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THE LEADER'S CODE AND THE SCIENCE OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

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The Leader's Code – Benjamin Laker

Ben's talk was centred on the subject of hubris and the susceptibility of successful leaders in succumbing to it. He warned us that the dangers of arrogant over confident hubristic behaviours are significant, not only in terms of their psychological effects, but also in their wider impacts on society. It is important for us to learn how to identify hubris and how it might be stopped.

Examples of well-known people who have exhibited hubristic behaviours include Jeffrey Epstein, Harvey Weinstein, Prince Andrew, Nissan's former CEO Ghosn and Brian Cullinan. All these people believed they were above the normal conventions and rules of society. These norms and rules were for others to conform to; not them. Typical symptoms of hubris are:

- 'No prisoners' taken
- A lack of care for others
- A fierce defence of reputation and power
- Defiant and dangerous self-interest

Ben was first alerted to the significance and dangers of hubris whilst doing leadership research following a successful article with The Harvard Business Review in 2016. He recounted his own personal story to illustrate hubristic behaviour and its unforeseen consequences.

Ben's story centred around Brian Cullinan who was the leading Executive of PWC in the USA and around the world. Brian was one of a number of successful leaders, Ben was to interview for his research into successful leadership.

The interviews with Brian Cullinan went well, with a good rapport developing between the two men. Brian invited Ben to a large networking event in Los Angeles in February 2017. Ben did some research and discovered that this event was the Oscars! He was flattered to be asked. His costs were to be covered and he would meet lots of well-known people. Prior to the ceremony, Brian asked Ben to a pre-Oscars Champagne party, to hold an actual Oscar statue, introduced him to several people (including Oprah Winfrey) and promised to text and update him throughout the awards ceremony. Brian explained that he was in charge of how the winning envelopes were given out to the Oscar winners. It was a full proof method

designed to be fully secure and accurate (2 PWC people holding duplicate envelopes for each film category; of which Brian was one). Brian would be personally responsible for giving the 'Best Picture' envelope to the runner who gave it to Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway, who in turn would open the envelope and announce the winners.

Ben was extremely flattered to be mixing with all these famous people and to be in Brian's confidence. Imperceptibly he admitted to feel almost entitled to be there! He was being kept up to date even at the time of the final, most prestigious award; the Best Picture of 2016. The photos below show Brian Cullinan in his tuxedo, standing behind the stage with the winning envelope under his arm and texting at the same time.



Just minutes later, on television, Ben saw Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway announce that 'La La Land' was the Best Picture. A whole entourage of 'La La Land' people came up on stage thanking all those involved in making the picture. Their joy was short lived, as a few minutes later, another person announced that a mistake had been made and that the Best Picture was 'Moonlighting' and not 'La La Land'. The 'full proof' PWC system of managing the envelopes had failed. Indeed, the failure was directly attributable to Brian Cullinan. Brian had a simple job to destroy one envelope after his PWC colleague had given the 'Best Actress' (Emma Stone in 'La La Land') envelope award to the hosts (via runner). He failed to destroy his duplicate 'Best Actress' envelope but instead left it on the table together with the 'Best Picture' envelope. He left both envelopes on a table and asked the runner to pick up the winning envelope. The runner chose the wrong one! Brian had been distracted and not focused on his simple task. He was busy texting and talking. Brian felt such a simple task was easily accomplished and he could do it in parallel with whatever else he was doing. After all he was Head of PWC and he could do whatever he liked.

There was to be a PWC post Oscar party at the hotel Ben was staying at but no one came, Ben was alone. The PWC legal team had ensured no one from the organisation could talk to the media. It was a damage limitation exercise. The media, undeterred, somehow found Ben's number and tried contacting him to ask for his 'inside' knowledge of what happened. Ben could be famous throughout the world. He was sorely tempted. Ben reflected on the whole situation and asked himself if he should capitalise on the situation. He began to

realise that he had been complicit in the debacle and decided that he would remain silent. He recognised that hubris was contagious and he was on that slippery slope. He informed Brian Cullinan (who despite his hubristic behaviour, Ben found very likeable) that he would not speak about it to the media. If he did the media, he would do it on subjects he could properly talk about and add value to any discussions (the BBC honoured his silence and asked him to talk about politics in both 2018 and 2019).

