

# Better Business Focus

June 2022

Expert inspiration for a Better Business



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Better Business Focus is the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that by focusing on the way in which successful businesses compete and manage their organisations. It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it offers expert inspiration for a better business.

## This month's contents

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**Eight ways to get close to your customers (and learn how to improve the customer service experience you provide)**

Ron Kaufman



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**Recruiting and retaining salespeople**

Sue Barrett



---

**Execute innovation and creativity will happen**

Urko Wood



---

**The worst advice I have ever heard as a business coach**

David Finkel



---

**Pride and Pronouns: What's all the fuss about?**

Joanne Lockwood



---

**When a salary is no longer enough – the rise and rise of the employee experience**

Thom Dennis



---

**Are you damaging your career by choosing to be invisible?**

Rozz Usheroff



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**A lateral way to expose war crimes and fight disinformation**

Paul Sloane



## This month's contents

### Trust and first impression

Yoram Solomon PHD



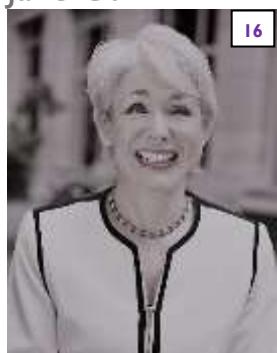
### Making & breaking habits

Kevin Stansfield



### 10 proven steps to making staff meetings more effective

Jane Gunn



### Wow people instantly (or 'elevate your elevator pitch')

Andy Bounds



### What dishonesty does to your brain & why it's bad for business

Dr Lynda Shaw



### James Cordon on cutting corners.....

Sunil Bali



### Stop serving the feedback sandwich

Adam Grant



### The power of praise

Mike Shipulski





Ron Kaufman

# Eight ways to get close to your customers (and learn how to improve the customer service experience you provide)

Want to add more value to your customers? Be sure you know what to add!

Here are eight proven ways to get close to your customers and find out what they value, what they care about, and what they really want:

**1. Ask them!** Whether in print, in person or over the phone, nothing beats asking customers exactly what they want, and how they want it. (Ask them what they don't want, too!) Use printed sheets, mail-back forms, comment cards, telephone scripts and more.

**2. Conduct focus groups.** Bring a group of customers together for an open-ended chat session. Set them at ease and get them talking about what they really like, don't like and wish they could get from your organization. Don't defend, justify or argue. Just ask questions and take good notes. Follow up with a sincere and generous 'Thank you!'

**3. Study complaints and compliments.** Every message from a customer brings value to your organization. Compliments show you what to reinforce. Complaints point to new ideas to boost customer loyalty and action steps for customer service improvement.

**4. Set up a customer hotline.** Some customers will tell you what they think, but they want an 'anonymous' way to do it. Fine! Set up a special voice recording 'hotline' for customers only. And don't worry about receiving any strange messages;

just sort through them for the gems!

**5. Hire a Mystery Shopper.** Have someone you trust mingle with your customers and strike up a conversation to find out what they like or do not like about their customer service experience with your organization.

**6. Become a customer of your best competitors.** Use all their products and services, and compare them to your own. Ask their Customer Service Center to describe all the services available in detail. Then copy the best and do better than the rest.

**7. Visit your customer's site.** Go to your customer's physical location to see exactly how they put your products and services to use. See with your own eyes what works and what doesn't, what gets used all the time and what gets left behind.

**8. Go online to seek more feedback.** Find an Internet user's group related to your industry or topic. Read the postings for new customer service ideas and information. Participate in the discussions. Follow up by e-mail to gain even deeper customer experience insights.

## Key Learning Point

Before you invest time, money and effort into 'adding value' to improve your customers' experience, make sure you know exactly what value to add!

## Action Steps

Stay close to your customers throughout the year with a robust customer experience management

program of connection and consultation. Your customers will appreciate the contact, your staff will learn from the customer service insights, and your business will grow from the continuous, constructive communication.

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## About the Author

Ron Kaufman is the world's leading educator for uplifting service performance and building service cultures. He helps leaders, teams, and organizations learn how to serve better, care more, and generate new value in the world. Ron is the author of the New York Times bestseller, "Uplifting Service! The Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues and Everyone Else You Meet" and 14 other books on service, business and inspiration.

Ron's unique approaches to learning and leadership have been featured in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and Harvard Business Review. For many years, GlobalGurus has ranked Ron the #1 Customer Service Guru in the world. Ron resides in Singapore with his wife Jen. They are committed to uplifting the spirit and practice of service and care in the present and for the future.

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Sue Barrett

# Recruiting and retaining salespeople

Many of our clients have been looking for salespeople over the last few months and their experience seems to reflect what the stats are saying: it's taking longer to fill these positions and the turnover is higher.

Our sales teams are the primary human face of our organisation and so these are critical roles.

## Let's look at recruitment first

Effectively predicting sales performance is critical to the success of any business, and using well designed, rigorous **psychometric assessments** as part of a sales selection process can really boost our chances of finding and retaining the right salespeople.

We have been using psychometric assessments for almost 30 years. We have assessed more than 80,000 people in sales, sales management and leadership roles using a variety of high-quality assessment tools for both selection and development purposes. The tools we use are designed to measure cognitive abilities, personality, motives & values, **Call Reluctance**, coping & derailing behaviours, **EQ**, etc.

To get the most value out of psychometric assessments when applied to your sales selection process you might like to consider these important points:

- I. **Use as part of a selection process:** psychometric assessments should be used in concert with other validated selection tools such as structured behavioural

**interviews**, competency-based **simulation exercises** and structured reference checks where findings can be cross-referenced against core criteria that have been established as relevant to the job and culture in question.

2. **Predictive ability:** psychometric assessments should account for no more than 20% of your decision-making criteria. They can never be 100% predictive of performance.
3. **Purpose-built:** use psychometric assessments that have been purpose-built to measure specific qualities, abilities or attributes.
4. **What to measure:** there are a variety of assessments you can use on their own or combined. Select the ones that will measure what you need for the **specific role**.
5. **Cost:** most businesses reserve the more stringent psychometric assessment process until after they have developed a shortlist of candidates who have been through the initial screening parameters and a thorough **Behavioural Interview**. Considering it can cost up to double the salary of an employee to replace them, when you balance the cost of including psychometric tools in your recruitment process against the cost of one or more poor selection decisions, the numbers speak for themselves.

## What about retention?

In 2018 the average tenure of a sales representative across Europe and USA was 15 months,

and closer to two years in Australia. However, these numbers seem to have decreased over the last two years with the changes in how we work since the beginning of the pandemic.

These statistics are alarming because the costs associated with poor engagement and high staff turnover are monumental and can manifest in many ways including a decline in sales, poor customer service, loss of reputation leading to more loss of customers and employees, and impaired recruitment. If not addressed, organisations can find themselves in a death spiral. And in today's hyper-connected world this can happen at lightning speed in any organisation.

So, what can we do to improve retention of our salespeople?

**Implementing a Selling Better Operating System**  
Smart CEOs and sales leaders understand that leading and managing a sales team and its operation is about managing a complex variable system that requires constant attention and considered action. We know that sales teams and operations do not follow a predictable straight line.

Throwing our salespeople in the deep end and expecting them to sell better with no **clear strategy**, no value proposition or articulated sales process, limited **training**, no ongoing support, no leadership, no coaching, or a 'customer phobic' value chain is madness. These are some of the reasons why sales teams experience such high turnover.

This is why we encourage companies to take a systems thinking approach to selling better. We've been studying, researching, codifying, modelling, promoting and educating people on a better, ethical, human-centred approach to selling since 1995 and implementing a systems approach to selling better has many benefits including creating high performing sales teams who want to stay and sell better.

