



CUTTINGS...

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Welcome to the first issue after the BREXIT decision. (For those of you reading in distant lands that are not affected by this - the UK has voted 52/48% in a referendum to leave the European Union. Readers of Cuttings will probably deduce from my consistent belief that collaboration is better than competition, so I am in the 48%.)

Some insights into what happened were serendipitously reported in an article last month on relationships at work which explains how neighbours can quickly become enemies.

As usual, if you would like a downloadable pdf of this edition, it is published on my website, along with copies of all past editions, [click here](#).

Enjoy, and have a good rest of the summer / winter (delete as appropriate...)

Geof Cox

Relationships at work are important

According to work done by a number of researchers into neuroscience around the world, it seems that we have hugely underestimated people's need for social connection at work. We understand the importance of relationships in our personal lives and yet expect people to switch into professional mode at work and reduce the need for relationships. I often use the Gallup Q12® questions as an example of what generates employee engagement, and one question "I have a best friend at work" always generates a great deal of discussion about its relevance in the business world. It is this sort of reaction across industries and countries that drives organisations, managers and leaders to not pay attention to fostering and building relationships.

Social rejection is painful and co-operation feels good

The need for social connection and inclusion is even more significant when you take into account research by Naomi Eisenberger and Matt Lieberman of UCLA that social exclusion activates the pain network in the brain. So social pain is also physical pain.

Way back in Maslow's research, we understand that as mammals and we would not survive our early life if there wasn't someone taking care of us and providing food, shelter and warmth. And the basis hierarchy

In this edition

Relationships are important at work - backing from neuroscience and research for building positive relationships.

Positive Psychology and Change - a new book by Sarah Lewis summarises why and how this stuff works...

Storytelling for scientists and technical people - scientists are renowned for not communicating well. The University of Texas has a way to help.

Plus details of **Public Courses** and **Book Sales**, and **Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection.

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"No' is a complete sentence."

Anne Lamott

"A happy life consists not in the absence, but in the mastery of hardships."

Helen Keller

"Hope is itself a species of happiness, and, perhaps, the chief happiness which this world

Samuel Johnson

"If we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves."

Thomas Edison

"Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain

of needs stays with us as human beings, but may be much less obvious than the babe in arms.

As hunter gatherers, we were far more likely to survive if we were part of a tribe than trying to fend for ourselves. Our brains have been wired to reflect this. Brain scans show that co-operating with others activates the brain's reward network. The brain likes to co-operate – it feels good. So the brain leads us to co-operate in order to keep our place in the tribe.

Social rejection also limits our capabilities

Psychologist Roy Baumeister has found that if we exclude people or don't allow them to feel like full members of the team, a threat state is created in their brains which reduces their ability to think. So not only does feeling rejected by others feel uncomfortable, it reduces our ability to think, solve problems, and persevere with difficult tasks. Good relationships at work are not just a 'nice to have', they are essential for us to perform at our best.

'Us' versus 'them'

Such is our need to want to belong that even when we know that the group we are in has been put together in an arbitrary fashion, we still feel loyalty to that group and identify with group members very quickly. Henri Tajfel's research with school children found that new groups can bond to become in-groups incredibly quickly and see the others as out-groups and would deny the other group 'rewards'.

What happens then is that our brains process thoughts about 'them' differently - there is less activation in the medial Prefrontal Cortex - inclining us to see 'them' more as objects than as human beings. One of the less palatable facts that neuroscience has revealed. Another is that our brains lead us all to be biased. They take shortcuts, making snap decisions about whether we feel people should be in our in-group or out-group. Training against unconscious bias training - like diversity training - is not enough because we will fall back into our biases the next time we are tired or stressed

This demonstrates how very quickly we can start to see people who have been friends and neighbours as our enemies

How to build better social connection at work:

Allow people to meet

We need to build more and bigger in-groups to provide a systems response to exclusion, rejection and bias. Science shows that face-to-face contact between people helps to build in-groups. Research shows that we warm to people who are more familiar to us. So we need to create more opportunities for people to meet and have meaningful contact.

Reinforce shared goals

Something else that builds and re-enforces the feeling of in-group is to remind people about shared goals – what we have in common - rather than focus on differences. So having and articulating a clear, positive and inclusive purpose for the team and organisation (and country?)

dormant."

Horace

"Man has made many machines, complex and cunning, but which of them indeed rivals the workings of his heart?"

Pablo Casals

"If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we are not really living. Growth demands a temporary surrender of security."

Gail Sheehy

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do."

Epictetus

"I always try to believe the best of everybody - it saves so much trouble."

Rudyard Kipling

"If you get up one more time than you fall, you will make it through."

Chinese Proverb

"Don't hurry, don't worry. You're only here for a short visit. So be sure to stop and smell the flowers."

Walter Hagen

"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations."

Charles R Swindle

"Life is the distance between dreams and reality."

Leonid S. Sukhorukov

"Always embrace the common humanity that lies at the heart of us all."

HH Dalai Lama

"The next best thing to knowing

works.

Use the word 'together'

Leaders and managers need to choose carefully the words they use, especially during change. Even the simple use of the word 'together' seems to activate the reward centre of the brain, making us feel that we belong. Research by Priyanka Carr and Greg Walton of Stanford University found that people who had been told that they were working on a problem 'together' with others, worked 48% longer and solved more problems correctly than members of another group who worked in the same circumstances but where the word 'together' was not used.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete report on HRZone.