This story of a very successful man, at the head of his organisation did not follow the simple full proof rules designed to eliminate any mistakes. Imperceptively, the involvement and flattering of Ben within Hollywood glamorous circles had started to make Ben feel important and wanted. Instantaneous, transient fame and flattery relating to this incident was not what he wanted to be known for. He recognised that he had been on the slippery slope of believing the 'hype' others were saying about him. This incident triggered Ben's research into the nature of hubris and how it can affect any successful person.

Hubris is not new. Greek mythical stories have warned us about hubris. The Cretan King Minos wanted to prove his divine right to rule. Part of his proof was to sacrifice beautiful white bull but when one was presented to him, he could not kill it. The Queen also fell in love with the white bull and conceived a half man/half bull baby; the minotaur. The King could not kill the Queen's baby but he decided to hide it from everyone. He commissioned a craftsman to build a labyrinth to house and hide the minotaur. On completion he did not want the craftsman and his son to tell anyone, so he imprisoned them too. Desperate to escape, the craftsman developed some wings and attached them to his son's body. As they were attached with wax, he told his son Icarus not fly too close to sun. However, he did and fell to his death; he was the innocent victim of the King's decisions. In the modern world we have lost sight of the real meaning of the story, it is not about ignoring warnings but about hubris and how mighty people circumvent rules to satisfy their own wishes. Greek mythology also pairs hubris with Nemesis the God of retribution. This god allocates sufficient punishment to fit the level of hubris (as the King found to his cost). Similarly, Weinstein, Napoleon, Hitler etc entrap themselves and cannot escape their own hubris by themselves. They need to be caught, punished etc to have any chance of escape e.g. Jonathan Aitkin who following prison became a vicar.

For successful people success is never enough; they want more. Harvey Weinstein was not satisfied being just a successful film producer he wanted more and more power over people, especially young starlets. Because of how our sub conscious brain works, all of us are susceptible to this behaviour and wanting more to satisfy our own notions of what success looks like. If we are repeatedly successful, we create our own hubristic, selfish behaviours which too often flout societal laws, rules and norms; just like Harvey Weinstein.

Having explained hubris via his own story, Greek mythology and practical mind experiments, Ben helpfully broke down the four source conditions necessary for hubris to start to develop. They were:

Source 1: Repeated success. People strive for the next successful milestone. They begin to hunger for success. Their susceptibility to hubris steadily grows. Napoleon is a good example of this.

Source 2: Hyper confidence. Followers flock around, keen to be associated with success. They say things like 'this success is due to you'. In social media the person attracts more and more followers. They become a 'brand'. They expound more and more on subjects they have no expertise in. Yet they are still respected for these views. Their sense of self-worth even grandeur increases.

Source 3: Uncritical acceptance of accolades. When you have thousands of followers on social media, it can trigger the wrong behaviours. Followers and fellow associates often put these highly successful people on pedestals. Even the normally sane Meryl Streep when accepting her Golden Globe award in 2011 thanked all those who helped her including God; Harvey Weinstein! In 1807, the Paris Journal described Napoleon as being invincible. They then begin to believe the hype about themselves.

Source 4: Exemption from the rules. A process analogous to canonisation occurs. The person is not judged by normal rules. Society allows us to do it. We are complicit! Hence their abhorrent behaviour persists. Harvey Weinstein both made and destroyed acting careers. Other notable examples are Jimmy Saville, Jeffrey Epstein and Hitler. Ultimately, their Nemesis will occur and they will fall from grace (albeit belatedly in some cases).

Knock on effects of hubris:

1. Repeated success is its own validation. There is a growing refusal to innovate
2. Repeated success triggers a belief that they don't need to change and develop a scepticism in the benefits of coaching
3. Lack of desire in what the future can bring; a more fulfilling vision
4. An 'imposter syndrome'. A feeling we should not be in a room as the person feels he/she will be found out. There is a level of anxiety and an uncomfortable feeling the greater the success.
5. Addiction to achieving success. The person feels that they are expected to add value on an on-going basis. They need to repeatedly prove it to themselves.
6. The person is a prisoner of their own success. They feel they have no choice but to continue on this path. They have no choice. A very well-respected Harvard professor, Amy Cuddy felt it necessary to publicise an academic work

about posture. All the results were fake and she was found out and forced to resign. She was not a bad person but felt compelled to be seen to regularly publish academic, meaningful papers.

False narratives and the wider implications to the whole of society. This is based on

- What is truth and the nature of honesty, transparency etc
- Lies and false narratives by people who feel more important, control the stories and who can influence the people who make the critical and large decisions.