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#### About the Author

Sue is the Founder & Managing Director of Barrett Consulting Group (est. 1995), incorporating Barrett, Sales Essentials, Mind Your Emotions, Sustainable Selling, Barrett Research, and Sell Like a Woman. Barrett is one of Australia's leading sales consulting firms specialising in Sales Strategy, SalesForce Design, Assessments, Sales Training and Sales Coaching.

Sue is regarded by many mainstream business press publishers & editors as one of the most authoritative thought leaders reporting and commenting on the selling profession and sales operations in Australia today, with her company's articles featuring weekly in BRW & Smart Company, as well as bi-monthly in IPA's magazine The Public Accountant.

Sue has written and published 21 books and 500+ articles to date on the world of 21st Century selling including topics on sales philosophy/culture/ethics, sales leadership, sales coaching, sales training, selling skills, sales mindset and resilience, neuroscience in selling, etc. Sue works as a business adviser, sales coach & trainer, speaker, and facilitator.

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Urko Wood

# Execute innovation and creativity will happen

Reveal needs. Create value.  
Drive growth.

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#### About the Author:

Urko Wood founded Reveal Growth Consultants in 2012 to help companies turn innovation and growth into a repeatable business process. He has created a free PDF explaining how over 400 of the Fortune 1000 have done so-called **Rethinking Innovation: How the Jobs-to-Be-Done Approach Delivers Dramatically Better Results.**

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Most people think that innovation and creativity are essentially the same thing. And, for most purposes, that's fine.

But if you want to turn innovation into a repeatable business process, you must distinguish innovation from creativity.

For the purpose of new product/service innovation, creativity is the process of coming up with new ways to address your target customers' unmet needs. But you must know your target customers' unmet needs if you're going to be effective with your creativity.

Innovation is the process of first discovering your target customers' unmet needs and then applying creativity to devise solution ideas to address them.

A customer need well-defined is half-satisfied. Knowing where to focus your creativity makes all the difference in the world.

**Innovation:** the process of discovering the target customers' unmet needs and then developing solutions to address them.

1 Discover the Target Customers' Unmet Needs

2 Develop Solutions to Address Them

**Creativity:** the process of making connections and reformulations to address unmet customer needs



David Finkel

# The worst advice I have ever heard as a business coach

As a business coach for over 25 years, I have heard a lot of business advice from leaders and other business coaches in the industry. And many of it, while it may seem well-intentioned, is actually pretty bad advice. And there are a few pieces of advice that I have heard over and over again that make me cringe. So, today I wanted to share one of the worst ones I have heard and share with you what you should be doing instead.

## Do What You Love, and the Money Will Follow.

This piece of advice is often given to a new entrepreneur looking to start their own business. They don't really know what they want to do yet, and have dabbled in a few things, but haven't really found anything that has gained traction. Their business acquaintances see them searching and share this little tidbit as a way to help their friend find their path. And it is often coupled with a story of a friend of a friend, who found a love for some obscure hobby and turned that hobby into a multi-million dollar business seemingly overnight.

It's inspiring and uplifting for the aspiring entrepreneur stuck in a dead-end job. But for every person that followed their passion, there are 1,000 people that started businesses in things that they weren't particularly passionate about and not only made it work but made it successful. Maybe you don't love mowing lawns, but you could have a very successful landscaping business. Is anyone passionate about urinal cakes? Billions of

them are purchased every year. The list goes on and on. You don't have to love the industry or the product that you sell to build a successful business. You do have to think about it objectively though.

### Know Your Audience.

Does that mean that you shouldn't try to do something you love? Of course not. But it is imperative that you do your research. You need to understand your market and your buyer before you take the next step. Is there value in the market itself? What does the competition look like? Does anyone need a product or service surrounding your passion? If the market is viable, then by all means pursue it. But if the numbers don't add up, sticking with it could end up spelling disaster for your business and your savings account.

### Create a Plan.

Another problem with the "do what you love mantra" is that it is implied that by simply following your passion, you won't have to work as hard as other business owners. And this is simply not the case. You want to create a plan for how you will approach the business, and how and when you plan to scale that business to meet the demands in your industry. It will take a lot of focus and attention to get your business to grow and passion will only take you so far. The rest will come through strategic planning and accountability.

So in summary, I would change the advice to be: *Do what you love (after careful market research) and then create a plan of action to make it happen.*

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### About the Author

David Finkel is co-author of,

*SCALE: 7 Proven Principles to Grow Your Business and Get Your Life Back* (written with Priceline.com co-founder Jeff Hoffman), and one of the nation's most respected business thinkers.

A *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* bestselling author of 11 business books, David's weekly business owner e-letter is read by 100,000 business owners around the world. David is the CEO of *Maui Mastermind*, one of the nation's premier business coaching companies.

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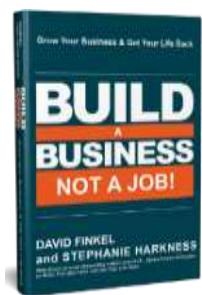
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- 6 time mastery strategies to free up a full day each week to build your business
- And much more ...





Joanne Lockwood

# Pride and Pronouns: What's all the fuss about?

If a pronoun is quite simply a way to refer to someone instead of using their name, why is it so important to be getting it right at work? The LGBTQ+ community is often still facing discrimination, isolation, poor opportunities and even hate crime at work, but not using the correct pronouns has a profound effect on our inclusion in the workplace.

The run-up to Pride this June is a celebration of how far the community has come but it is also a stark reminder of how far there is to go in raising awareness and one key aspect of that is identity. Many in the LGBTQ+ community may not align with typical gender stereotypes and choose to use alternative pronouns to avoid being misgendered. For example, non-binary individuals don't identify as male or female so tend to use the gender pronouns 'they/them/their'. Using the correct pronoun is showing you respect and accept an individual's right to be as they authentically and truly are.

Pronouns are a way to affirm one's identity, especially because on a daily basis, the LGBTQ+ community face challenges surrounding equality and acceptance. **I like people to respect and use my name and pronoun as a woman. Misgendering me and not including me as a woman can make me feel like I continue to fail to be allowed to be who I am and that I am not accepted, validated, included or good enough.**

**Look at it from a different perspective. Imagine being called a gender that you are not if you are cisgender. No one wants that because we want to be identified as we truly are. Obviously, when someone uses the wrong pronoun in genuine error and doesn't have any bad intention, I appreciate it when they correct themselves and we can of course move on. When that mistake is repeated over and over it becomes a microaggression. Personally, I often ask them to repeat themselves and to check that is what they meant but ultimately organisations also need to have a clear protocol, leaders need to lead by example and many businesses need training around that.**

This decade will increasingly see a movement towards the importance of pronouns, both for trans and non-binary equality and to increase discussions about gender, which is something that benefits everyone. Using the correct pronouns for someone or including pronouns in your own email signature or social media profile shows you don't make assumptions about gender, want to reduce misgendering (accidental or not), you care about how each of us identifies differently, and it is an important move towards better inclusivity. At a business level, this type of inclusion can represent a powerful cultural shift in organisations and an awareness that is thankfully growing - the need for and provision of a safe work culture.

