



CUTTINGS...

Number 128 April 2017

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

We are well into 2017 and BREXIT has been triggered, so we have a couple of years of unnecessary uncertainty in Europe. So it is appropriate that the articles I have found in my mail box in the last couple of months are about surfacing conflict, caring and building trust. All topics the I am sure will be in the political headlines during the next months - and skills that are needed across Europe.

Enjoy,

Geof Cox

The Caring Leader

Augusto Giacoman, in a recent article in **strategy+business**, tells the story of the sergeant major in his Army infantry unit who had completed multiple deployments with an elite Regiment. Although he was outranked by the officers in his battalion while on active service in Iraq, he gathered them together for a leadership development session in which he played a video of the classic children's story *The Giving Tree*, by Shel Silverstein. This story describes an enduring relationship of unconditional and self-sacrificing love between a tree and a little boy. In the silence after the video ended, he uttered a simple command before dismissing us: "Be the Giving Tree for your soldiers."

It was the most powerful leadership training ever. The most important thing about this tough sergeant major was that he cared. Through the medium of a children's story, he charged the officers to care to about their soldiers more than themselves. This philosophy of caring yielded incredible results, both in garrison and in combat.

From the corporate world, Giacoman uses the example of Paul O'Neill, who served 12 years as CEO of Alcoa before serving as treasury secretary for President George W. Bush. One of O'Neill's first actions upon becoming CEO of Alcoa was to introduce an obsessive focus on worker safety. This act of caring, which raised objections among other directors, produced increased productivity and grew income significantly - as well as lowering worker accidents; an outcome I remember well from my time working with Exxon who had a similar safety obsession.

In this edition

The Caring Leader - a caring attitude delivers results for leaders.

Matrix Management is about Surfacing Conflict - don't try to suppress conflict in a matrix, constructive conflict is how it works

Trust is the key to success in the digital workplace - creating real value from new working practices

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

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"Feel the fear and do it anyway"

Dr Susan Jeffers

"Appreciate the little things in life for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things"

Robert Brault

"You have brains in your head and feet in your shoes; you can steer yourself in any direction you choose"

Dr. Seuss

"Obstacles do not block the path, they are the path."

Zen Proverb

"Ultimately, a full understanding of any concept of any complexity cannot be restricted to a single mode of knowing."

Howard Gardner

Giacoman cites academic studies that show the proven benefits to a caring attitude.

- In a study of 69 self-managed teams by Boston University found that caring behaviors, such as expressing concern over well-being, understanding another's perspective, and speaking warmly to colleagues, generated a sense of safety and trust and were associated with a pervasive and positive impact on satisfaction and engagement, as well as learning and task outcomes.
- A longitudinal study of 3,200 employees in seven industries in 2014 by Harvard researchers found that employees who felt they worked in a caring culture reported higher levels of satisfaction and teamwork, had less absenteeism, and generated better organisational results.
- Another classic Harvard Business School study from the 1990s of more than 1,000 "star" financial analysts – among the best in their industry – found that when they switched firms, their job performance rarely matched the heights of their previous success. Losing the teamwork and relationships at the places where they became stars were found to be important contributing factors.

So the first step for leaders is to recognise that caring, and demonstrating that you care, brings benefits. The next step is counterintuitive: Think about your own dissatisfaction – that first Monday back after a long vacation – dealing with a difficult boss – the disappointment when a deal goes bad. Then, recognise that your team members are experiencing the same frustrations and worries as you. This simple reflection naturally generates a desire to help others with their dissatisfaction, and can produce the optimism and energy necessary to do it.

Finally, thinking about the ways in which your success would have been impossible without the help from others — loving parents, supportive teachers, and empathetic mentors. And your continued success will require further help from others, including your work colleagues. This provides a self-interested reason for leaders to care about the well-being of their team members.

Giacoman also points out the risks. A study by Professor Mark C. Frame suggests that the higher up the organisation one is promoted, the less his or her care is valued. Caring needs to be balanced with some level of assertiveness and independence. The sergeant major cared about his soldiers, but he still put them through tough training and meted out discipline swiftly.

The image of the shouting alpha leader as someone who gets results has been shown to be a myth. From war zones to boardrooms, caring has proven to be an effective tool for leaders.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article in strategy+business.

New Directions offer workshops and consultancy on leadership and appreciative leadership. For more information [Click here](#)

Matrix Management is about

"Genius is that energy which collects, combines, amplifies and animates."

Samuel Johnson

"I think somehow we learn who really are and then live with that decision."

Eleanor Roosevelt

"85% of your success is due to your personality and your ability to communicate, negotiate and lead. Only 15% of success is attributable to technical knowledge."

