

Bad behaviour isn't necessary

One of the most important criteria for successful leadership is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is about understanding your emotions, being able to control them, and recognising other people's emotions as they react to your behaviour.

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Effective leaders control their behaviour and show only the emotions they wish to show in order to generate the responses they want. Because all reactions to behaviour are based on perception and interpretation, skilled leaders do and say things that are interpreted as intended. Of course, actions and words need to be congruent with one another. We pay far more attention to people's behaviour than we do to what they say, especially if the verbal message is unclear or mixed.

But organisational life can be highly frustrating at times. It seems there is a continuous stream of things that get in the way of doing a good job, while at the same time there is no let-up in the pressure to deliver. The emotions that are created – frustration, anxiety, anger – can have a major effect on the things one says and does. That's when emotional intelligence comes into play. When you don't control your emotions the resultant behaviour can have a significant effect on the performance of other people.

Different people react to frustration and anxiety in different ways. Some lose their temper, some turn their back on the situation and walk away, and some try to adjust their view of the situation and accept what is happening. Each of these reactions to frustration involves behaviour that can be, and is, observed by others. Displays of temper and anger are the most noticeable and have the most immediate negative effect on people. Contrary to what managers who do this sort of thing believe, intimidating, berating and demeaning people does not make them perform better. In fact it's the exact opposite:

they react by becoming more cautious, less willing to take decisions, less committed, less motivated, and more likely to take time off work due to illness.

Being the target of harsh criticism and not being able to do anything about it has major effects on health and performance. For instance, when this occurs the probability of coming down with a common cold is increased by 250% and the rate of coronary disease jumps by a third.

The behaviour also affects employee turnover. Statistics show that while 25% of people who are subjected to this type of behaviour leave their jobs, that's not all that happens; 20% of the people who witness the behaviour also quit.

Quite clearly managers who are serial offenders will have the most marked effect on performance, productivity and staff turnover. But the issue isn't simply the frequency of occurrence of displays of temper and anger; one serious outburst can be enough to trigger significant negative consequences.

The most unfortunate thing about this type of behaviour is that its effects are disproportionate to its occurrence. Research shows that actions perceived as threatening create not only a strong emotional reaction but also leave an indelible and long lasting memory trace. Human survival has depended on being able to remember threatening, dangerous things and being able to avoid them. We remember being shouted at; we remember threats to our self-esteem and dignity; we remember being demeaned in front of others; and our brains record the stress that ensues and the resultant raised levels of cortisol, a hormone that the body

generates in an emergency. High and sustained levels of cortisol have a number of negative effects on health and our systems "remember" this.

Professor Herminia Ibarra of INSEAD says that one of the most important things people in leadership roles must learn is how to control their temper. We all get angry. But it's not the anger we feel that's the issue; it's how that anger is dealt with. Does it manifest itself in a display of temper – raised voice, slamming of doors, pounding of fist, or the even more childish behaviour of throwing or breaking things? Or instead of explosive vocal and/or physical displays, is it projected non-verbally? You don't have to shout, make any overt physical gestures, or even say a word to signal anger to people; it can be done with facial expression, eye contact or lack of it, and body position.

Dominant, insensitive, bullying managers still exist in organisations. While commercial enterprises get lots of negative press about this type of behaviour, studies show the public sector also has large numbers of people who behave this way. However, as Professor Robert Sutton of Stanford points out, it is possible to calculate the cost of this behaviour. Our research indicates that if organisations made this calculation and dealt with the individuals who incurred these costs they would increase their productivity and profitability by up to 25%. What is your organisation doing about it?

Robin Stuart-Kotze
Senior Advisor

strategy people performance

Penumbra is a strategic business consultancy. We bring clarity by using research to drive understanding and direction. We deliver success by balancing experience and innovative thinking.

Whatever your aspiration, we'll provide the tools, information and analysis to turn your strategy into operational reality, in a way that motivates your people to outperform the market.

Overview

As a strategic business consultancy, our expertise is in helping our clients executing strategies and delivering results.

We achieve this by combining a robust management planning system with a focus on people which drives alignment and commitment

We work in partnership with talented and committed leadership teams to help organisations build corporate value with a wide range of customised, cross-functional advisory programmes and services delivered from four complementary service groups:

Strategy

(Development, formulation, implementation and alignment)

Our innovative **Penumbra Balance** approach creates dynamism, drives and sustains momentum and makes strategy real for stakeholders

Organisational Development

(Behavioural issues)

We call our holistic approach **Balanced Motivation** which encompasses activities that improve performance both for the organisation and the individual

Research and Insight

Our stimulating **Clarity** approach draws on our business consulting skills to deliver a mix of business analysis and market research which

provides compelling insights for winning decisions.

Operations

The Operations practice brings all of our hands-on practical experience to bear on execution and delivery of results.

Our technology enabling approach called **Totality** facilitates business focussed services and solutions, aligned to business needs, for people, processes and tools.

Why Us?

Organisations turn to us when they:

- Want to find a new strategic direction
- Have created a strategy and now need to execute it
- Need to drive more value from existing initiatives
- Have a big issue to resolve, usually dependent on lasting employee buy-in
- Need to explore new ways to drive value
- Need a breakthrough result
- Are seeking measurable results

Our Experience

We have real world experience spanning 20 years with our clients. This includes working with:

BP, Citibank, Morgan Chase, WestLB, RBS, UBS, Bankers Trust, Kleinwort Benson, Coutts, Natwest, Intel, Nokia, Adobe, Kall-Kwik, Glaxo Smith Kline,

Dupont, Pfizer, Savills, British Council, Clifford Chance, British Airways, Gillette, Unilever, Shell, Volvo, Vauxhall, British Gas, TradeStation, MWB Business Exchange, Investors in People, University of Cambridge

On projects such as:

Strategic Planning, Strategy development and implementation, Culture change, Post-Merger Integration, Vision, Purpose and Values, Current State Analysis, Organisation Re-design, Transformational Change, Client Focus Strategies, Perception Studies, Client and Staff Engagement surveys, Global Rebranding, Know your Customer, Market Forecasting, Consumer Insight, Market Segmentation, Process optimisation, Lean/Six Sigma, Project Management, ERP Systems Roll-out, Market Research, Financial Modelling, Franchise Start-up Evaluation models, Cost Benefit Analysis, Implementation Alignment, Strategic Alignment, Complex Database development, Custom Application development, Supply Chain Optimisation

Covering diverse sectors such as:

Financial Services, Pharmaceuticals, Manufacturing, Energy, Mobile Telecoms, Travel and Tourism, Aviation, Property, Hi-tech and Business Services