How your business can embrace a culture of inclusion using the right pronouns:

1. **Find out a person's pronouns.** If you are not sure how someone identifies introduce yourself to your co-worker or employee with the phrase "Hi I am... and my pronouns are he/him. What about you?" for example. By doing this you will hopefully put them at ease and show your acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.
2. **Add your pronouns to your email signature.** More people are adding their pronouns to their email signature to avoid being misgendered, signalling you will also respect the email recipient's gender identity and choices or as a simple show of support and allyship to the community. LinkedIn provided a section on profiles so you're able to state your pronouns and this is slowly but inevitably occurring elsewhere.
3. **Equally, let your staff know they can (if they wish) add their pronoun to their email signature.** This means that anyone can clarify how they would like to be referred to and that all genders are respected. Society's attitude is changing towards the community and respecting pronouns is a valuable way for businesses to stay current as well as inclusive.

4. **Create a safe space so everyone can bring their authentic self to work.** This means that individuals do not need to censor or hide parts of themselves and as a result, the business itself will benefit from better productivity, creativity and teamwork as employees bring their authentic selves to work.
5. **Normalise discussions about gender.** This will help create an inclusive and supportive work environment for everyone and in particular transgender and non-binary people as it can reduce the burden on them to explain their identity repeatedly.
6. **Respect there are different stages of gender and sexual orientation.** For some sharing their pronouns is easy and they feel confident doing so, whilst others fear discrimination or could be at a different stage of their gender identification and they may need more time. Just be sure that the business culture is 'all are welcome'.
7. **Don't question the use of 'they' as a singular pronoun.** Be mindful not to question their use of 'they' or tell them it's 'incorrect English', just accept and use what makes those individuals feel most included. If you accidentally use the wrong pronouns, just apologise and try your best not to do it again. Awkwardness and confusion around pronouns is unhelpful for progression so be mindful.
8. **Be language aware. For example, addressing an audience using 'ladies and gentlemen' is outdated and insulting to many people in the community. We need awareness of contemporary language.**

9. **Change your corporate wording.** Traditionally policies and contracts had only two gender options: female and male. Update the wording in all marketing collateral and business material to encompass all gender identities including providing an option not to say, as not everyone is comfortable sharing.

10. **Celebrate people differences.** We know that diversity increases productivity, creativity, curiosity, promotes new thinking, creates a healthier working environment, promotes respect and reduces bullying and harassment. What's not to like about that?

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#### About the Author

Joanne Lockwood is the founder and CEO of SEE Change Happen, an Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Practice with a specialism in providing Transgender Awareness and support to organisations and businesses.

Through this she delivers keynote speeches, seminars and workshops to promote Transgender awareness and inclusion, breaking down misunderstandings and the fear of getting it wrong. She is an avid blogger and works tirelessly to support others, especially in the transgender community.

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## How to answer a call with a text message

You can pick several different preset text message responses to incoming calls, including "Can I call you later," "I'm on my way," and "Sorry, I can't talk right now," or you can set a custom response and even edit the preset responses in Settings.

1. When your phone is ringing, tap **Message** above slide to answer.



2. Tap one of the preset responses to automatically send a text and reject the call or tap Custom to write your own response.



3. If you tapped Custom, a text conversation with the person calling will appear. Type whatever you like! (But please don't choose this option if you're driving!). Tap Send, and you're done.



Web: <https://www.iphonelife.com/>



Thom Dennis

# When a salary is no longer enough – the rise and rise of the employee experience

With resignations at the highest they have been in over a decade, leaders are battling to build an employee experience to suit and retain their workers. Talented employees are calling the shots so organisations are potentially having to explore a completely different offering in the workplace as employees increasingly want a bespoke work-life including better flexibility, training, opportunities, recognition, inclusion and an overall better experience.

## **What do employees want?**

Employees still expect a competitive salary, however, statistics from the employment website Indeed's **Work Happiness Score**, found that only 27% reported being happy at work most of the time, and (72%) admit that their workplace unhappiness has negatively impacted their physical and/or mental wellbeing.

Thom Dennis, CEO of Serenity in Leadership explains: "Long gone are the days of 'You work for us so you conform to our rules'. Fair renumeration and a gimmicky table football machine in the corner are no longer enough. Pre-and during the pandemic, organisations asked employees to be resilient, often asking them to take pay cuts or lose benefits to help prop up the finance and support the sustainability of the business. Trust has been eroded and employees are well aware that they now hold all the cards but a fair wage in exchange for high productivity isn't enough anymore. Employees want to be at the centre of the business and not just used for the benefit of the company."

Prioritising wellbeing is at the top of the list. **Benefex** found that 96% of HR leaders reported that employee experience became more important during the pandemic, and employee wellbeing is seen as a primary driver for this. Recognition is increasingly important. **Blackhawk Network** recently reported 77% of employees would work harder if they felt better recognised and 68% of employees said they would remain loyal to their employer if they were regularly thanked for their efforts.

Thom Dennis says: "An employee-centric workplace is where employees are valued, engaged, paid well for the work they do, have opportunities to develop, and their wellbeing matters. Workers want to be happy and to do meaningful work. The pandemic taught us that people can do their jobs in a way that suits them and without the supervision that weak management have a need for. They want flexibility, to be excited by what they do and to make a difference by being part of tackling society's most pressing challenges. They want to be motivated and to be offered regular chances to upskill and to work for a forward-thinking organisation. They want bespoke career plans and to thrive not just survive."

## **2022 is going to be difficult for leaders and employees**

"2022 will show greater divides and disparity between the haves and the have nots. Living in a VUCA world means life is so uncertain, we want to feel safer and protected. Leaders have to get hybrid working right as for many that flexibility is the cornerstone of good working

conditions. Businesses are no longer able to hide behind customer branding campaigns because there are so many social media platforms and forums for employees to openly review their experience at a business.

"Business outcomes must include the personal goals of employees which may mean rethinking the design of roles. There is a big adjustment to be made in moving from financial wellbeing to employee well-being but the benefits are limitless from increased productivity as a result of better engagement to a decreased chance of burnout and sick leave. Businesses must focus on the human side of work and should be prioritising seeking social, emotional, and cultural enhanced cognitive skills in recruitment. It is a real opportunity for HR to shine but they need to be given the space to do that. Importantly your employees are likely the best ambassadors for the business in terms of putting across the right message and building the brand."

## **What is the best practice to optimise the employee experience**

- I. **Ask your employees what they want and need with clear purpose and intent.** Leaders often get caught up communicating with partners and stakeholders, forgetting about clearly and regularly communicating and building meaningful relationships with their employees. Unless an organisation has transparency, care and accountability at its heart, the existing systems may not address how to make employees feel

- appreciated, and dissatisfaction will brew.
- Establish a clear purpose.** Employees, particularly the young, want to work for an entity that has a clear purpose that touches issues greater than the existence of the organisation. This means for many businesses they have to apply themselves now to examining why their organisation exists and questioning whether this is a worthwhile reason; having that greater reason will encourage people to join, to stay and give of their best in all respects.
- Recognise, reward and care.** Maintain motivation with positive, meaningful reinforcement. Ideally look to first promote from within your company, whilst treasuring diversity and fresh ideas. Build a culture of recognition and offer with pleasure bespoke rewards that matter to that individual. A genuine simple 'thank you' can have benefits far beyond any effort involved.
- Collaborate and design the business strategy together.** This has to be real, not a mere rebranding exercise and leaders must avoid putting a plaster over a problem area. Collaborate to find out what employees really want and foster curiosity and a growth mindset and really listen to what is being said. Create a space where people feel safe to give their views and set up group dialogues to discuss issues. It is imperative that leaders at the top do not make unilateral decisions about inclusion, even with the best intention, for the very people that any future policy affects.
- Commit to managing staff health and wellbeing.** Balance the imbalance and stop a culture of burnout. Positive employee well-being is essential to increasing employee experience.
- Focus on emotional connections.** Develop a positive organisational culture with trust at its very heart.