Ben conducted 2 experiments with the audience. In the first one, he asked if we could flick a switch to divert a runaway tram in order to save 5 people; would we do it? Everyone said yes. In the second experiment we were asked if we would push a fat person off a bridge to stop a runaway tram and thus save 5 lives. The audience were now more conflicted. 15 said yes but 29 said no. This is inconsistent with the original decision mainly because people were more emotionally involved and less detached. Whole populations have an inconsistent middle which is susceptible to false narratives designed to change their minds. The Nazi party recognised this and invested huge resources to repeatedly issue false narratives and emotionally charged propaganda.

A model that describes how to deliver a false narrative is called **APRIOY**. It is a model for influencing and communication, with no recommendations, just options

A-Attention: grab a powerful image that really grabs people's attention and which relates to the specific issue

P-Position: set out a logical context of the current and past position. What is the problem with the way things are done at present?

R and O-Risk and opportunity: Bring out the risks and missed opportunities to feed our sense of fear and loss. This is setting the scene for the need to take action now.

I- The issue or challenge: It is a logical development e.g. People that kill always kill again. They are mass murderers

O-Options 1 and 2: These are reasonable but demolish them with skewed facts and figures

Option 3: Highlight the 3rd option with a brief description and say it will be detailed later. This turns into a recommendation with the associated rationale, features, benefits, advantages over the others etc.

Y-The Yield: Conclusion linking the benefits of the recommendation with the risks and missed opportunities. State how it directly affects the issue.

Conclusion

Some key points:

- Being addicted to success is easy. Research has shown that the brain changes permanently
- There are real dangers for successful people and the people they deal with as they can be innocent victims used to feed the hubristic ego.
- Society is often complicit: society likes putting people on pedestals
- Understand that narratives are being developed and are controlled to influence us
- Ask yourselves; am I susceptible to hubris developing in me and am I susceptible to false narratives (am I being entrapped)? Am I being true to myself? Someone who is not hubristic is David Attenborough. His leadership and associated behaviours occur even when no one is involved or looking.

Ben Laker's new book, Too Proud to Lead will be out in the spring of 2020.

The Science of Intrinsic Motivation – Susanne Jacobs

After approximately 30 years of experience in both the corporate and academic world, Susanne has become convinced that the workplaces we have created are not fit for human beings! They do not align with our biology and thus there are lots of unintended consequences. Our brains are looking for a workplace environment of trust yet they are full of threats. Our organisations have, forgotten ignored or not understood the fact that humans have basic intrinsic motivations which are reliant on a trusting environment, which when satisfied, leads to focus, attention and engagement.

There is a motivation crisis that is growing every year with falling engagement levels. Susanne quoted a number of statistics such as:

- A £70billion loss in productivity (Gallup Research)
- 85% of UK workers were disengaged
- 67% are going to work but are indifferent to the organisations they work for. They are increasingly apathetic and less energised by work. Ordinary workers are less inclined to do extra discretionary work
- 12.8 million days are lost because of work place stress. This causes significant increases in risks which costs organisations 6 to 8 times more than the actual cost of the absenteeism.

Conversely, organisations with high levels of engagement are:

- 100 times less likely to make mistakes (pro rata) in their processes
- 70% fewer safety issues
- 87% less likely to have staff leave the organisation

