

HOMOUR, PRODUCTIVITY AND BRAIN RESEARCH

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Productivity levels can change ; and the environmental demands require them to change and change constantly for the better.

For these levels to change, however, the concerned people have to either do different things or in different ways or both.

They do this but only occasionally , and only some of them, which explains the yawning gap between the possible and the actual.

WITH SUFFICIENT AND APPROPRIATE HUMOUR, THEY ARE LIKELY TO DO MORE AND MORE OFTEN.

What is the logic ?

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 entirely in a 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, writing and writing. The right side of the brain's handles very different activities like imagination, colour, music, rhythm, day dreaming and day dreaming.

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 usages, the left brain is the more dominant one. It has been described as " the executive " and " the talker ". The right brain is , on the other hand, fragile and mute. Here lies the trouble.

RELEVANCE TO RAISING PRODUCTIVITY

WHAT has this to do with productivity attitudes ?

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 " It however 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.

Productivity problem-solving 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 quieten or 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 eventual "passing it on" to the left brain for acceptance and retention.

One way to "trick" the left brain is to employ 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 is humour that "invites" the left brain to suspend its vigilance, "just for a second."

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

Said 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.

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