

CUTTINGS...

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

December again!! Once again it is time to plan for the festivities and end of year celebrations. And the New Year usually brings with it the start of the annual performance appraisal round - and the dread of most managers and employees! I have written a lot on this subject in recent Cuttings, so no direct comment this time - just an interesting article on the power of listening to improve employee feedback and make them less defensive.

Other articles from the trade press and e-zines look at using people analytics and why virtual teams tend to fail. Some useful pointers in each. And, as usual, there is a collection of quotations to provoke your thoughts.

Season's Greetings to you all. Enjoy...

Geof Cox

The Power of Listening in Helping People Change

Giving feedback is often used to tell employees that they need to change, and even if it is positive it often backfires because it comes from a positional power position and can make employees stressed and defensive. Researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have been experimenting and observing the use of high quality (attentive, empathic, and non-judgmental) listening to positively shape emotions and attitudes. Listening does not replace feedback, rather, it seems that listening to employees talk about their own experiences first helps them feel psychologically safe and less defensive, which makes giving feedback more productive.

What Makes Listening Powerful?

For example, in one laboratory experiment, speakers paired with good listeners felt less anxious, more self-aware, reported higher clarity about their attitudes on the topics and wanting to share their attitude with other people more compared with speakers paired with listeners who were distracted. This is replicated in a field studies where the researcher's findings suggest that listening seems to make an employee more relaxed, more self-aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses, and more willing to reflect in a non-defensive manner. This can make employees more likely to cooperate rather than compete with colleagues, and more open to considering other points of view.

In this edition

The power of listening in helping people change - some interesting results from just listening from an HBR article

Using people analytics intelligently - some examples of how people analytics have been used to help change efforts.

Why virtual teams fail and how to avoid them - four key issues and solutions to improve remote team working

Plus details of **Public Courses, Book Sales**, and a collection of **Snippets** - quotations to further provoke your thinking and reflection

Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

"When you find an idea that you just can't stop thinking about, that's probably a good one to pursue."

Josh James

"Nothing will work unless you do."

Maya Angelou

"If you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong."

Terry Pratchett

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Charles Darwin

But whilst evidence is clear that managers who listen well are perceived as people leaders, generate more trust, instil higher job satisfaction, and increase their team's creativity. It still faces a number of barriers to being widely adopted:

- some managers may feel that if they listen to their employees they are going to be looked upon as weak.
- Listening takes time and effort, so listening managers must be prepared to put in the time to listen in order to see the future benefits.
- High-quality listening can be risky because it entails entering a speaker's perspective without trying to make judgments which could potentially change the listener's attitudes and perceptions.

So managers need some help and training to become better listeners. Here are some best practices:

- Give 100% of your attention. Get rid of all distractions.
- Do not interrupt. Practice only listening for a prolonged period: 3, 5, 10 minutes and then not responding until later that day or even the following day. You will be amazed at what you hear.
- Listen without jumping to conclusions and interpreting what you hear. If you notice your mind wandering off the speaker, apologise and ask them to repeat.
- Do not give a solution: help the speaker draw up a solution themselves.
- Ask more (good) questions. Questions that you don't know the answer to. Questions which follow what the speaker is saying and helps them delve deeper into their thoughts and experiences. Before you ask a question, ask yourself, "is this question intended to benefit the speaker or satisfy my curiosity?"

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the complete article in HBR by Guy Itzchakov and Avi Kluger

New Directions offer workshops on interpersonal skills including good listening. For more information [Click here](#).

"We hire for hard skills, we fire for soft skills"

Rick Stephens, SVP Boeing

"Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

"The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook."

William James

"The greater our knowledge increases, the more our ignorance unfolds."

John F Kennedy

"In pursuit of knowledge, everyday something is acquired; In pursuit of wisdom, everyday something is dropped."

Lao Tzu

"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have not been in bed with a mosquito."

Anita Roddick

"Information is giving out. Communication is getting through."

Sydney Harris

Using People Analytics Intelligently

People analytics — the use of data about human behaviour, relationships and traits to make business decisions — helps to replace decision making based on anecdotal experience, hierarchy and risk avoidance with higher-quality decisions based on data analysis, prediction, and experimental research.

Microsoft's Workplace Analytics division identifies three main ways organisations use people analytics to help understand and drive their transformation efforts.

Process transformation: people analytics can measure activities and find embedded expertise. One example, people analytics looked at the time spent on a finance process carried out in every country to map the networks of the people involved. They discovered that one country was 16% percent more efficient: they got the same results in 71 fewer person-hours and with 40 fewer people involved each month. The local

Why virtual teams fail and to avoid it

HRZone suggests four key issues:

Lack of understanding Teammates are separated by factors including time zone, language, culture and religion as well as geography: one size does not fit all. *Solution:* accommodate diversity and take advantage of the unique perspectives and fresh ideas that come from a team made up of lots of different team members.

Poor communication Misunderstandings are five times as likely to happen when we move away from face-to-face conversations. *Solution:*

finance team had no idea that they were such a bright spot, and without people analytics the process improvement may not have been identified.

Cultural transformation: feedback loops and other methods of data-driven storytelling can help culture transformation. An example - teams whose managers spent at least 16 minutes of one-on-one time per week with each direct report per week had 30% percent more engagement than the average manager, who spent just 9 minutes per week.

Top-down strategic transformation: people analytics track resources, boundaries, capacity, time use, networks, skill sets, performance, and mindsets that can help pinpoint where change is possible and can measure what happens when you try it. One people analytics team at a financial services company created a dashboard showing the number of hours that knowledge workers were active for in different teams. This showed when a team is over-utilised, and in danger of burn-out, and where teams are under- or unevenly utilised and could be more receptive.

USEFUL LINKS

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

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

be clear and concise; slow down, avoid jargon, obscure words and local phrases. Continually check for understanding.

Using the wrong channels Virtual teams don't tend to choose their communication channels wisely. *Solution:* choose the right channel - decide as a team which channel to use when, to suit team preferences and the outcome required.

Recruiting the wrong people Soft skills are different. Employees may be great in a face-to-face setting but lack the skills to succeed in a virtual setting. *Solution:* interview applicants in the same way as used on the job: in person, by phone, on Skype, and via email.

USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to see the HRZone article **New Directions** offers workshops on effective teams. For more information [Click here](#).

Public Courses in SE Asia

New Directions runs a small number of public training programmes in Kuala Lumpur in association with petroEDGE. Click on the course date for further details.

Human Competency & Capability Development [13-16 October](#)

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

Moving from Engineer to Manager [19-21 October](#)

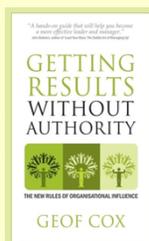
A 3 day programme to help engineers and those from a technical background take the first steps into management.

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.

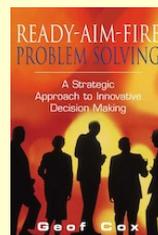
It has been published continuously for more than 20 years by *New Directions*, an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

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USEFUL LINKS

[Past issues of Cuttings](#)
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