- Ultra-controlling behaviour that we saw in lockdowns is destructive and must be a thing of the past. Equally, excessive meetings will bring about a loss of productivity and increased frustration. Managers need to remember we are not buying our employees' time but the results of their experience, creativity and talent. Cultural intelligence is key (successful inclusion depends on it), as is an acknowledgement of the values of the individuals that make up an organisation.
- Create a culture of respect and inclusivity.** Prioritise diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the business and regularly organise a deep dive look at bias. Ensure that your recruitment and promotion strategies as well as company policy do not exclude diversity and also prevent discrimination and harassment. Being accepted, respected, included and appreciated means understanding differences between generations, genders, cultures and the financial well-being of employees. Make sure employees don't have to hide any part of themselves so they can bring their whole selves to work.
  - Provide multiple opportunities for employees to learn and upskill.** This is best achieved through training, shadowing, mentoring, multi-disciplining and project opportunities. Choose with your employees what areas they would like to focus on. Value the employees already in your company because if they know there are opportunities to progress or grow, motivation will remain high. Ensure line management skills are at their best; don't merely promote in line management on the basis of technical skills.
  - Build an effective onboarding programme.** Acknowledge that the employee experience starts before they join the company

from the first glance at the company website to a fair, accessible recruitment process. Every interaction the individual has with your business should promote a positive employee experience. Remember that inclusion frequently falls down at promotion, even in organisations with great recruitment practices. Equally, understand why employees choose to leave the business as a learning opportunity.

**Be an inspirational leader that puts their people first and leads by example.** Don't raise expectations and then not follow through. Trust is destroyed when employees are left in the dark about changes to the business and they become unmotivated and disengaged. Whilst leaders may still be making difficult decisions every day, transparency is the best chance of gaining employee support. Give employees the confidence and positivity that needs are, and will, be met and that they are part of something important.

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#### About the Author

Thom Dennis is CEO of Serenity in Leadership. He is a facilitator, speaker, consultant, change agent and educator. For the last 29 years, he has led companies dedicated to coaching executives and teams through personal and organisational change, defining strategy, working through M&As and improving communication.

With Serenity in Leadership, Thom is focusing his depth and breadth of experience to help organisations move into the 20s and all the changes that are developing. He is intent on resolving issues of inclusion to help people whoever they are, whatever background they have come from, shine and thrive, and their organisations with them.

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Rozz Usheroff

# Are you damaging your career by choosing to be invisible?

Do you choose to be center stage or are you more comfortable working under the radar screen?

Interestingly, Zenger Folkman recently conducted [research](#) by inviting 7065 leaders around the world to answer this question: "If you were given a choice of two special powers, which would you prefer? A. Ability to fly or B. Power to be invisible."

With a difference of almost three to one, 72% of the leaders selected the ability to fly over being invisible (28%). When they analyzed the data by position, they discovered that 76% of top managers selected the ability to fly, as compared to only 71% of individual contributors.

One other interesting point was that those who chose the ability to fly were seen by team members as more confident.

Regardless of your position, if you wish to be seen, recognized, and sought out for your expertise, you do not have the luxury of operating behind the scenes.

Every touchpoint counts if you are to build a reputation that sets you up for success. Everything you do and say represents your personal brand. If you seek to be recognized and appreciated, you will have to shift your attitude to embrace visibility as an essential component to future-proofing your career.

Here are several tips to help you showcase your visibility whether in-person or virtually with presence and impact:

**KEEP YOUR CAMERA ON:** If provided with the option to attend online meetings with your video turned off, do the opposite. Make

sure your face is well lit and your facial expressions are pleasant. Your clothing must reflect the image you wish to present about yourself. It also demonstrates respect for your audience. If you do not wish to be on camera, upload a professional headshot to display on your profile throughout the meeting instead.

**CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE:** To stand out, make yourself the "uplifter". With so many people burning out, you will naturally be appreciated for your positivity, passion, and light-heartedness. Come prepared with various short topics that set the tone for an engaging experience with you. Whether you're leading a meeting or attending, showcase your personal charisma.

**PERFECT YOUR EYE CONTACT:** Direct eye contact is essential for reinforcing your point even in a virtual setting. Resist the immediate temptation of scanning the people on the screen. In your video conference, you want to look into the camera more often than at the attendees' squares. A great tip is to begin your point looking at the eye of the camera, then scan the room but always end your point by again looking at the eye of the camera. This will increase the impact of your words as it makes people feel that you are looking at them. If you are using two screens where you must look sideways to see the attendees, share this at the onset of the meeting. Otherwise, it will be perceived that you are giving them the cold shoulder when you turn sideways. And you certainly don't want anyone thinking you are watching Netflix with subtitles!!!

**MASTER THE ART OF ASKING CURIOUS QUESTIONS:** This is a powerful tool for exchanging ideas, building rapport, and improving interpersonal bonding. When you are not knowledgeable of the topic,

asking questions shows genuine interest and grants you visibility. You naturally show others that you are present and confident to speak out. People are more responsive when you ask questions in a casual way. Choose open-ended questions which allow for a deeper conversation instead of closed-ended questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no", potentially showing bias. Opening questions can begin with "I'm curious to know..." or - "What influenced you to..." Avoid "why" questions which might make someone feel like they are being challenged. To set the right tone, initially ask casual questions.

To quote Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech of 1994: "As we let our own light shine, we consciously give others permission to do the same".

What can you now be doing to take center stage? It's your choice!

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## About the Author

Roz Usheroff is a leadership, image and branding specialist, entertaining and educating diverse audiences across continents with her insights and vision on what it takes to achieve leadership and corporate success. Over the past two decades, Roz's unique abilities have positioned her to work with Fortune 500 companies worldwide. She leads her clients (from new talent up to CEOs) to maximize on their personal brand, unique abilities and differentiate themselves.

Roz is the author of "Customize Your Career": "Taking the Leap", and "The Future of You! Creating Your Enduring Brand"

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Paul Sloane

# A lateral way to expose war crimes and fight disinformation

The English journalist and blogger, Eliot Higgins, became interested in open source methods in 2011 when he wanted to authenticate video clips from war zones and crime sites. He found that you could use satellite imagery to check the locations of videos but it needed many pairs of eyes to review all the possible comparisons. In 2012 on his blog 'Brown Moses', he posted articles with videos from the civil war in Syria. He and his collaborators analysed hundreds of short videos and were able to authenticate their locations using geolocation techniques. He researched the weapons used and was able to show that the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad was using chemical weapons and cluster bombs.



Eliot Higgins

Picture Source: [wordpress.org/openverse/image/e9ed54fa-2e87-4ea8-8114-37a19dac1e71](https://wordpress.org/openverse/image/e9ed54fa-2e87-4ea8-8114-37a19dac1e71)

In 2014 he founded Bellingcat as a journalistic group which would investigate war crimes and major incidents using open source intelligence (OSINT). They would analyse thousands of documents and posts in the public domain to accurately identify and verify the

information. Initially, all members of the group were unpaid volunteers. The name Bellingcat comes from the old tale of mice who complain about a cat. The mice agree that it would be great if they could hang a bell around the neck of the cat – but no mouse dares to try to do it. Belling the cat means bringing aggressors out of the shadows.

Bellingcat's first major success was its investigation into the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) which was shot down on 17 July 2014 while flying over Ukraine. All 283 passengers and 15 crew were killed. Through painstaking research, Higgins and his team were able to show that Russian forces were responsible for the atrocity by using a Buk missile launcher.

They tracked the progress of the Buk using photos from many sources on the internet and by using Google Earth to verify locations and in some cases the length of shadows to identify the time of day. Their findings were later confirmed by the Dutch-led international joint investigation team (JIT).

