

Jemstone Tidbits

Jemstone Consultancy Business Psychology: Adding value to business through the application of positive psychology: increasing wealth, health and happiness: 020 8293 0017

Intuition can be good for business!

In business much emphasis is placed on making decisions logically and rationally, using factual data. However research suggests that it is **our emotional system that allows us to make effective choices between alternatives**: that intuition (emotion based awareness) is not a mystical process, it is essential to survival.

Intuition has a neuro-physiological base in **the limbic system** (a brain system) which is at the core of emotional learning, responsiveness and ability.

The limbic system **learns from experience**, when it detects something that its experience suggests is important, it causes us to 'feel' something.

These gut feel responses are informed by previous learning, of which we may not be consciously aware e.g. **learning that has taken place at the sub-awareness level**.

Intuition is a sub-consciousness process that leads to a **feeling about a particular behaviour or course of action**.

If this **system is damaged, people make very poor decisions** that lead to financial, social and friendship losses e.g. poor survival choices, despite 'knowing' better.

Intuition is helpful in complex situations where explicit information about risky outcomes is not available: **it helps effective decision-making**.

In other words intuition is a sub-consciousness activation of previous learning of survival significance and is crucial to our ability to make decision that are good for our preservation.

Early signs are that the ability to access intuitive level learning can be enhanced by developing greater skills in **spontaneity, relaxation, bodily awareness, and imagination**.

Alan Carr (2004) Positive Psychology. Brunner Routledge. Sadler-Smith and Shefy (2004) Professional standards research: developing intuition. People Management. 11.11.04 pp51

Coaching: Is it getting too busy?

As we contemplate how to 'do' effective coaching, I thought it might be an idea to remind ourselves of the importance of relationship to achieving change.

The **attitude of the coach and the quality of the coaching relationship** crucially affect the likelihood of change occurring.

The first priority is to establish **trust**; challenge and change come later.

This is helped by bringing the qualities of **congruence, acceptance and empathy** to the relationship, as first identified by Carl Rodgers.

Remember, people will allow themselves to be influenced by a person **after** they decide that they have been heard and understood.

To be effective a coach needs to: accept that they are not in control, to listen, to pay attention to the said and unsaid, to not judge, to guide coachees to their solutions, and to suspend their expertise. You don't have to be busy to be doing something in coaching!

For more see: Peltier (2001) the psychology of executive coaching

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Does your organisation exert coercive control? Does it matter?

Coercion is the use of punishment or threat of punishment to get others to act as we would like 'Do it or else', and of rewarding people just by letting them escape from our punishments and threats. "I'll let you off". In the short term and the immediate context coercive control can seem very effective, over time it has other effects on behaviour.

People react to coercion by **avoidance or escape** (stay out of your way, leave)

Coercive control systems **reduce freedom of choice** (e.g. empowerment, creativity)

Those who experience frequent punishment learn to do as **little as possible**, working solely to avoid being punished. (dull, no motivation). **Learning decreases**.

Those who use punishment become **conditioned punishers** (as does the environment in which punishment takes place) so the punished will seek to avoid them

If people know a punishment is coming, they are **unable to keep working effectively** (lost productivity)

Coercion breeds coercion: a punished person will 'turn' on the nearest person aggressively. (e.g. come out of the manager's office and shout at the office junior)

In such an environment people are unable to be creative, relaxed, enthusiastic, willing, risk taking, empowered, motivated, learn or to display initiative.

How can you tell if your organisational environment is coercive? Do people avoid contact with certain people? Do they stick to known 'safe' behaviours? Are they rigid in their beliefs and unwilling to take risks? Do they become anxious and unable to work well when told the manager wants to see them later? Do they work solely to stay out of trouble?

In many organisations **the very role of manager is a conditioned punisher**. To overcome this, managers have to **demonstrate over time that they can be trusted not to produce 'shocks'** for people. Telling people its OK to take risks is not enough. It's the behaviour that counts.

For more see: Sidman M (2001) Coercion and its fallout. Authors Cooperative Inc, Boston

Useful questions for coaching or development situations?

If I were to ask (other person) what would they say? (systemic understanding)

What would you like me to ask you about? (relevance, self awareness)

How will you know if (the change has happened, you have been effective, they have heard/reflected etc.)? (sensitizing to evaluative criteria)

What will you be listening for (in the planned conversation)? (sensitizing to conversational cues)

What would you have to hear from whom to be able to do this/to feel ok about this? (permissions)

Who else might know about this? How could you get that information? (accessing other resources)

When will be the right time? (belief system)

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