



# CUTTINGS...

Number 134 April 2018

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Welcome to 2018 - and look forward to 2030 and what that might have  
Welcome to Spring!!

This is the time of year-end for many companies, so an article on performance appraisal is timely - this time looking at the use of strengths based rather than problem solving conversations. In the second article, I was attracted by some research from PwC that identified the problems of getting cross-functional teams to perform, and some advice from them to improve. And finally a reminder of the ease with which we create mistrust - sending a copy of your email to the boss creates pockets of mistrust with co-workers. So don't do it even if it is intended to promote efficiency and transparency in communications.

Enjoy

*Geof Cox*

## In this edition

### Strengths based performance

**conversations** - some new research from the CIPD.

### Effective Cross-Functional Teams -

setting the parameters for success.

**How to create mistrust at work** - just cc your boss on intra-team communication!

Plus details of **2018 Public Courses, Book Sales, and Snippets** to further provoke your thinking and reflection

## Strengths Based Performance Conversations

There has been a great deal of attention on performance management over recent years. There has been a constant questioning of some established approaches, such as annual appraisals, are irrelevant and ineffective and should be replaced by more regular coaching-style conversations.

The CIPD report, *Could Do Better?*, reviewed in Cuttings 127 in February last year, summarised a lot of the current research and identified the best available evidence on what works:

- managers' evaluations are more powerful motivators than self-assessments,
- forced distribution to rate performance should not be used, as it generates negative employee reactions
- if you use categories to rate performance five categories work better than three
- strengths-based feedback has a positive effect on performance and motivation
- employees should be involved in the appraisal discussions so that their voice can be fully heard, even if it doesn't influence the evaluation
- more regular discussions are helpful to see how employees are responding, in particular to ensure that they feel the process is fair and useful

## Snippets

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

"We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the Universe. That makes us something special."

*Stephen Hawking*

The initial task of the language of leadership is spark energy and initiate forward motion"

*Stephen Denning*

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

*Alan Kay*

"You manage things; you lead people."

*Rear Admiral Grace Hopper*

"Just because nobody complains doesn't mean all parachutes are perfect"

*Benny Hill*

"In youth we learn; in age we

One area mentioned in that report is the strengths based approach to performance management. The CIPD has now responded to the growing interest in this area, but lack of research evidence, in a field based investigation and report on Strengths Based Performance Conversations.

Strengths based processes are based on Positive Psychology and the practice of Appreciative Inquiry, which suggest that people's greatest opportunity for improvement comes from understanding and building on their strengths, rather than fixing their weaknesses.

In the strengths-based approach, managers adopt a coaching style in conversing with their employees and use questions and language that reflect on positive experiences at work, times when employees felt at their best and were producing their best work, and identifying the capabilities and strengths that made this possible.

This marks a big shift in mindset for most of us brought up in a deficit based education and management system where the default mode of thought is to focus on what's gone wrong and consider how we can fix it or avoid that in the future. We engage in root cause analysis of problems, which means we understand problems very well, but we don't understand the root causes of success - which are likely to be very different. A strengths-based approach aims to ensure that the norm in regular performance conversations is to reflect on what worked well, why, and how this can be replicated.

The latest study by the CIPD includes an evidence review and a robust field study of the impact of interventions, as compared with control groups, conducted in a real-life organisational context.

Not surprisingly, greater impact is felt from interventions that are more extensive and holistic than one-off training workshops - but even these were able to deliver meaningful change in the utility of performance conversations. So, in contexts where HR leaders are not able to run wide-scale holistic or extensive change programmes, it is worth making a start with a more discrete, one-off approach of running capability-building workshops.

The evidence from the field research showed that the use of strengths based conversations as opposed to the 'normal' deficit based discussion had positive impacts on the frequency and efficacy of performance conversations. There was evidence of more frequent performance related discussions between managers and staff, a more supportive environment, and of a range of different topics being discussed. Employees talked more often to their managers about challenges in their personal lives, their career or development ambitions, the learning and development they need to perform in their roles, their performance in their job roles, challenges they face in their work and how their managers can support them.

*"The most important finding from our trial is evidence of a positive impact on how useful employees believe (strength-*

understand."

*Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach*

"Either do something worth reading or do something worth writing"

*Benjamin Franklin*

"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."

*Warren Bennis*

"There's zero correlation between being the best talker and having the best ideas"

*Susan Cain*

"Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity"

*Hanlon's Razor*

"It is our choices that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

*J.K Rowling*

"If a man has a talent and cannot use it, he has failed. If he has a talent and uses only half of it, he has partly failed. If he has a talent and learns somehow to use the whole of it, he has gloriously succeeded."

*Thomas Wolfe*

"As we grow older we must discipline ourselves to continue expanding, broadening, learning, keeping our minds active and open."

*Clint Eastwood*

"What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

*Jane Goodall*

"In every man there is something wherein I may learn of him, and in that I am his pupil."

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"It is never too late to learn what is always necessary to know."

*Seneca*

"As a CEO, I have to go to school all the time because I am learning new skills that I need to run this company and I am realising that I am not equipped to just coast, I have to constantly renew my skills."