Carnegie Institute of Technology

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said"

Peter Drucker

"Be careful when speaking. You create the world around you with your words"

Navajo saying

"The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend."

Anonymous

"Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still."

Chinese Proverb

"Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen."

John Steinbeck

"Human beings are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, and are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so."

Douglas Adams

"We all have possibilities that we don't know about. We can do things we don't even dream we can do."

Dale Carnegie

Trust is the key to success in the digital workplace

Surfacing Conflict

A recent article from matrix management specialists Global Integration makes the key point that the matrix is about surfacing conflict not trying to minimise it. Many organisations introduce a matrix explicitly to improve the amount of communication and collaboration across the traditional vertical silos, usually geography and function.

In a formal matrix structure additional reporting lines are added to reflect "horizontal" business entities such as business units or key global processes such as supply chain. In a more informal "matrix management" way of working reporting lines remain unchanged but there are many more cross functional virtual teams and projects that connect the organisation together.

By reflecting the needs of the horizontal and vertical in reporting relationships, or in collaboration structures, the matrix effectively forces more collaboration and makes people more pay more attention to multiple dimensions of their organisations. At the same time, the matrix is associated with higher levels of conflict. In my workshops I make the point that matrix organisations are designed to increase conflict and so requests from participants to find ways to reduce the amount of conflict are not appropriate.

It is probably not a good idea to reduce the amount of conflict, but what is important to be able to manage it positively. Conflict is a reflection of different perspectives and strongly held ideas about where the business should operate. The more people that are involved, the more the possibility of strongly held different views. The more passionate you are and the more you care about the business, the more disagreement you should expect. We worry far more when we find organisations with low levels of disagreement, this probably means that it has been suppressed and that people have given up.

Of course, it's not enough just to have conflict, we need the skills and confidence to identify and resolve disagreements when they happen. If we just suppress problems or take them off the table, then they will keep coming back and it will cause frustration and delay. Communication training which is associated with a traditional hierarchical structure does not typically involve conflict handling - so this is a skill not many people possess.

In an international context there are some particular challenges

- it happens virtually - disagreements may be more evident when we are face-to-face and can consider people's body language, in the virtual world they are more hidden and can escalate without our realising. Deep-seated conflicts are also not easy to resolve without face-to-face time. So, we need mechanisms to identify when conflict is happening virtually and we need a team and corporate culture that allows conflict to be expressed and resolved openly
- it happens cross culturally - there are many cultures, particularly in Asia but including my own in the UK, that prefer to smooth over conflict in the interests of our harmony and politeness. As international managers, we need to learn the signs of conflict in

The digital workplace is becoming the norm, with collaboration tools, social media, open plan offices, virtual teams and flexible working gaining prevalence. But a number of organisations also claim that flexible working hurts collaboration and impedes innovation. So, do digital workplaces actually create business value?

Research by Nick van der Meulen at the University of Amsterdam says 'yes' where the physical and digital work environment is designed for a collaborative, integrated employee experience. Connectivity is built across silos both physically - with activity-based, flexible open-plan offices, and digitally through networks and systems that integrate employees across geographies and time zones.

Organisations that have this integrated and company-wide approach to greater employee connectedness outperform direct competitors in their respective industries on dimensions such as growth in market share, profit growth, and employee satisfaction.

Above all, the research emphasised leaders must also adopt a facilitative approach allowing employees to decide when, where, and how best to work. That requires a shift in leadership mindset to one of trust in employees. This trust is a huge motivational force, that empowers employees to make decisions in the best interest of customer experience and their work. It's a win-win scenario.

Employers that invest in the digital workplace and provide employees with the tools and are provided with trust and confidence are then those that in the main are the companies which perform best.

Does your workplace is getting value

other cultures and how to interpret indirect communication to get the real meaning behind

The real meaning of the matrix is to create more constructive conflict and prevent people just walking away from it into their own silos. If you are experiencing more conflict when you work in a matrix, don't be surprised, but do make sure you build the skills to resolve it positively.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article on the Global Integration blog

New Directions offer workshops and consultancy on the skills of working in matrix and project structures For more information [Click here](#).

from the digital workplace, ask yourself:

- How much does your manager trust you?
- Does he or she allow you to work anywhere, at any time?
- Does he or she give you the freedom to make decisions or allow you the scope to make mistakes in search of improved performance?

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the full article on HRZone

[Click here](#) for information on New Directions offers in this field

Public Courses 2017

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 human resource development strategy for the oil and gas sector.

Kuala Lumpur [18-21 October](#)

International Oil & Gas Executive Programme

An intensive 5 day workshop in strategic management.

Kuala Lumpur [24-28 October](#)

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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](#)

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