The Skills Challenge

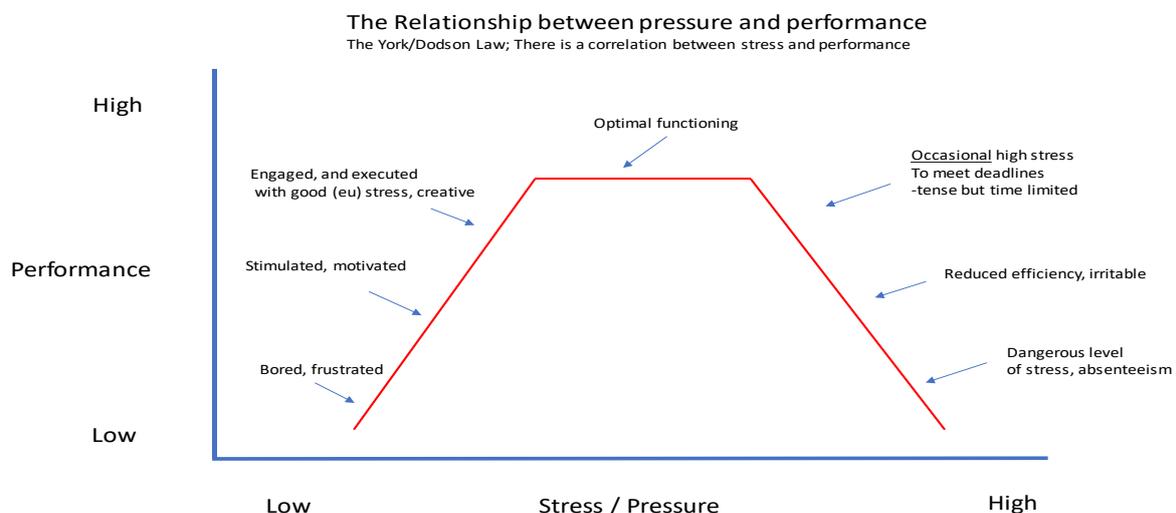
The challenge Susanne asked is; what can we do to change this situation? This is more important than ever as we are in the 'Digital Age', with technology increasing at a faster and faster rate. For change to happen we need the 10 key skills for this Digital Age (as postulated by the World Economic Forum). They are:

1. Problem solving
2. Critical thinking
3. Creativity
4. Project management
5. Coordinating with others
6. Emotional intelligence
7. Judgement and decision making
8. Service orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive flexibility

Susanne's research requires an 11th: Focus. We need to be attentive to perform. To meet the Digital Age challenge, we need staff to actively develop and use these skills. A threatening environment will stifle their development.

Trust and intrinsic motivation to drive performance

Humans evolved, guided by our brain's sense of purpose in keeping us alive. This has served us well but in modern life the stimuli we receive are not always helpful. Modern threats are more psychological; yet we respond in the same way as our more primitive forebears. We are still 'hard wired' to sense danger in the current workplace environment. There are too many organisational, management and work signals that trigger our brain's 'threat circuitry'.



Meaningful, properly organised work allows us to focus and meet challenges. This causes some stress but this is good for both our mental and physical health. However, as the graph above shows, when this tips over into long hours, a high workload and overly frequent difficult situations, we become overwhelmed and distressed. This can easily lead to chronic stress and a sense of not being able to cope, resulting in absenteeism.

Organisational cultural norms, leadership and unwritten rules can 'feed' this malign level of stress. The culture often creates a non-trusting environment, resulting in individuals sub-consciously asking themselves 'do I feel safe'? Our brains kick in and very quickly try to make out patterns from deep within our stored experiences (Susanne likened part of our brain to a filing cabinet, with a file for each memory that is pulled out if a similar experience occurs) to make sense of situations, and then act heuristically (take short cuts) which are not always accurate or helpful. This results in negative emotions, of feeling threatened, thinking more negatively, behaving in a more guarded way and often misunderstanding any feedback as negative or designed to 'catch us out'.

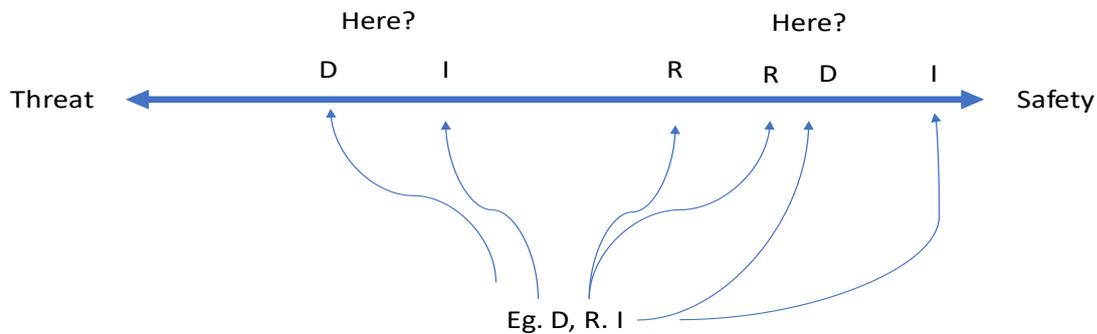
Developing more trust is **the** key for better performance; bar none! This was clearly demonstrated in Paul Zak's book 'The Trust Factor'. We need to not just manage our time but also our energy. We need to understand our human need for safety and then nurture our drivers. Trust and our intrinsic motivation are directly and very strongly linked. Susanne has broken these down into 7 key drivers for trust and intrinsic motivation. These are shown in the following table:

