

Enhancing Expertise in Business, Sport & Life

Praise doesn't Motivate

Leaders, teachers and coaches often praise to motivate. A recent study involving 464 students from 2 Universities reveals that this practice may not be working. The researchers found that the only outcome directly affected by praise, however, was motivation. Students presented with praise reported lower levels of motivation, higher levels of ego involvement, decreased levels of task involvement, and higher perceptions of success while exhibiting modest performances compared with



students not praised on their work. In other words, when praised the students were less motivated and gave less effort because they perceived themselves already successful due to the praise received. The strongest finding of the study was that written, detailed feedback specific to individual work was strongly related to im-

provement. It is interesting to note that the highest-performing group in the study was the one receiving detailed feedback perceived to come from the instructor with no grade and no praise. To improve performance, therefore, you must focus on the things the lead to achievement and not praising the outcomes.

Source: Lipnevich, A & Smith, J. (2009). Effects of differential feedback on students' examination performance. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 15, 319-333.

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Leadership is a Contact Sport

When leadership coach Marshall Goldsmith reviewed the leadership development programs in eight major corporations, they all shared a similar goal—to determine the desired behaviors for leaders in their organizations and help leaders increase effectiveness by better aligning actual practices with desired behaviors. The companies, however, used different methods for developing leadership skills in their people. Interestingly, the corporations all measured the program effective-



ness by asking co-workers to assess the leaders "increased effectiveness". One variable consistently emerged as foundational for achieving long-term positive leadership change: the leaders' ongoing interaction and follow-up with colleagues. In other words, leaders who dis-

cussed their own improvement priorities with their co-workers, and then regularly followed-up with these co-workers achieved remarkable improvement in their leadership. They concluded that continual contact with co-workers and colleagues is so effective in promoting improved leadership that leadership is a contact sport.

Source: Goldsmith, M. & Morgan, H. Leadership is a contact sport. www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com/docs/articles/LeaderContactSport.pdf

I hated every minute of training, but I said, "Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion."

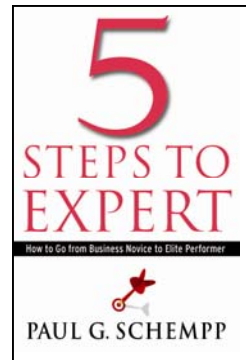
-Muhammad Ali

Applied Skills

As a coach for several professional golfers, I've spent considerable time on the practice tee watching seasoned pros and promising newcomers. It is not at all unusual to see a promising prospect with impeccable technique impressively launching golf balls long

and straight from the practice tee. But there are no style points in golf, and one gets little credit for how far you can hit a ball in practice. The bottom line in performance is outcome. During a performance, skills are recruited to produce results. If those promising prospects cannot produce the golf shots in a tournament that give them an outstanding score, they will never move from prospect to

proven professional. It is the same in business. It is in the execution of your business skills that produce results—good or bad. Environmental conditions such as equipment, business climate, and competition will all play a role in the results you achieve. But everyone faces pretty much the same conditions you face. The difference will largely be the skills you bring to the table.



After reflecting on and analyzing his emergency room decision making, Dr. Stan Shapiro wrote an article that identified five pitfalls in critical decision making. They include:

1. Unique Situation. Because they have no learning curve, unique situations must be approached cautiously, considered risky and dangerous, and seen as invitations to poor decision making.
2. Data Deficit. When insufficient information exists, more data is

Decision Making Pitfalls

necessary before making a critical decision. Find it!

3. Emotional Denial. It is natural to bias our thinking toward positive solutions and outcomes. Negative scenarios may be dismissed, but often at our peril.
4. Gambling on Probabilities. Relying uncritically on one probable outcome should be considered gambling and the full extent of the



gamble and its consequences then needs to be considered.

5. Positive Reinforcement. Previous success does not insure future success. Don't assume you will always be right.

Source: Shapiro, S. (2010). Decision Making Under Pressure. *Futurist*, Jan-Feb, 42-43.

