

# BMTFed Newsletter

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Manchester, UK



## Leaving Things Unsaid

By Jonny Bennet

I suppose we have all from time to time left an encounter thinking 'I wish I had said X or said Y'. The world of the unsaid leaves all kinds of ugly trails in the form of our own assumptions regarding our take on reality and someone else's understanding of our world and how we feel.

Multiple opportunities abound when it comes to what I am thinking and just how oblivious the other person can be of my pain!

Rather than say something coherent we typically attempt to transfer our message silently - via thought transfer:-

- "You didn't respond to my slightly disguised but plainly obvious silent cries for help."
- "You should have realised how unhappy I was; it took all my effort to keep a pleasant expression on my face."
- "I have been transmitting my dissatisfaction with every fibre of my body language."
- "If you can't figure it out then it's not up to me to tell you."

All are a classic case of "I would have thought by now you would realise that I don't like pasta; how many times do I have to give you my legendary 'I don't like pasta' icy stare?"

One thing is for sure, leaving things unsaid builds a panoply of dirty pain over a lifetime.

## Listen To Me

By Richard Kazbour

I told my two year old daughter yesterday, "Pay attention to me." I like to think she's pretty smart, so naturally she stopped talking and looked at me. It's an important lesson, I thought - I remember my parents teaching it to me as a kid.

Later in the day she locked eyes with her three year old cousin and said, "Pay attention to me!" She didn't have anything important to follow the demand up with. Granted she's only two but still I thought, "What have I done?" Turns out it's much easier to demand the attention of others than it is to pay attention to the impact we have on them. I've still got 16 years to impart that wisdom onto my little girl.

## Meeting Inspiration

By Lee Martin

I met our new client last week. The most senior client person went around all the other people in the room and shook hands, introducing himself. I was very impressed: When he spoke he was modest and wise. He spoke infrequently but his input was enlightening. I found the experience quite inspiring and energising. I wonder, do you think the impact you have on your people (or your children) brings out the best in them in this way?

"Judge people on how they treat the least powerful person in the room." - Tim Minchin

*Behavioural Management Techniques (BMT) is a blend of applied behavioural science tools and project management skills. BMT is used to improve business and safety performance.*



# Organised Curiosity

By Bruce Faulkner

Tim Minchin describes science as simply as the word we use to describe a method of organising our curiosity. He makes the point that it's easier at a dinner party, to say "science" than to say, "the incremental acquisition of understanding through observation, humbled by an acute awareness of our tendency towards bias."

These two statements are a wonderful description of the power of science. Organising our curiosity taps into the desire to know more about what is happening. The incremental acquisition of understanding sets the expectation that this is going to take some time. These two points can be harnessed to unlock an understanding of why people do what they do, and not what we want them to do.

Observation - Behaviour is simply what people say and do. This means behaviour is overt. It happens in the public domain and can be observed. Observations can be gathered across several interactions. As the data accumulates a behavioural pattern come into focus.

Curiosity - The common practice is to observe someone, pass judgement on their behaviour and apply a label. This sequence plays into prejudices and biases. It isn't actually an accurate assessment of what was observed. An accurate assessment is that all behaviour serves a purpose. This new perspective helps kick in curiosity. How has that behaviour helped that person;

- get something,
- avoid something, or
- escape from something?

When observation and curiosity come together, a rich picture of the environment emerges. Frustration and anger are defused since the person is no longer viewed as the problem. Being able to predict upcoming behaviour creates an opportunity to influence new behaviour. The dinner party line is, "Do you want more or less of that behaviour?"

## Shades of BMT

- Leaders talking to their direct reports about today's / this week's tasks is the 2mph method of improving productivity. These leaders risk being paired with coercion.
- Leaders talking to their direct reports about anything but today's / this week's tasks could be the 50mph method of improving productivity.
- The second method uses curiosity to understand and then curate the productive environment. This is great leadership personified.



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# Consistent Safety

By Lynn Dunlop

I recently heard someone - let's call him Paul - speaking about their company's mobile phone policy. Paul explained that his company's policy was that no phone calls were to be made or received while driving. The company's policy was well-intended - they hoped to keep their people safe by preventing them from being distracted while they were driving.

Paul had noticed that this policy was not strictly adhered to, and that the worst offenders for breaking the rule were often the senior leaders. He said, "It's difficult to hang up on someone when they call or when you call them, particularly if the person is in a senior role. I have taken to just calling people back if on the phone, but the person can be insistent that they want to continue."

Trying to get people to follow a blanket rule, especially one which makes it harder for them to do their job, is always difficult. In this case, the inconsistency of the leaders' adherence to the rule is likely making people less safe than if the rule didn't exist at all.

A blanket rule is an attempt to control a person's behaviours rather than create an environment where people always choose to do the safest thing. Consider a parenting analogy: Parents want to teach their children how to make the right choices in life, and it's impossible to teach that lesson that by banning children from doing things.

It's always worth considering company policies in terms of their behavioural soundness. It is safer to enforce a consistent policy of asking people to simply follow the letter of the law rather than to inconsistently follow a partially-ignored company guideline.

If you're in a senior position and considering breaking one of your company's rules, think instead about scrapping the policy. By ignoring a rule, you're making the future less safe for everyone in your organisation.