D	Direction	A sense of purpose, meaning, shared with others
R	Relative Position	Where am I, status, knowing you are valued
I	Inclusion	Belonging, identity, loyalty, banding together
V	Voice and Choice	Autonomy, influencings, priorities, sense of control
E	Equity	Fairness, equal opportunity, organisational justice
R	Reliability	Sense of predictability, know where you stand
S	Stretch	A sense of pride in our effort, challenge, achievement

Susanne asked us to position our own workplace drivers on the threat/safety scale (see below). This can be replicated for the team, department or even our social situation. It is a

very powerful but simple tool which helps bring about a positive discussion.

Exercise: Place your workplace D,R,I,V,E,R,S on the scale below:



If any of your D.R.I.V.E.R.S are positioned near the threat side; What can you do about it?

Cognitive Intelligence (CE) and breaks

Susanne asked the audience: How many take regular breaks in the day?

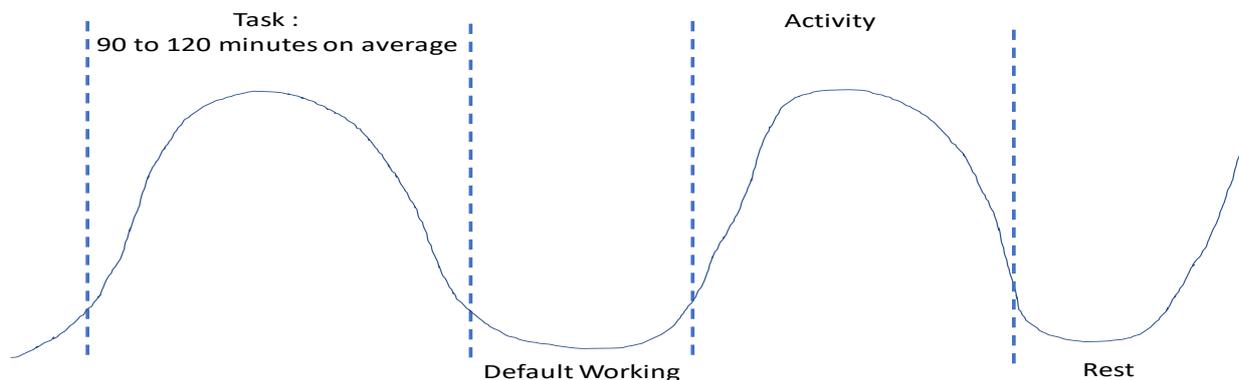
Often?

Sometimes?

Never?

Like much of the general working population, they can be spasmodic, often rushed, and often combined with a task. This is increasingly becoming a cultural normative behaviour, often summarised as: we don't 'stop'. This is counter-productive, as we have an innate need to regularly rest, to optimise our cognitive energy. Rests can be quite short; 2 or 3 minutes but they must be taken.

The Working / Rest Cycle



We get tired and our brains need a time for default working or a rest. It is in these periods that we learn. We make associations and consolidate the task more coherently. Indeed, if

we have no breaks there is a 25% reduction in our cognitive energy. Yet, repeatedly we make important decisions when we are on empty in terms of cognitive energy. It has also been shown that if the activity is a very tough meeting, is highly complex or just new, our cognitive energy drains out more quickly. This means we need to take a longer break. The consequence of all this research is that we need to notice own body's tiredness and propensity to drift off.

Multi-tasking is another area we should be wary of. It can be done if the tasks are automatic but otherwise it should be avoided as it causes cognitive conflict. This is because our attention works in a sequential way. Our short-term memory is very small and has little capacity to hold something else. Indeed, cognitive switching from one task to the other reduces our cognitive capacity by over 25%, leads us to make the wrong associations and worryingly renders our IQ the same as an 8 year old! To quote the Roman 1st century sage, Publius Syrus; 'To do things at once is to do neither'.

Concluding points

- Time is the coin of life. It is the only coin
- Use the 7 drivers to see what is really going on in your organisational culture
- Paying attention or focus is vital for your performance
- Take a break and re-charge; don't be perpetually busy

Susanne's book is: DRIVERS - Creating Trust and Motivation at Work

Peter Westbrook

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