

## Most everything we define as 'best practice' today doesn't suit the way our Brain works!

The world of Neuroscience is turning up some interesting facts. Yet for the vast majority of organisations heavily invested in the currently accepted approach to change, this new science threatens to be very disconcerting indeed.

One example of this 'New Science' that threatens to turn current beliefs about 'What works' on its head, is the process of Neurogenesis (The on-going process of change in our brain).

Elizabeth Gould, a professor of psychology at Princeton University & RSA winner of the Benjamin Franklin Medal, awarded for the discoveries made using new neuronal imaging techniques in Human brains, details this process in a talk entitled 'How Does Experience Influence the Brain'.

<http://www.thersa.org/events/video/archive/elizabeth-gould>

Referencing this and my own studies into Psychology and Neuroscience over the last 10 years, I think it's safe to suggest that the capacity to change our brains (and thus our minds / beliefs / reactions / behaviours / performance [& organisational performance through teams of individuals] etc.) is **directly** related to the **consistent** experiences we have of the world through our senses - feeding into our brains.

This is of course influenced by the Physical surroundings, our own emotional position / self concept (psychology) and the 'social rules / conditions' we accept and adopt at cultural & philosophical levels.

If we take the data presented by Elizabeth Gould and do the Maths, it's also reasonable to conclude that the maximum rate of change to our existing neural construct happens when we are exposed to completely different Physical, Emotional and Social surroundings. This 'maximum rate of change', occurs at approx. 12% / month. (Proven in the Hippocampus and Olfactory bulb based on studies to date).

However, people going to work are of the same psychological disposition as they were previously, the physical conditions they experience (layout / routes taken / smells / sounds etc.) are the same and the social rules (policy / control mechanisms / process / attitudes / command and control / hierarchy) remains the same.

So, the rate of change in the brain, even when going through a 'Change program' or receiving 'Training', has little chance (certainly less than 12% / month) of real physiological change at a neural level when it's only a few physical attributes (layouts / colour coding / new instructions / new equipment) in our surroundings or some new data (.ppt based training / policies / e-mail based communications etc.) that constitutes the new experience

.... quid pro quo ....

if our brains don't change through a lack of Physically / Emotionally / Socially changed stimulus, our behaviours / performance doesn't change and the performance of teams and organisations doesn't change.

To realise real 'Sustainable', 'Cultural' change (with employee engagement), development programs have to be considered at Physical, Emotional and Social levels. This necessarily requires the Executive and Leadership teams understand the direct connections between their own beliefs, behaviours and organisational outcomes, in such detail that this knowledge effects a change **in** those beliefs (worldview /

opinion about what works), and thus their behaviours & the resultant social conditions they create, which will either enhance or detract from the organisational performance improvement they desire.

In addition, those 'social conditions' created by 'Leadership beliefs', will inform the emotional aspect of individuals (where psychologically we have to acknowledge that 'control' [among other factors] has a negative impact on confidence and a 'freedom to act'; thus, at a complex neurological level, leadership ignorant of 'control issues' has a negative impact on 'Innovation'. (Another 'buzzword' the current approach fails to understand with sufficient depth ... i.e. innovation is negatively impacted by stressor hormone release impacting Brain Derived Neurotropic Factor (BDNF), glucose energy being diverted to the Amygdala (Emotional control centre / defence mechanisms / fight or flight) etc. etc.

It is at this level we 'NEED' to understand change in respect to Human Factors, if 'Change' is to be effective and / or efficient.

Once we address change at this level, then and only then can programs like 'Lean and Six Sigma' have any chance of realising the significant benefits proposed by those with a vested interest in selling the approach.

This is enlightening and nothing short of a revelation, but of course, there are millions of people, companies and political parties around the world who are invested in the current belief that 'best practice' is 'best'; so for those people, faced with significant change to their beliefs, this is also, 'potentially', disconcerting and immensely challenging, probably to a point of denial. (Which is another subject, requiring a much bigger article on psychology, cognitive dissonance, kin altruism, self deception, blame as part of our defence mechanisms, guilt, fear of failure and rejection etc.).

So in summary, & considering the title of this short observation on change, we might conclude much of 'best practice' approaches change around the wrong way. With new technology and new scientists breaking new ground, we've found the way to do it better, we're just not yet doing anything about it, and we're not doing anything about it because of the psychological opposition we will exercise to avoid a new truth, ironically, this is one aspect of human behaviour which undermines organisational change that this new science could help us understand, if only we could become 'open' to it ... Simple!

If you want to address change in yourself, your team or your organisation at a depth that will actually realise sustainable, cultural change, contact me via my website [www.duxinaroe.com](http://www.duxinaroe.com)