Bellingcat identified the coordinates of an Islamic State training camp and the site where an American journalist was killed. They went on to expose atrocities in Syria, Yemen and Cameroon. In a major coup, Bellingcat discovered and revealed the identities of the three Russian GRU agents responsible for the poisoning of Sergei Skripal in Salisbury in 2018. Their continued success has enraged the Kremlin which regularly denounces Bellingcat for 'disinformation' and being a tool of Western intelligence services. In fact, they are fully independent and their funding comes from grants,

donations and selling workshops which train people in the skills of open-source investigations.

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 Bellingcat has been very active and shown the use of cluster bombs.

The [Bellingcat website](#) was blocked for Russian users. Bellingcat has received many awards and honours and it has changed how news and intelligence agencies gather and verify stories using OSINT methods. These are mighty achievements started by Higgins and a group of crowdsourcing amateurs sitting at their computers.

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## About the Author

[Paul Sloane](#) is an author and expert on lateral thinking in business. He has delivered hundreds of talks to executive audiences around the world. His talks are different because they challenge your thinking head-on. He is a skilled facilitator and course leader who helps top-level teams achieve breakthrough results in their meetings. He helps companies overcome the problems they have making innovation happen. He can improve creativity and lateral thinking for leaders with leadership and innovation masterclasses. This results in a more agile culture, more ideas and successful innovation.

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Yoram Solomon PHD

# Trust and first impression

One of the six components of my trustworthiness model is time. Time is one of the “what you do” group of dynamic components. Time accelerates the impact that the interaction’s positivity (or negativity) has on your trustworthiness level. But not all time is equal. You know that it takes time to build trust. You also know that once you lose trust, it is almost impossible (or takes a tremendous amount of time) to rebuild it. You also heard that “nobody gets a second chance to make a first impression.” The first impression plays a special role in building trust, as well. This article will discuss the special role of first impression in building your trustworthiness, explain why it has such a strong impact, explain what happens over time, and give you some advice related to the role that first impression plays in building your trustworthiness.

## How does a first impression work?

You heard the phrase “don’t judge a book by its cover.” While a great value (focus on substance rather than appearance), our brains are not wired that way. We allow looks and first impressions to affect how we judge others. As a result, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” Accordingly, while time is one of the six components of trustworthiness, not all time is made equal. The first seconds, minutes, and hours in a relationship have a much more significant effect on assessing trustworthiness than later times.

Once, I invited a company to give me a proposal for renovating my pool. The company representative (possibly the owner) showed up at my doorstep driving a Maserati. What does that mean? How did that affect my assessment of him or his business? How would my opinion change if he was driving a Ford F150 truck or an old and beat-up Toyota Corolla?

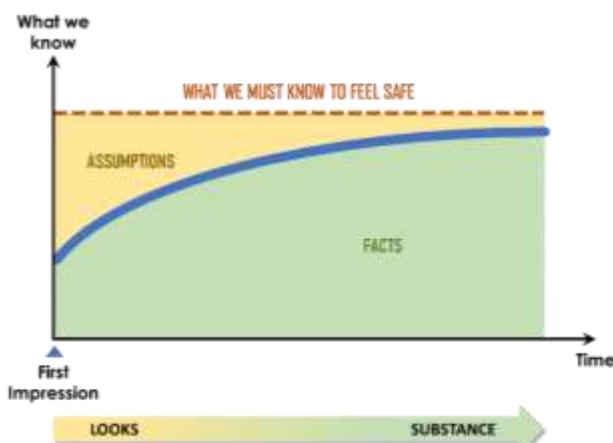
Malcolm Gladwell wrote about it in *Blink*, and Daniel Kahneman wrote about it in *Thinking Fast and Slow*. Others, too, researched and wrote about our subconscious mind that comes into play and affects our decision-making process unconsciously.

## Why does a first impression have such a strong impact?

We hate uncertainty. Call it a defence mechanism, but we feel we must know enough about the other person before we can trust them. We must possess a level of “knowledge” (or, at least, what we categorize as knowledge) about the other person to feel safe making decisions involving them. If we know less than that, we don’t feel safe.

However, the first time we meet someone, we cannot possibly know enough to feel safe. So, our brain fills the gap as quickly as possible. It does it subconsciously. But it fills the gap with assumptions based on shreds of evidence. Those assumptions are susceptible to being wrong. We see one little thing (the car that the pool renovation company owner drove) and using our experience, as limited as it might be, we deduct assumptions that are not necessarily true. Those assumptions are subject to our past experiences and our confirmation bias, whether we admit having it or not. Based on

those assumptions, we decide whether we can trust the other person or not. Based on those assumptions, others decide whether they can trust us or not.



When we start a relationship, the balance between facts and assumptions is heavily skewed toward the side of assumptions. Over time, as we learn more facts about the other person, we can start letting go of our assumptions about them (provided we are not holding on to them too strongly and refuse to replace them with contradictory facts) and replace them with facts. The balance shifts from assumptions to facts and from looks to substance.

## What is the first impression important for trust?

My trust model has two groups of components: *who you are* and *what you do*. The *who you are* components (competence, personality compatibility, and symmetry) exist before we ever interact with the other person. However, unless we know those components, the starting point of the first interaction (considering you never planned to meet the other person) is zero trust. That level of trust will change through the positivity that the other

person will contribute to the interaction and be accelerated by the *time* and *intimacy* components.

Since there is not much that you know about the other person before the first interaction with them, time has a much bigger impact in accelerating (really, emphasizing at this point) every little positive or negative contribution they make.

#### **What happens over time?**

Over time, as we know more and more about the other person and form our opinion of their trustworthiness, time plays a smaller role in completing the trustworthiness picture we have of them, for better or worse. If our impression is that they should not be trusted, even positive interactions will change this only a little. This is also why it's so hard to rebuild trust once it's lost.

#### **Advice**

If you want to be trusted by someone you are about to meet and have never met before, help them form a positive opinion of you and your trustworthiness before that first meeting starts. Communicate information about *who you are* (competence, personality compatibility, symmetry), either directly or indirectly, through someone they trust and who knows you, utilizing the Fifth Law of Trust: transferability. Research who they are so you can emphasize things that are important to them and things you have in common with them.

If you know that you are about to meet someone for the first time and that you will have to assess their trustworthiness, do your homework! Learn who they are. Get as much as you can to establish *who they are* (competence, personality compatibility, symmetry). Ask people you trust and who know them about them.

Try to build as much of a foundation of facts about them so you will not have to rely on snap judgment and assumptions your subconscious brain will make about them.

Finally, if another person considers you to be untrustworthy after a long time, know that it will be very hard to change that perception. No matter how hard you try to contribute to every interaction positively, they will remember how you used to be and give little credibility to your efforts. Once you know what you have done wrong that caused you to lose their trust and know how to do better, you should consider changing your environment. Move to another team, another company, another set of friends, and start fresh with actions that will build your trustworthiness in the new setting by people who were never exposed to how you were before and haven't formed their opinion of your trustworthiness yet.

Listen to the podcast episode:  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/s5e1-trust-and-first-impression/id1569249060?i=1000556102212>

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#### **About the Author**

Dr Yoram Solomon is the author of *The Book of Trust* and host of *The Trust Show Podcast*, committed to help companies and individuals build trust and become trustworthy. He published 14 books, 22 patents, more than 300 articles, and was one of the creators of Wi-Fi and USB 3.0. Named one of the Top 40 Innovation Bloggers and one of the Top 20 Global Thought Leaders on Corporate Culture.

Yoram is a professional member of the National Speakers Association and was a TEDx speaker and host. He is an adjunct professor at Southern Methodist University. His trust-building model is based on years of original research and service at the IDF 35th Airborne Brigade.