*Indira Nooyi*

*based) performance conversations with their managers are."*

The learning for any HR or line manager who is dissatisfied with their existing deficit based performance management process, is that a strengths based approach has great benefits in improving the conversation and the employees' perception of fairness and usefulness. It is also possible to have an impact with change on a small or local changes without needing a corporate wide intervention.

### USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete report 'Could Do Better' by the CIPD. [Click here](#) to download a copy of [Cuttings 127](#) [Click here](#) to read the complete report 'Strengths-based Performance Conversations' by the CIPD.

**New Directions** offer workshops and consultancy on performance management and strengths-based processes including Appreciative Inquiry. For more information on workshops [Click here](#) or on our consultancy offers [Click here](#)

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

*Alice Walker*

"Don't be distracted by criticism. Remember —the only taste of success some people get is to take a bite out of you."

*Zig Ziglar*

## Effective Cross-Functional Teams

A recent survey by PwC found that only 6% of employees working on cross functional teams believe that they consistently produce outstanding results; only 8% say leadership always makes their team's work a priority and sets clear objectives; just 10% say that these teams make clear decisions and are accountable for their actions; a mere 9% say that team members share information effectively; and perhaps most telling, only 9% say that these teams consistently embrace diversity of opinion — which is why different skills are brought together in the first place.

Effective teamwork of any sort requires finesse, but this is especially true for cross-functional teams. For cross-functional teams to perform well within more traditional organizational structures, the PwC reporters identify three key guardrails that must be put in place.

**Senior executive ownership.** Assign a senior executive to oversee the team and signal that the effort is important. This also provides a mechanism for clear decision making and that team members are credited for this work.

**Clear goals and performance metrics.** Tie the team's output to the organisation's strategy and to the executive owner's performance to align the team.

**Knowledge transfer.** Create mechanisms to ensure that the team's output is transferred back into key functions and work streams so the insights become standard operating procedures for the enterprise.

Bringing diverse talent together — and allowing that talent to accomplish big things — has become the norm for how work gets done. But the way most companies use this talent needs serious improvement. Cross-functional teams have the opportunity to unleash great results,

## How to Create Mistrust at Work

A recent study by Professor David De Cremer, of Cambridge Judge Business School, looked at the common practice of copying or "cc'ing" the boss into emails between co-workers. Often done with good intentions of creating transparency and efficiency, and also facilitated by collaborative software, the evidence shows that it more often creates a culture of distrust.

Using globally sourced data, de Cremer found that copying supervisors or superiors into emails between coworkers can foster a "culture of fear and low psychological safety". The participants felt that cc'ing the boss signals that the co-worker did not trust their 'competence,' 'integrity,' and 'benevolence.'

And, says Professor De Cremer, "the more often you include a supervisor on emails to co-workers, the less trusted those co-workers feel". So, the next time you think about cc'ing your supervisor or a superior in an email between

but only if we ensure they are set up in the right way and given the support they need in order to work. In the current business climate, companies need to make these cross-functional teams successful — or risk being left behind.

### USEFUL LINKS

Click [here](#) to read the full article from Strategy+

New Directions offers consultancy on cross functional and remote team working, leadership and communication. For more information Click [here](#).

coworkers, you might need to ask yourself two questions “What is the rationale behind this email?” and “Is it really worth adding the boss?” Otherwise you will risk creating mistrust in the team.

### USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to see the article from HBR

**New Directions** offers consultancy on teams. For more information [Click here](#).

## Public Courses 2018

New Directions runs a small number of public training programmes in association with partners. 2018 dates are below.

### Human Competency and Capability Development

A 4 day course in human resource development strategy for the oil and gas sector. Run in partnership with petroEDGE.

**Kuala Lumpur** [29 October - 1 November](#)

### International Oil & Gas Executive Programme

An intensive 5 day workshop in strategic business management, designed specifically for managers in the oil and gas sector. Run in partnership with petroEDGE.

**Kuala Lumpur** [22-26 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.](#)

## Cuttings

**Cuttings** is a bi-monthly collection of ideas and comments published elsewhere which have attracted my attention over the past couple of months and has been in continuous publication since 1988.

It is designed for readers who are interested in individual, organisation and management development and is free.

New Directions is 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](#)

### Contact details

T: +44 (0)117 968 1451

M: +44 (0)7753 626284

Skype: GeofCox.NewDirections

E: [geofcox@newdirections.uk.com](mailto:geofcox@newdirections.uk.com)

P: 26a Downleaze, Bristol BS9 1LZ

© Copyright 2018 by New Directions Ltd. The contents are the property of the publisher but may be used if the publisher is identified and if copies of such use are sent to the publisher. This message was sent to [email address] as you have either requested a copy or attended one of our courses.

**Note for data protection legislation purposes:** your details are stored on a database which is used solely for the mailing of this newsletter. By subscribing you are agreeing to your data being stored and used in this way. The database is not used for any other communication or marketing purpose, and third party access is not allowed. You have a right of access and of rectification of your data, and a right for your data to be removed at any time. If you do not wish to receive future communications, or to remove your data from the database, reply with an “UNSUBSCRIBE” message and you will be permanently removed from this database.