Learning what is correct

Feedback in the form of Knowledge of Correct Response (KCR) during practice is expected to help learners recognize the important features of a task and improve subsequent practice. Additionally, psychological research indicates that learners who have a degree of control over practice task selection are more highly motivated to practice than those who have practiced tasks prescribed. A study conducted in the Netherlands tested both these hypotheses. The participants were 118 college students who completed a series of 54 problem solving tasks in the field of genetics. These tasks were learning tasks that presented a given

state, a goal state, and a partial solution (i.e., a number of *solution steps*) that learners had to complete by adding the missing steps. Students who were provided KCR feedback (i.e., feedback on problem solutions that indicated what solution factors contributed to a correct response and solution factors that inhibited a correct response) yielded higher efficiency solution scores as well as higher learner motivation. The findings suggest that when people receive feedback that identifies what was done well as well as what could be done better they are more efficient in learning, as well as more motivated to learn the task. An interaction be-



tween feedback and control, indicating extra beneficial effects of feedback when learners control the selection of learning tasks, was not found.

Source: Corbalan, G., et al., (2009). Dynamic task selection: Effects of feedback & learner control on efficiency & motivation. *Learning and Instruction*, 19, 455-465.

Key to Progress in Our Time

"Give me a place to stand," said Archimedes, "and I will move the world." These men moved the world, and so can we all. Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. Thousands of Peace Corps volunteers are making a difference in isolated villages and city slums in dozens of countries. Thousands of

unknown men and women in Europe resisted the occupation of the Nazis and many died, but all added to the ultimate strength and freedom of their countries. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. "If Athens shall appear great to you," said Pericles, "consider then that her glories were purchased by valiant



men, and by men who learned their duty." That is the source of all greatness in all societies, and it is the key to progress in our time.

Source: Robert Kennedy, Day of Affirmation Address, June 6, 1966, Capetown, SA.

Elite Athlete Aggression

It is a common conception that elite performers are aggressive. But the nature of aggression, particularly during performance has not been studied to a large extent. Researchers in Australia recently published the results of their investigation of elite athletes in one of the world's most aggressive sports—Australian Rules Football. The study revealed that the top players in the AFL all reported the use and importance of aggression in their play. The interview responses also provided important insight into the nature of this aggression.



First, the majority of their aggression was channeled into sanctioned activities (e.g. aggressively executing legal skills and strategies). The athletes associated this type of aggression with being highly competitive. Second, unsanctioned aggression

(i.e., illegal) had 3 purposes: power, anger and thrill. Power manifested in attempts to intimidate an opponent, anger was used to retaliate for a perceived infraction, and thrill was, well, just for the hellavitt. Due to efforts by the league to curb unsanctioned aggression, players used it judiciously as it would often result in unacceptable fines and penalties. So hit 'em hard, but hit 'em fair.

Source: Grange, P., Kerr, J. (2010). Physical aggression in Australian football. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise*, (11), 36-43.

Personality traits predict ethical leadership

A study of 894 employees and their 222 immediate supervisors in a major financial institution in the USA found that two personality traits predicted the extent to which subordinates view their supervisors as ethical leaders. These two traits were agreeableness and conscientiousness. Further, these traits were seen as unrelated, and therefore each contributed significantly to employee perceptions of ethical leadership. Specifically, the employees re-



ported that those leaders perceived as ethical promoted greater psychological safety, and in turn, greater employee voice behavior. In other words, lead-

ers perceived as being agreeable and/or conscientious made their employees feel listened to and respected, and the employees consequently voiced their thoughts and opinions more often than employees of supervisors who were less agreeable or conscientious.

Source: Walumbwa, F., Schaubroeck, J. (2009). Leader personality traits and employee voice behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94, 1275-1286.

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Good seasons start with good beginnings.

-Sparky Anderson, coach

Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don't believe is right.

-Jane Goodall, anthropologist

How wonderful it is that no one need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

-Anne Frank, diary keeper

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

-Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.
My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.



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