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**Kevin Stansfield**

# Making & breaking habits



If you've ever tried to break a bad habit, you'll be able to relate to the power that habits have over us on a day to day basis. Whether you realise it or not, our lives are full of habits, good and bad. From getting up in the morning, brushing our teeth, checking our emails, driving to work etc., our brains are incredibly efficient at creating automation and making it so we no longer do these activities consciously ... so it's no wonder these habits are so hard to break!

I'm sure during the pandemic we have all created a bad habit or 3, like one too many trips to the fridge, or watching too much Netflix. So, if you are keen to break some of those habits, then I would highly recommend reading a book called **Atomic Habits** by James Clear.

He has sold over 3 million copies of this book worldwide, and it's a New York Times number 1 bestseller.



**James Clear**

This book offers the "do's and don'ts" for creating new, helpful habits and breaking old, unhelpful ones. It is jam packed full of practical and directional advice.



The key message is, if you want to make some changes to your life, you need to make small changes each day. As James Clear himself says:

**"Get 1% better every day for a year, and you'll be 37% better by the time you're done"**

Here are 6 manageable 'Atomic Habits' you can adapt and incorporate into your day to day life, and that will make a big difference to your performance:

### 1. Prepare your day the night before

By preparing the night before, you will feel so much better when you go to bed, knowing that everything is organised for the next day. You'll also feel a lot calmer in the morning when you are getting ready for the day ahead. So in the evening, check what meetings you have the next day, make sure you have what you need, organise your lunch, and make sure your bag is ready to go.

### 2. Write down your thoughts

Our minds can become cluttered with all the things we need to remember and do. If you have meetings to prepare for, or you need to remember to pick something up on your way home etc., make sure you write it all down. Studies have shown that getting things out of your head and onto paper really reduces anxiety and helps us feel more in control. This is a particularly good exercise to practice before bed, as by decluttering the mind, you will feel more relaxed, and actually sleep better.

### 3. Delay your responses

When we receive emails and calls, we are often all too eager to respond and get the issue out of the way and dealt with. However, this can lead to making hasty decisions, and committing to things we may not have time for.

There is nothing wrong in delaying your response with a reply that will buy you some thinking time. You can say, "I will look into that", or "I'll check my calendar and get back to you". As long as your initial reply is timely, this will allow you to check your workload and rethink your priorities, to see if you can make it work. This delay really helps avoid unnecessary pressure and stress of taking on too much or double-booking yourself.

### 4. Put the phone away

The constant ping of messages, notifications, updates etc is so distracting. Studies show that, on average, after checking our phones it takes 23 minutes to get back on track with what we were doing. It is increasingly becoming an addiction to check messages or scroll through social media. There are even apps available to provide time limits for your mindless browsing! Just think of the difference it would make to your productivity if you reduced your mobile phone usage each day. How about giving yourself a specific time and time limit to check-in, and then after that lock your phone away in your desk or bag.

### 5. Review the day

Take 5 minutes at the end of your working day to review how things have gone. Write down the things you accomplished, and the things you didn't. Focus on the positives, but also note the reasons you didn't achieve something, and assess whether, if you'd done things differently, that would have made an impact on the end result.

### 6. Read more

I am a great believer in self-development and staying curious. All the big thinkers in the world are readers, from Bill Gates to Oprah Winfrey. By committing to reading for just 15 minutes a day, you can significantly increase your knowledge and skills. If you aren't a big fan of books, why not try podcasts and audiobooks, as you can listen to these whilst in the car or gym.

Perhaps you could join a business book club to help you with the reading habit. In fact, why not join mine? My BookCLUB runs on the last Friday of every month. Check out the next one (and our other great training events) here: [EVENTS](#)

*Try making some of these changes to your daily routines, and see the impact they can have on changing your life for the better. It's time to take action, break those bad habits and make some better ones!*

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### About the Author

Kevin is the MD and founder of ActionCOACH Solent the leading business coaching and training firm in Southampton, Hampshire, where his teamwork with owner-run businesses, helping them create better lives through Business Improvement and Growth.

Kevin has attained numerous Regional, European and Global awards. He is also a global speaker and trainer and has qualifications in areas as varied as an MBA, NLP, ECi and DISC. His life prior to coaching started as a Chartered Accountant which soon led to becoming a freelance FD of various fast-growth companies. As a keen sportsman, he believes wholeheartedly that nobody achieves their full potential without appropriate training and coaching.

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Jane Gunn

# 10 proven steps to making staff meetings more effective



It is increasingly a challenge to host effective, inclusive meetings that inspire collaborative relationships and action, especially if many of those meetings are online, or harder still hybrid. **International expert mediator and facilitator, Jane Gunn** reveals ten proven steps on how to hold clear, effective and authentic meetings.

- I. Have a clear purpose –** Explain what the unique purpose of this specific meeting is and what you hope to achieve in getting together - is it the approval of something, to resolve issues or conflicts, or to set future tasks for example. Skipping this step may leave colleagues relying upon assumptions and using past templates instead of thinking and planning for this specific meeting. The theme or type of the meeting – team meeting, board meeting etc. is often confused with the purpose.
- 2. Consider carefully who should be invited -** Who fits the meeting's purpose and who may impede it? It is such a poor use of business time to have people in meetings when they don't actually need to be there. Equally, be clear about the criteria you are using to include or exclude people from your meeting to avoid causing offence or isolating

people. Online meeting fatigue is definitely growing so make sure attendees actually need to be there.

- 3. Identify potential roadblocks to the meeting's success -** Meetings should enable every communication to be clear, honest and authentic. Stick to the agenda. Help create collaborative rather than adversarial relationships by ensuring everyone is heard and experiences a sense of working together. There should be an implicit agreement to make the meeting a success.
- 4. Be prepared on a practical level -** Be totally ready with technologies or appliances you want to use to create a more dynamic, fluid meeting, such as slides, props or flip charts. Take into account the nuances of a hybrid meeting, if some are in the room and some are dialling in especially.
- 5. Priming -** Prior to the meeting agree on how long the meeting should be and explain to attendees what they can expect from the meeting and how they could prepare for or contribute to it. Circulate the clear agenda beforehand because participants will have existing expectations, agendas and underlying assumptions.
- 6. Think about how you will open (and close) your event -** and how to manage or facilitate the process to get the best contributions from those attending. People are at their most ready to be inspired at the beginning of a meeting, so the opening is vital. Set the tone and vibe of the meeting at the start. Think about introductions and how to get everyone engaged from the beginning, whilst reminding people why you are gathering. Close on a high rather than allowing the meeting fizzle out and people drift away. Summarise and reiterate what you have achieved and thank everyone for their time at the end of the meeting.
- 7. Be a good facilitator -** Critical skills for a strong facilitator include deep listening, questioning, micro-observation, empathizing, non-verbal communication, and giving and receiving feedback. Make sure everyone feels connected, valued and listened to and respected, and there is clarity and certainty about the outcomes. Think about engagement, energy and experience.
- 8. Problems –** Allow conflict and issues to surface and use your skills and tools to deal with them. Most problems are centred around

individuals and how they seek to be heard or get their message across. Some people may appear too strident or aggressive, others may be reticent to speak up. Remember that whatever is unspoken is hardest to change. Like an iceberg, 90% of important information in a conversation is often hidden. Make sure all interactions are respectful.

