



# CUTTINGS...

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Articles this edition focus on relationship building and the use of 'soft skills' - subjects that seem to be dominating the blogs and articles that come across my physical and virtual desk.

As the British and Irish Lions embark on a tour of New Zealand, there is an insight to their feedback culture. There is some confirming research that managers need to be aware of their impact and not rely on their intent - they think they use personal power, but what is overwhelmingly felt is negative position power. And there is increasing evidence that remote teams work better when they get together regularly in a face to face environment.

Enjoy,

*Geof Cox*

## In this edition

**Give your teams face-to-face time** - getting remote teams together improves results

**Perform like the All Blacks** - develop a feedback-rich culture to emulate the best rugby team in the world

**Influencing without authority** - managers need to be aware that their impact is different to their intention - the gap is great.

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

## Give Your Teams Face-to-Face Time

Eric J. McNulty teaches an executive education class at Harvard, and has noticed that the project teams they set up to work remotely for six months have been starting to hold regular face to face meetings mid-project, in their own time and at their own expense. And the outcomes from these projects compared with teams who remain remote for the six months have consistently been among the best.

With collaboration technology getting better and less expensive, geographically dispersed teams are becoming more common. Yet the experience of McNulty's executive students - and also examples from organisation around the world - supports the trend for high-touch to balance the high-tech. It essentially comes down to how we build and maintain relationships - a team's basic building block is trust, and building trust is best and more effectively done as a multi sensory experience. It is difficult to build and maintain high levels of trust when you are remote and only connected by technology.

Language, even a common one, can be a barrier to teams functioning smoothly. For example, Northern Europeans tend to be quite informal and direct when speaking English, while Indians and Africans are more formal and indirect. So even just speaking to each other can irritate or even offend. These cultural and linguistic challenges are more easily navigated when people work side-by-side to solve problems as well as share a meal, learn a bit about colleagues' backgrounds, and swap

## Snippets

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

"Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes but they don't quit."

*Conrad Hilton*

"Engaging people is about meeting their needs - not yours."

*Tony Robbins*

"While 89% of managers think that performance appraisals are important on some level, only 4% of employees think they are the best way to manage performance"

*BambooHR*

"Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read."

*Groucho Marx*

"One of the best predictors of

stories about kids, sports, and other non-work issues. The informal, social dialogue is probably more important than the formal task conversation in building trust.

Getting teams together regularly runs up against issue of the perceived cost. But once you start to show the increased benefits in deliverables from the project teams over purely dispersed operations, most CFOs will accept the spend. One manager who regularly used face to face meetings for his dispersed teams keeps a shared spreadsheet to have full transparency on costs. Team members see how much the company is investing in bringing them together and the bosses and the CFO see the costs and can weigh them up against the improved performance.

Another manager who is a great believer in getting people together observes that companies rarely hesitate to fund travel to unite a team when something goes wrong. Then it's all hands on deck and don't worry about the expense. So, if you'll spend the money when a problem arises, why don't you spend some to prevent the problem in the first place?

Human connection is a necessity, and even though work has become global this does not replace the need for contact. That is a tension that must be resolved if people are to work well together. At the very least we should make all project kick-off meetings face to face, and allow those teams some regular face to face contact time to work on and review the project and maintain the culture.

## USEFUL LINKS

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

**New Directions** offer workshops and consultancy on building better relationships and building high performance teams. For more information [Click here](#).

## Perform like the All Blacks

The British and Irish Lions rugby team are about to tour in New Zealand and play the All Blacks, who are the most successful rugby (and probably all sports) team in the world. They have a record of having won almost 80% of the test matches they have ever played, they are the only nation to boast a winning record against every opponent they play, and they have held the number one ranking for longer than all other teams combined since the introduction of World Rugby rankings in 2003. Not bad for a team representing a nation of only 4.5 million people!

One of the most important factors in their continued success is their use of feedback to drive performance. They operate a 'feedback rich culture' based on four defining characteristics.

HIGH TRANSPARENCY/HIGH OWNERSHIP

ultimate success isn't natural talent or even industry expertise, but how you explain your failures and rejections."

*Daniel Pink*

"Just change the channel. You are in control of the clicker. Don't replay the bad, scary movie."

*Arianna Huffington*

"Everyone talks about building a relationship with your customer. I think you build one with your employees first."

*Angela Ahrendts*

"Don't be intimidated by what you don't know. That can be your greatest strength and ensure that you do things differently from everyone else."

