

# The Humour Route to Higher Acceptance of VE Proposals

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We, Value Professionals, often complain of the proverbial "resistance to change." And for a good reason.

We feel frustrated when a delightful idea developed by us, an idea that is technically feasible, economically attractive, and administratively workable, is not promptly accepted and implemented. It is more than frustration; it is indignation. How cursed people can be, we murmur.

The loss is not only to us, personally. The loss is to the organization and the society. Any study that provides a breakthrough - VE is itself a breakthrough technique - is worth doing.

I made such a study.

The conclusion is that if we employ sufficient humour in all the phases and especially at the presentation-negotiation phase, our chances of success will be considerably enhanced.

This may need some personal coaching and practice. To do so, we need conviction. And only logic can give conviction to engineers. What is the logic therefore?

## Breakthrough Brain Research

Recent brain research provides the clue.

Nobel Prize winner Professor Roger Sperry's discovery of a dual brain is perhaps the most exciting finding in the behavioral sciences in our generation.

The breakthrough research finding is that though physically we have one single brain, functionally we have two. The right hemisphere of the brain functions in one way and the left hemisphere functions in an entirely different way; they "speak different languages."

The left brain, according to Professor Robert Ornstein of the University of California, handles mental activities

like mathematics, language, logic, analysis, and writing. The right side of the brain handles very different activities like imagination, colour, music, rhythm, and day dreaming.

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Their different functioning has been in part described thus. The left brain does one-at-a-time processing, looks at detail, sees cause and effect, produces linear thinking, and evaluates. The right brain does all-at-once processing, looks at the whole, produces imaginative thinking, uses images and sees connections.

Both by design and by usage, the left brain is the more dominate one. It has been described as "the executive" and "the talker." The right brain on the other hand is fragile and mute. Here lies "THE TROUBLE."

WHAT has this to do with VE proposals?

## Brain Functioning & Resistance to Change

We "see" with concepts and not with our eyes. Concepts are categories formed in the right brain but for them to be retrieved long-term, the left brain's acceptance of the concept is crucial. The existence of the concept in long term memory depends upon "the permission" of the left brain.

According to Dr. James Asher, "Constancy is a function of the left brain. Once the left hemisphere accepts a concept, it has constancy, it has stability,

it resists extinction." In the process, it defends and protects existing concepts from rival concepts.

This "concept constancy" phenomenon is significant for human existence. It is the safe-keeping, preservative aspect of nature. It is this that enables skill development as well.

The other side of the picture is that this ever-vigilant, ever-critical left brain is "opposed to" novelty or change and will not permit any "concept disruption." It will fight the unfamiliar with skepticism, arguments, scorn and ridicule.

Problem-solving VE proposal acceptance means altering or replacing an existing concept, and this means "concept disruption."

How do we solve this dilemma?

### **Humour the Door Opener**

The only hope is that we somehow quiet, trick or 'short circuit' the left brain so that the new concept gets a chance to register in the right brain. Unless this "watchman" relaxes, the right brain has little chance of receiving the novel concept and eventually "passing it on" to the left brain for acceptance and retention.

One way to "trick" the left brain is to use humour. In moments of humour, the left brain goes sort of out of action; it relaxes and there are flashes of concept registration.

Humour, defined JB Priestley, is thinking in fun and feeling in earnest. For "concept disruption," feeling in earnest is not enough; thinking in fun is necessary. It

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The answer surely is not indiscriminate humour; it is deft and discriminate humour; it is humour with a design.

Said the Indian philosopher Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan; "It is easier to penetrate a quarter mile of granite than to penetrate a quarter inch of cranium." Thanks to recent brain research, this need not be a despair any more. The miracle is indeed possible!

There are other approaches to "quiet" the left brain and thereby give the VE proposals a better chance of acceptance. Humour is the easier and more familiar among them. Let us inject a liberal dose of relevant humour in our VE work.

If we can't master it, let us hire a humour professional!

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