9. **Length of meeting –** Meetings that run longer than an hour are probably not being managed well unless it's an extraordinary event. Keep the meeting moving along and keep those involved aware of time without letting important issues being rushed. In necessarily long meetings, prevent a loss of energy by taking regular breaks.
10. **Consider the outcome or product of the meeting -** What was decided and what, if anything, was left needing more discussion? Is a break-away meeting needed for specific people? What actions have been agreed and how will people be accountable for carrying them out? What happens next in terms of meeting or follow-up to keep the momentum going? The meeting is truly over when all loose ends have been tied up.

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#### About the Author:

Mediator, speaker and author, Jane Gunn is a former corporate lawyer. She specializes in transforming business relationships and has helped numerous companies to move from deadlock situations to opening new streams of revenue and a vibrant corporate culture.

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Andy Bounds

# Wow people instantly (or ‘elevate your elevator pitch’)

So if you want to help more people buy into – and buy from – you, lead with their AFTERs.

And it's easy to do. Simply...

#### Action Point

1. ...List all the types of people you interact with – customers, colleagues, bosses, your team, investors, etc.
2. For each, identify why *they* perceive they're better off AFTER you
3. Focus everything on these AFTERs
4. [To ensure you become an AFTERs Ninja, click here...](#)

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#### About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success. Marketing legend Drayton Bird said Andy had taught him ‘... more about effective communicating than a lady who'd taught two American Presidents’.

To receive my weekly tips on how to communicate more effectively, [click here](#)

Short of time? Here are my [Quick Wins](#)

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Dr Lynda Shaw

# What dishonesty does to your brain & why it's bad for business

Dishonesty in the workplace varies from lying, misuse of company time or expenses, stealing, fraud, claiming sick pay when not sick, taking leave without permission or giving untruthful information when applying for a job to name but a few. Dishonesty tarnishes relationships, compromises finances, breaks loyalty and destroys reputations, so why is it still rife in business (and politics)?

## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DISHONESTY & THE BRAIN

The more lies we tell, the easier it gets according to a study conducted by researchers from University College London and Duke University \* who aimed to discover precisely what happens to our brains when we tell a lie. To test this, participants took part in a task where they could lie to receive money. During the first phase of the experiment, heightened activity was found in areas of the brain, such as the amygdala, which process emotions like feelings of guilt when being dishonest. However, as participants continued to lie over time, this activity started to a decline, despite the lies they were telling were becoming more extreme. The brain has the ability to desensitise itself to emotional stimuli so over time as the magnitude of the lies increased, the guilt lessened.

Humans are also not programmed to tell the truth if lying is advantageous to the individual, according to a study \* by UC

Berkeley's Haas School of Business.

## SO HOW CAN YOU DETECT DISHONESTY?

Avoiding eye contact, closed body language, vague responses, repetition of questions before answering them, playing with hair, excessive itching or fidgeting, rolling lips back or biting them, a sudden flushed or pale complexion, sweating, a higher-pitched voice than normal or sudden change of volume are all signs that someone may be lying.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISHONESTY ON BUSINESS AND PERSONAL REPUTATION

1. **White lies, moral lapses or shortcuts jeopardises the reputation of your business,** but these are often used as a way to justify dishonesty. No matter how small a lie this still signifies a lapse in someone's integrity and may mean that they are more comfortable engaging in other disingenuous behaviours.
2. **Creates a false persona.** We value those who are willing to be authentically themselves. Telling white lies out of convenience, to save face or as a way to fit in is easy to do, but this can have damaging consequences for our self-esteem. Every little lie we tell about ourselves subconsciously validates assumptions that we are not good enough. This behaviour implies that we are flawed and that these flaws are unacceptable.
3. **Can damage your company's reputation.** Companies are always built on integrity and a positive public perception, though this can easily be lost which can lead to stocks falling, investors pulling out, ruined working relationships, customers leaving and the resignation of employees.
4. **Unreliable and dishonest businesses destroy customer loyalty.** Businesses and people who are unreliable, never true to their word, lack transparency, are unrealistic with what they commit to and never follow through with what they promise, and ultimately dishonest will clearly not benefit from repeat business and referrals but may suffer from poor damaging reviews.

## HOW TO CRACK DOWN ON DISHONESTY

1. **Take a long term vision if tempted to take a 'shortcut'.** Increasingly consumers are deciding to purchase products or services based on company ethicality, of which honesty and integrity play a large role. It can take years to build and maintain a good reputation but takes even longer to recover after dishonesty has destroyed a reputation.
2. **Address concerns regarding workplace dissatisfaction.** Low morale or employee dissatisfaction is more likely to incite employee theft, unproductivity and misuse of company time and expenses.
3. **Create policies and systems to prevent employee dishonesty.** Include any repercussions such as suspension, termination or legal action. Put these in writing and circulate them to all employees.
4. **Do effective background checks** on potential candidates to prevent any cases of employee dishonesty early.
5. **Educate leaders on the impact of honesty** on achieving set goals and objectives and how they reflect the values and integrity of the organisation. Whilst lies can negatively impact a business, routine acts of open honesty have the opposite effect.

6. **Hold yourself and others accountable in the workplace** by encouraging them to be honest, own their mistakes and try to remedy the consequences of poor decisions.
7. **Make it clear that honesty is expected at all levels of your organisation** from the c-suite executives to the junior employees. I heard some advice from a senior CEO that I will never forget – ‘You only have to apologise for the truth once’. So wise.

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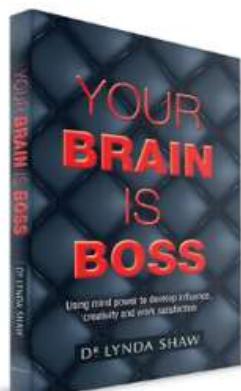
#### About the Author

Dr Lynda Shaw is a cognitive neuroscientist and chartered psychologist, a Forbes contributor, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Fellow of the Professional Speakers Association as well as an entrepreneur and author of adult and children's books.

Dr Shaw has lectured in Psychology and Neuroscience at various Universities in the UK and conducted research on brain function and impairment, specialising in consciousness, emotion and the effects of ageing. She was honoured to receive the Professional Speaking Award of Excellence in October 2017, it is the highest accolade for UK speakers given by their peers.

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Sunil Bali

## James Corden on cutting corners.....

Whether it's the boardroom or a blank canvas, quality is a great strategy for business and life.

#### Moving minds - Transforming performance

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#### About the Author

Sunil is a Performance Coach, Speaker and Author.

Ex-Head of Talent for Vodafone Group and Santander, and having run a £50m business, Sunil has been responsible for hiring over 50000 people and has had the pleasure of working with some great entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

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"Suddenly I realised the work I was doing simply wasn't good enough. I wasn't taking enough care and was cutting corners."

"Loads of people around me were telling me how great I was, and I believed them, but the public wasn't buying what I'd written," says Corden.

"As soon as I refocused on producing the best quality work that I could, the success came back," concludes Corden.



Adam Grant

# Stop serving the feedback sandwich



How do you give feedback to a CEO who's twice your age? I was 25, a new professor called in as a last-ditch, Hail Mary effort to save a dying company. They had already fired three consultants, so why not try me?

The CEO had been leading longer than I'd been alive. After several weeks of watching him in action, interviewing his senior team, and gathering data from his employees, it was time for me to bring down the hatchet. His company had merged with another firm and he was still trying to figure out where to go. His team desperately needed him to outline a vision.

When I went to colleagues for advice, they all told me the same thing. Put a slice of praise on the top and the bottom, and stick the meat of your criticism in between. It's the compliment sandwich, as Stewie Griffin called it on *Family Guy*—a technique for giving feedback that's popular among leaders and coaches, parents and teachers.

But when I looked at [the data](#), I learned that the feedback sandwich doesn't taste as good as it looks.