*Sarah Blakely*

"The road to success is always under construction."

*Lily Tomlin*

32% of UK workers feel that having remote access to their workplace means that they can't switch off. But 53% say it helps them to work flexibly and 37% find it makes them more productive

*CIPD Employee Outlook*

## Influencing without authority

According to a recent study conducted in South Africa, Canada and Italy researchers asked how matrix and functional managers influenced their teams - and how their employees perceived them influencing.

The gap between intent and impact was big.

While the project managers in the matrix organization stated their top three influencing techniques were passion and inspiration, logical arguments and creating shared goals

In the All Blacks' feedback-rich environment, performance is transparent. Everyone sees how they – and others – are doing, all the time, and can connect their own performance to that of the team. Transparency brings two consequences – strong individual ownership of performance, and no hiding place for poor performers.

The All Blacks use transparency to enable self-improvement – players are taught to analyse their own performance accurately and to drive their own improvement over time. Rather than being 'spoon fed' performance reviews by coaches, players review videos of each game on their own in advance of sitting down with the coaches, and identify their personal opportunities to improve.

High transparency also allows the players to hold each other to account just as much as the coaches do. Players can and do challenge each other's performance, using the data, in the shared understanding that it's for the good of the team.

#### CONVERSATIONS AS 'RUNNING COMMENTARY'

Enabled by high transparency, in the All Blacks' feedback rich culture the amount of discussion on performance is far greater than the norm. Individually and collectively they maintain, in effect, a running commentary on performance as it occurs. They invest in learning from today to help them become better tomorrow. The All Blacks learn from every training session and every game, regardless of whether they win, lose or draw.

#### STRONG DELIVERY CAPABILITIES

The All Blacks understand there is a skill in delivering effective feedback, which for many people does not come naturally. They invest to ensure their people are schooled in the art of using feedback to drive improvement. They design training and review processes that ensure feedback happens in the right way, with the right frequency and linked to one goal – ensuring the organisation reaches ever higher standards of performance.

#### 'JUST ENOUGH PROCESS', FIT-FOR-PURPOSE

To facilitate the high volume of performance conversations, the All Blacks keep each individual conversation as short, sharp, and to the point as possible. Their operating principle is 'just enough process', which means that the purpose of each discussion is clear, and the amount of formality and structure is minimised. They understand that unnecessary bureaucracy creates a barrier to having conversations take place at all.

The All Blacks feedback rich culture enables their outstanding performance – historically, now and into the future.

There is much that business leaders can learn from this approach to drive performance in their own teams.

#### USEFUL LINKS

This is an article from the authors of *Powerhouse* published by Kogan Page. [Click here](#) to find the book on Amazon

(in my Getting Results Without Authority terminology: Ideas and Process styles / Personal power), their team members felt they used authority first, then association (the desire to be linked with the manager)(in GRWA terminology: Action style / Positional power), with passion and inspiration coming a dismal third.

Functional managers did not fare any better: their view was that they influenced through empowerment and logical arguments (Personal power / People and Process style), their teams felt penalty pressure, performance ratings and authority (negative Positional power).

It seems like micro-management and use of negative positional power is still with us.

In my, and the researchers experience, most managers do not intend to deliberately use coercion and negative positional power, but it is still very clearly felt in terms of impact. Many managers intend to be inspirational, but because of the status of their role, team members assumed they were being coerced and then find confirming evidence.

The research also looked at what works best in a matrix organization, and found the strongest statistically significant correlations were for 'respect knowledge', logical arguments and passion and inspiration. And for functional managers the strongest drivers of performance were similarly passion and inspiration, logical arguments, and then association.

A clear endorsement for managers to use their personal power, rather than dropping back on positional power. They need to take note of their impact rather than their intention, as at the moment their good intentions are not coming across in practice.

#### USEFUL LINKS

[Click here](#) to read the research article from Global Integration

New Directions offer workshop and consultancy on team working, feedback and coaching for performance. For more information [Click here](#).

**Getting Results Without Authority** is an industry leader in helping managers develop their personal power and influence [Click here](#) for information.

## 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** [3-6 October](#)

### International Oil & Gas Executive Programme

An intensive 5 day workshop in strategic management.

**Kuala Lumpur** [9-13 October](#)

#### USEFUL LINKS

[New Directions consultancy and training services](#)

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### 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. 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](#)

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