The EXTRAORDINARY TEAM
NEWSLETTER

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Bias affects our perceptions, our realities, and our daily choices. Could bias be affecting your decisions and your team's decisions in a negative way? Could you be favoring a certain employee, team member, or panelist? In this month's articles, you can learn to become more aware of common biases and how the choices you make reflect on you as a team leader.

Just wanted to take a moment this month and share my thanks to you, my clients and loyal readers. I so appreciate YOU!

With gratitude in my heart,
Kristin

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

8 OF THE MOST COMMON BIASES IN THE WORKPLACE

Once you have addressed the problem, now it's time to move into the analysis phase. Now this is the tricky part where our cognitive biases influence our thinking. Wikipedia, otherwise known as the font of all knowledge, lists 175 biases – which is far too many to discuss in this article – but keep in mind that *they all play into our perceptions and realities*. There's no escaping them. However, you can gain awareness of them and how they impact your thinking, and then take countermeasures to become less influenced by these biases.

Because there is so much information out there in the universe, our brains are wired to make sense of it all. Below are the eight most common cognitive biases I see in the workplace**:**

1. Confirmation. Focus on details that confirm our own existing beliefs. We readily accept information that confirms your own hypothesis and we tend to ignore details that contradict our own beliefs. (Note to reader: this is my biggest bias!)
2. Primacy. Notice things that are already primed in memory, repeated often, or most immediate. We tend to give more credence to words, images, and patterns that have recently been loaded in memory.

3. Bizarreness. Remember the weird. Our brains tend to boost the importance of things that are unusual, bizarre, funny, or surprising. Alternatively, we tend to skip over information that we think is ordinary or expected.
4. Confabulation. Find stories and patterns even in sparse data. Rarely do we have the luxury of having the full story. When we have partial information about a specific thing that belongs to a group of things we are pretty familiar with, our brain fills in the gaps with a SWAG (Silly Wild Arse Guess) or SWAG-NER (Silly Wild Arse Guess Not Easily Refuted!)
5. Occam's Razor. Favor simplicity over complexity. Occam's razor asserts that the simplest solution tends to be the right one. Simple is actually our preference. We'd rather do the quick, simple thing than the important complicated thing, even if the important complicated thing is ultimately a better use of time and energy.
6. Sunk Cost. Complete things that we've already invested (too much?) time and energy in. This is the behavioral economist's version of Newton's first law of motion: an object in motion stays in motion. This Sunk Cost Fallacy helps us finish a project, even if we come across more and more reasons to give up.
7. System Justification. To avoid mistakes, we avoid irreversible decisions. If we must choose, we tend to choose the option that is perceived as the least risky or that preserves the status quo. Better the devil you know than the devil you do not.
8. Overconfidence. Be confident in our ability to make an impact and be important. Yes, this is the overconfidence bias – the bane to many executives! But without some degree in confidence in our critical thinking skills and ability to take action, we might not decide to do anything at all!

Before you throw up your hands and admit defeat, you have the ability to recognize these biases in your own thinking as well as on your team. The key is to call it out. Share why you think that bias is affecting the team's decision. Look for and consider alternative viewpoints before you rush full steam ahead, presenting that rock to the CEO. Thanks to Buster Benson for his contribution to this list!

YOUR CHOICES REFLECT YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITIES

Time. We all have just 24 hours in one day. Doesn't matter if you are the President of the company, a customer-facing employee, or in the back office. We all have just 24 hours - and where each of us allocate that time is a choice.

Our choices directly reflect what are our highest priorities. What we *don't do* doesn't mean we don't care. It simply means that those activities are a lesser priority. Not that they are not important, but *just not as* important as the activities we choose to do.

Ah...but there is another subtext to this choice. It's about respecting your commitments to yourself and to others. Let's say you call a team meeting for 10:00 in the morning. It should start at 10 because: 1) It is an important meeting. You have published the objectives and the agenda, and your team is prepared to discuss the topic(s). 2) It's a sign of respect. By starting on time, you recognize that other people have priorities that they are also juggling. They have allocated an hour to this meeting, and have made intelligent choices for their day. When you start your meeting 30 minutes late, that disrupts the day.

Now let's be clear: I am NOT a time-crazed person who is pathologically on time all the time. Stuff happens. I let people know immediately (as soon as I know!) that I will be late - whether it is for a meeting, a deliverable or any other promise made. But I am also aware that by being late, I am eroding the trust I have built with my team.

That being said, I try to be on time and follow through on my commitments. After all, we have just 24 hours in a day - it's up to you to choose how we are going to use that time. Just be aware that your choices, your commitments, reflect to your team what are your highest priorities.

MODERATING A PANEL OF YOUR PEERS - WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

A few years back, I moderated two panels of my peers at the National Speakers Association's CSP/CPAE Summit in Coral Gables, FL. The Summit had about 80 of the top speakers in the United States – our association's Certified Speaking Professionals (CSP) and the Speaker's Hall of Fame (CPAE) – who came together to discuss and share best practices. It was quite an intimate and special event and I was honored to be the Chair as well.

After the panel, one of my colleagues asked me, "How is it different to moderate a panel of your peers rather than a panel for a client that you don't know so well?" Interesting question, which I have been pondering since.

My first reaction is around familiarity. Because I know most of the people in the room, am friends with many, and we are part of an association family, I would say that I wasn't as quick to intervene when someone spoke too long, didn't answer a question or just needed to be reigned in.

I limited the length of the introductions and yet made them personal. I said two sentences about why I asked them to be on the panel and provided a slide that showed the panelist picture, short bio info, and Twitter name. That's it. Sweet and simple.

I chose a less active format. As a peer, my questions may be no better than the audience's questions, so I chose a format where each panelist shared some ideas for a few minutes. Next, I started the conversation with a question to the panelists and then immediately moved out into the room for audience Q&A. I did NOT sit down with the panelists and make the focus on the stage. But then again, the size of the group allowed me to use this kind of format.

As a professional facilitator, I don't think I got sucked into the content – where a moderator shows their bias and preference for a specific position or panelist. But that might just be my ego talking here. But that is a danger for anyone who is moderating their peers.

What else is different when you moderate your peers vs. a group you are not part of?

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: TALK TRIGGERS: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CREATING CUSTOMERS WITH WORD OF MOUTH

As an entrepreneur of a 25-year consulting business, I attribute much of my success to "word of mouth" marketing. Simply put, you do a great job, and people become your raving fans and tell others. Problem is that people aren't standing by the proverbial water coolers as much - and when they DO share, it's gotta be something worth sharing. Remarkable, in fact.

So how to do something so darn remarkable that others will comment on it to their social circles as well as online? Jay Baer and Daniel Lemin, in their book, *Talk Triggers: The Complete Guide to Creating Customers with Word of Mouth*, have cracked the code into helping businesses create, implement, and measure a strategy that will dramatically increase your word of mouth.

Be advised: Creating Talk Triggers is not a generating a gimmick, a viral video or a PR strategy. It's more than a WOW moment delivered to a customer along the customer journey. Nope. Baer and Levin are talking about a sustained action that compels your customers to speak about you to others over and over again.

I must tell you their 4-5-6 process is not for the faint of heart. It will take some introspection and some real work (gathering insights, chatting up your customers, brainstorming potential talk triggers, testing and measuring them and then continually evolving them.

It's not something you can do by yourself or in a day. It will take some time and cultivation. So I have this on my 2019 Strategic Plan - can't wait to see what our team discovers!

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