**Problem 1:** the positives fall on deaf ears. When people hear praise during a feedback conversation, they brace themselves. They're waiting for the other shoe to drop, and it makes the opening compliment

seem insincere. You didn't really mean it; you were just trying to soften the blow.

**Problem 2:** if you avoid that risk and manage to be genuine about the positives, they can drown out the negatives.

Research [shows](#) that primacy and recency effects are powerful: we often remember what happens first and last in a conversation, glossing over the middle. When you start and end with positive feedback, it's all too easy for the criticism to get buried or discounted.

Giving a compliment sandwich might make the giver feel good, but it doesn't help the receiver. Instead, try these four steps to make your criticism feel constructive:

## 1. Explain why you're giving the feedback

Recently, a team of psychologists was able to make feedback [40% more effective](#) by prefacing it with just [19 words](#):

**"I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them."**

Rather than feeling attacked, now you feel like the person has your back and believes in your future. People are remarkably open to



criticism when they believe it's intended to help them. As Kim Scott [observes](#), people will accept being challenged directly if you show that you care personally.

## 2. Take yourself off a pedestal

Negative feedback can make people feel inferior. If you level the playing field, it's a lot less threatening:

**I've benefited a lot from people giving me feedback, and I'm trying to pay that forward."**

**"I've been studying great managers, and I've noticed that they spend a lot of time giving feedback. I'm working on doing more of that."**

**"Now that we've been working together for a while, I think it would be great if we gave each other suggestions for how we can be more effective."**

All of these messages send a clear signal: I'm not perfect. I'm trying to get better too.

### 3. Ask if the person wants feedback

"I noticed a couple of things and wondered if you're interested in some feedback."

I've opened this way many times, and no one has ever declined. Once people take ownership over the decision to receive feedback, they're less defensive about it.

### 4. Have a transparent dialogue, not a manipulative monologue

Organizational psychologist Roger Schwarz **suggests** a thought experiment. Imagine that you're about to give feedback to two employees, but you have to be transparent about what you're trying to accomplish:

**"I have some negative feedback to give you. I'll start with some positive feedback to relax you, and then give you the negative feedback, which is the real purpose of our meeting. I'll end with more positive feedback so you won't be so disappointed or angry at me when you leave my office."**

It sounds ridiculous. It's destined to elicit the kind of rage that I haven't seen since Ross Geller bellowed **MY SANDWICH!**!!

Here's what Schwarz **recommends** instead:

**"The presentation you gave to the senior leadership team this morning may have created confusion about our strategy. Let me tell you how I'd like to approach this meeting and see if it works for you. I want to start by describing what I saw that raised my concerns and see if you saw the same things. After we agree on what happened, I want to say more about my concerns and see if you share them. Then we can decide what, if anything, we need to do going forward. I'm open to the possibility that I may be missing things or that I contributed the concerns I'm raising. How does that work for you?"**

### Putting it in Action

When I was preparing for the meeting with the CEO, I learned that all three consultants had tried to compliment him, and he saw right through it. It was time to take the feedback sandwich off the menu and be radically candid.

I started by explaining why I was giving the feedback. "Your senior team all believes you're the right guy to save this company, and I do too. I hope I've seen something that can help you do that."

Next, I took myself off a pedestal. "I see this as a two-way street—there's a lot I can learn from you about leadership. Who are the leaders who have taught you the most in your career?"

He gave me a few examples, and one was a leader with a clear, compelling vision. I took the opening and asked if he wanted feedback: "Your team actually has some pretty consistent views on how you can deliver your vision. Do you want to hear them?"

He nodded and took out a pen. I shared a few of their observations and asked if he agreed. He did—he needed to clarify the vision. A few weeks later, he stood up and rolled out his vision. It was a triumph.

Later that year the company failed anyway. But if I had given a compliment sandwich, it might have failed even sooner.

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### About the Author

Adam Grant has been Wharton's top-rated professor for 7 straight years. As an organizational psychologist, he is a leading expert on how we can find motivation and meaning, rethink assumptions, and live more generous and creative lives. He has been recognized as one of the world's 10 most influential management thinkers and Fortune's 40 under 40.

He is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of 5 books that have sold millions of copies and been translated into 45 languages: **Think Again**, **Give and Take**, **Originals**, **Option B**, and **Power Moves**. His books have been named among the year's best by Amazon, Apple, the *Financial Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. His viral piece on languishing was the **most-read** *New York Times* article of 2021 and the **most-saved** article across all platforms.

Adam hosts **WorkLife**, a chart-topping TED original podcast. His **TED talks** on languishing, original thinkers, and givers and takers have been viewed more than 30 million times.

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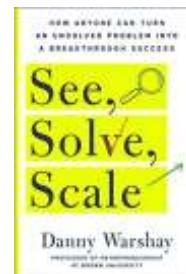
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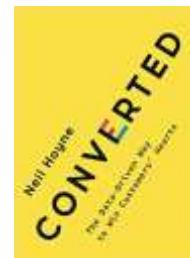


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Mike Shipulski

# The power of praise

Praise happens when you tell someone they did something wonderful. Praise is virtually free and almost the most powerful force in the universe.

When you tell someone what they did was amazing, they stand three inches taller. Right in front of you, they get taller. They grow. They expand. Don't believe me? Try it. And bring a ruler.

To deliver praise, you must pay attention. You must invest in what's going on, you must hear what is said, and watch what is done. Congratulations. Though you have yet to deliver praise, you've already differentiated yourself.

Next, you must compare the behaviour against the norms and recognize a difference. Sure, it's a simple difference calculation, but it's a calculation that takes attention and caring, which in today's rat race are in short supply. Now, you must find words the right words to describe the specialness of the behaviour-why it's different and why it matters. Then, you've got to deliver it in a way that is worthy of the specialness.

Deliver praise in public and be specific. This person (use their name) did (say what they did) and it's important because (and say why it is important). And tell people what you think and feel. They (use their name) did (say what they did) and I feel (e.g., happy, excited, proud) because (tell them why you feel as you do). Feel free to steal that script, but if you do, stick to it because it's a good one.

## A rule: If you don't praise people, you don't know what you're doing.

But here's the thing about praise. If you fake it, you bring about its opposite. When you fake it, people get smaller and they get angry. They get smaller because they know they are being patronized. And they get angry for the same reason. So, a word of caution. If you deliver praise that's fake, you will lose all credibility with the recipient and anyone in earshot.

And it's such a violation of their dignity, I don't know a way to resurrect their trust. In short, if you fake it, it's over for you.

## Another rule: If you have the urge to deliver fake praise, don't.

Praise is powerful, but in today's environment is almost extinct. It's not that praise-worthy behaviour is uncommon, rather, the time and attention required to recognize and formally acknowledge praise-worthy behaviour is uncommon.

If you want to elevate the performance of a team, praise their behaviour. And do it in public. Pay attention and praise. Schedule a meeting, **buy the pizza**, and praise. Be specific, be genuine, and praise.

Yes, you will spend a lot of money on pizza, and, yes, that is the best return on investment in the universe.

*This article appeared on:  
[www.shipulski.com/2022/05/04/the-power-of-praise/](http://www.shipulski.com/2022/05/04/the-power-of-praise/)*

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## About the Author:

Mike strives to define best practices and tools for *Product and Technology Development* and embed them into company culture. With that, practices and tools become a working part of how a company does business instead of ending up in a thick handbook that defines how things "should be done" which is read by no one. To Mike, behaviour is most important.

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businessVision benefit from having a stable number of long serving team members and a reputation in the South West as being a practice that is different from the typical accountancy practice, is small and friendly, but able to offer the type of services more commonly associated with large accountancy firms.

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