping stone."

*William Prescott*

"Every artist was first an amateur"

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"The power of imagination makes us infinite"

*John Muir*

"One finds limits by pushing them."

*Ralph Marston*

"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

*Leonardo da Vinci*

currently drives Honda's enviable record of continuous creativity and sky-high productivity.

Waigaya meetings do also challenge the 'Western' management culture, especially in technical environments. In waigaya, managers are not the source of solutions or leadership. Western traditions tend to dictate how things are done through strict procedures and reject input from workers, even though we know that they probably know best.

In his book "Driving Honda: Inside the World's Most Innovative Car Company" Jeffrey Rothfeder relates a number of examples where time and cost saving by using waigaya rather than the formal procedures for solving problems and design issues.

At Honda, managers find that when they use waigaya methods they drive creativity and also raise the morale, loyalty, engagement and output of workers. They also find that paradox and disagreement drive continuous improvement, and not through design by committee and compromise, but by genuine innovation and practical solutions.

## USEFUL LINKS

Read an article by Jeffrey Rothfeder in *Strategy+Business*. [Click here](#)

Order *Driving Honda: Inside the World's Most Innovative Car Company*, by Jeffrey Rothfeder (Portfolio Penguin, 2014) from [Amazon](#)

New Directions provides consultancy and training services that promote team problem solving and employee engagement [Click here](#) for more information.

"One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say"

*Bryant H. McGill*

The best things carried to excess are wrong. *Charles Churchill*

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships."

*Michael Jordan*

"Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it"

*Maya Angelou*

"Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day-in and day-out."

*Robert Collier*

"All progress takes place outside the comfort zone."

*Michael John Bobak*

"Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value."

*Albert Einstein*

People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within."

*Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*

Discussion is an exchange of knowledge; argument an exchange of ignorance."

*Robert Quillen*

"Don't wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions and make them great"

*Orison Swett Marden*

"Things work out best for those who make the best of how things work out"

*John Wooden*

## Time to Kill Performance Ratings?

According to the authors of a recent article, our total dissatisfaction with performance ratings comes from two effects in our brains. First, it triggers a 'flight or fight' response, which prevents genuine reflection and considered conversation, which is needed in performance review. Secondly, ratings reinforce the idea of a 'fixed mindset' (intelligence and talent are established at birth) rather than a 'growth mindset' (we can learn, develop and grow throughout our life).

So, our traditional form of performance management, including forced ranking, can be de-motivating and damaging.

- It creates status differentials, which can cause tension;
- Individuals can feel they have little influence over their performance as it relates more to past performance;
- It fosters competition with colleagues rather than collaboration and teamwork,
- It is seen to be more about arbitrary decisions to meet quotas or an ideal distribution, and therefore to lack fairness.
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These negative consequences also affects managers who may feel undue pressure to raise performance ratings over time, or to differentiate. It seems that the only ones benefiting from such a system are senior executives overseeing the process, who experience feelings of status, certainty and autonomy as a result.

So what can be done differently? The article explores a number of options:

1. Replacing end-of- year appraisals and ratings with regular structured in-depth conversations about performance, drawing on multiple data points.
2. Initiating 'guided conversations' which provide a framework for exploring goals and opportunities.
3. Shifting away from individual performance to evaluating team performance.

This is what we typically try to emphasise in any training in performance management, and it links to what we know about employee motivation and engagement. Moving more to on-line systems tends to reinforce the 'bad' elements of performance management and undermine the need for regular conversations. So perhaps the time is right to scrap the annual rating and review system to improve performance.

#### USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article (and video) from strategy+business

New Directions provides training and consultancy in performance management and employee engagement. A public course in 'Results Through People' is planned for September (see below). [Click here](#) for information about our services.

## A Mindset for Success

The above article on performance ratings refers to a 'fixed' and 'growth' mindset. According to neuroscience research, success is not hardwired into ones DNA, but more attributable to people's mindset. A "fixed" mind-set ascribes success to innate qualities and is less resilient and adaptable than a "growth" mind-set that connects achievement to continuous learning and persistence.

The difference in helping people to develop is often making a simple distinction between labelling the person as successful or unsuccessful and labelling what that person did as successful or unsuccessful. The latter is a growth mindset which fosters learning and development. Focusing on someone's demonstrated strengths and their future potential and performance is more effective than reviewing past performance as successful or unsuccessful.

#### USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read an article in Harvard Business Review on the research.

"There is in the worst of fortune the best chance for a happy change"

*Euripides*

"The pursuit of excellence is relentless"

*Red Arrows CO Jas Hawker*

"Be what you are. This is the first step toward becoming better than you are"

*Julius Charles Hare*

"The laws of society differ from gravity. People often fall upward rather than downward."

*Amin Maalouf*

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to cheer someone else up"

*Mark Twain*

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."

*Maya Angelou*

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

*Nelson Mandela*

## Some Seasonal Celebrations

### St Nicholas Day

The feast day of St Nicholas, the patron saint of children. In some countries, St Nicholas is said to bring sweets and presents to well behaved children on 6 December.

### Saturnalia

17 December was the beginning of the festival of Saturnalia, in honour of the god of agriculture. This was a holiday period for all including slaves, who were waited on by their masters for the duration.

### Winter Solstice

The Pagan celebration of Winter Solstice (also known as Yule) on 21 December is a celebration of the shortest day and longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

# Public Courses 2015

New Directions runs a number of public training courses in association with partners. Click on the date to reserve a place or get more information direct from our partners' websites.

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**London** [7-8 December](#)

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**London** [27-31 July](#)

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A 5 day course on performance management and employee engagement.

**London** [7-11 September](#)

## Successfully Leading the Implementation of Projects

A 5 day course on the people side of project management .

**London** [14-18 September](#)

# Cuttings

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New Directions is also a partner in the European consulting organisation *Learning Consortium* who are the providers of one of the leading personal development courses in interpersonal skills, *Focus on Influence*.

### USEFUL LINKS

**Past issues of Cuttings**

**New Directions website**

**Getting Results Without Authority**

**Learning Consortium website**

**Focus on Influence**

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