New Directions offer workshops and consultancy on building better relationships at work. For more information [Click here](#).

Positive Psychology and Change

A great new book by Sarah Lewis summarises the thinking and the need for the use of positive psychology, strengths based and whole systems thinking approaches that I have been championing for a number of years. Sarah's book Positive Psychology and Change covers - much more eloquently and with a much more solid research base - the arguments that I make in my own articles (see links below)

Traditional change is slow

A top-down, linear, compliance process; plan then implement takes too long and is too hard. Whole-system change is owned and generated by all and is fast - focused on maximising tomorrow not fixing yesterday.

We create our own futures

Forecasting is tricky in an unpredictable world of disjointed and disruptive change. Analysing the past to predict the future doesn't work, so single point forecasting has been replaced by scenario planning and futures research. These require us to use our imagination to create attractive possibilities that inspire us, co-ordinate our efforts and pull us forward.

Employee engagement drives profitability

The evidence is clear that developing employee engagement and a sense of purpose delivers profitability. The triple bottom line of Profit, People and Planet is achievable and shows better returns than just using traditional measures. Good organisations are also exceptionally profitable.

Resilience is relational

Organisational resilience, an attribute called on during change, is as important to organisational change success as financial reserves. Relational reserves are an expression of the accumulated goodwill and mutual trust that helps organisations bounce-back quicker from disruption or trauma. Building relationships is a key feature of strength based change processes.

something is to know where to find it."

Samuel Johnson

"In dreams and in love there are no impossibilities."

Janos Arany

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

George Bernard Shaw

"And the rosy ray of the closing day may promise a brighter morrow."

Emily Brontë

Storytelling for scientists and technical people

The elevator speech, a staple of entrepreneurs, has been introduced to graduate students at the University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. They held a competition to explain their research project in 90 seconds...

An "elevator speech", if you haven't come across the term, is a clear, brief message about yourself and your work. A tiny talk you can memorize and use during interviews or meetings. Or when you get that proverbial chance encounter in the elevator with your company's CEO.

The UT's elevator speech competition forced graduate students to pull back from the data and the details of their research, and figure out how to explain their work to almost anyone. "It has to be intelligible, it has to be 90 seconds, and it has to be fun," the organiser Carrie Cameron explained in a blog post in the university's newsletter.

Forced into using metaphors from everyday life to help non-scientists

Change needs more buyers and less sellers

Have you ever walked into a shop, money in hand, keen to buy only to leave empty-handed frustrated by the salesperson's emphasis on selling rather than listening to you? Pushing change into, down or through an organisation creates a similar sensation. We are selling the change too forcibly and not identifying what we need to do to create a buyer. If we allow change action to happen at points where the need is felt most, we create buyers of change. Not only that, the strategic intelligence is not only in the boss's office, it is spread throughout the organisation. So working in real time with front-line staff on real issues is faster, more effective, and has little or no resistance.

Lots of good reasons why the non-traditional approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space and World Cafe work better, and why you should read this book if you are involved with organisation change in any way.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to go to Sarah Lewis's posts on LinkedIn Pulse

[Click here](#) to get Sarah's book from Amazon

[Click here](#) to read my article 'Rapid and Inclusive Strategy Development' (eVector)

[Click here](#) to read my article 'Developing Inclusive Strategies' (Strategy Magazine)

New Directions offer workshops, facilitation and consultancy on change using strengths based and whole systems thinking. For more information [Click here](#).

visualise and relate to their work led to ovarian cancer control being compared to the thermostat on the air-conditioning; some cell based proteins being described as waste-plant workers who cause a build-up of waste in the waste-plant if they don't function properly; and variations in the micro-environments of tumours to the variations in vineyard soils, which can change how grapes grow and taste.

The event proved to be an overwhelming success in helping scientists to find a way to explain to non scientists what exactly they do all day in the lab. But also prepared them for working in large, interdisciplinary 'team science' where the scientists themselves do not know what each other's technical area is. They found a way to communicate. Something technical people in any discipline could learn to do in order to be better understood.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article In Houston Public Media

Cuttings

Cuttings is a bi-monthly collection of ideas and comments published elsewhere which have attracted my attention over the past couple of months. It is designed for readers who are interested in individual, organisation and management development and is free. It has been published continuously for more than 20 years by *New Directions*, an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

USEFUL LINKS

[Past issues of Cuttings](#)

[New Directions website](#)

[Getting Results Without Authority](#)

Public Courses 2016

New Directions runs a small number of public training programmes in association with partners. 2016 dates are below.

Human Competency and Capability Development

A 4 day course in strategic human resource management in oil and gas .

Kuala Lumpur 18-21 October

International Oil & Gas Executive Programme

An 5 day workshop in strategic management for the Oil and Gas industry.

Kuala Lumpur 24-28 October

USEFUL LINKS

[New Directions consultancy and training services](#)

Book sales

Getting Results Without Authority is available at the special price of £10.00

Ready-Aim-Fire Problem Solving is priced at £7.00

Bundle both titles for **£15.00**

Price includes p&p in the UK, for deliveries outside the UK add £1.00.

[Click here to go to the secure *Online Shop*.](#)

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