



talking about...

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... designing better relationships for better outcomes

A newsletter for those interested in ontological coaching

Power and Trust

In our last article on relating, we spoke about giving authority. This month, we look at the two key factors that bring us to give ourselves or another person authority.

In our last article, we spoke about authority as a declaration we make to validate, or not, the declarations we listen to and we also distinguished between collective and personal authority. Whereas collective authority is defined by a society, personal authority is at the heart of each individual's acceptance of declarations as they apply to them. This begs the question, "What has us declare authority?" Our answer can be seen in two well worn words – power and trust.

Power and trust are words that are so commonly used that most people assume they know what they mean. Yet when exploring them in depth, their meaning is generally nebulous. We have covered trust in a number of articles in the past, so we will just quickly remind you of those distinctions. Trust can be seen as four distinct assessments on which we base the coordination of action with another. These four assessments are: sincerity (do they mean what they say?); competence (are they capable of doing what they promise?); reliability (how well do they keep or manage their promises?); and involvement (how much do they care about me and my concerns?). If we trust someone in a certain situation, then we are likely to give significant weight to their declarations and often give the person authority and accept their declarations.

However trust is not all there is to accepting others' decisions. We also take into account the power of the person making the declaration. So what is power? Again, there are many definitions of power around. The way we define it is that power is an assessment of an entity's capacity to generate action. The greater that capacity, then the more powerful they are. We should also point out here that the action generated may not always be in our best interests, but it is relevant to us. When we look at power in these terms, we can then break those assessments down into FIVE domains.

Threat or force. This is the most basic means of power and of creating authority. It is seen everywhere and often appears as the first option for people when they seek to gain authority. The raising of the voice, the threat of taking something away or physical pain are some of the ways in which this manifests itself. This is clearly an aspect of power where we do not see the action to be taken in our best interests. Threat or force works because it generates fear such that people would rather accept a declaration than deal with what it is they fear.

Productive capacity. How much an entity is able to produce can make them powerful in certain domains. Hence, those with a monopoly in a certain domain of business have great power in that domain.

Control of resources. "Money talks" speaks to the capacity of resources to be seen as powerful. The greater the wealth, the more action can be generated.

Discourse. "Knowledge is power." A discourse is a set of knowledge or a powerful story. For example, religious discourses hold great power for many. Science is another discourse that is seen as being able to generate action. Hence those who are the keepers of such knowledge are seen as powerful in the domain in which the knowledge applies.

Collective authority. As we have seen earlier, collective authority gives people the ability to generate action in certain domains.

When we look at why we give a person authority in our world or if we are seeking to expand our authority, we can look to the nine aspects of trust and power as a window to better understanding how this applies to us. By doing so, we can also

identify how to become more powerful ourselves.

When we bring the ideas from our recent articles together, we can see a simple pattern of relating. Human beings use language to shape their world. The key to shaping our world in the future lies in the linguistic action of declaration, often but not always seen as decisions. How effective our declarations are and therefore how much we can shape our world in the future stems from the way in which others validate or accept our declarations – the authority they grant us. This in turn shapes our self-story and the story we hold about our relationships with others. As authority is generated through various aspects of trust and power, these are the cornerstones of how we see ourselves and how we relate to others and as such form the basis of our living.

"If you think you're too small to be effective, try going to bed with a mosquito."

Anita Roddick

Did you know that? ...

On Thursday 4th May at two minutes and three seconds after 1:00 in the morning, the time and date will be 01:02:03 04/05/06.

That won't happen again in our life time ...

Thanks to our friend Jeremy Anderson, who brought this to our attention.

"A leader must be first and foremost a conversationalist. She must be sensitive to and able to influence the conversations that take place."

William Berquist, The Postmodern Organization

Talking About Pty Ltd

PO Box 6652,
St Kilda Rd Central,
Victoria, 8008.

Ph: +613 9507 2464

info@talkingabout.com.au
www.talkingabout.com.au

A few reasons why the English language is so hard to learn:

Thanks to John Boomsma, who sent this to us...

- 1) The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 2) The farm was used to produce produce.
- 3) The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 4) We must polish the Polish furniture.
- 5) He could lead if he would get the lead out.
- 6) The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 7) As there is no time like the present, he decided to present the present..
- 8) A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum
- 9) When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 10) I did not object to the object.
- 11) The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 12) There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
- 13) They were too close to the door to close it.
- 14) The buck does funny things when the does are present.
- 15) A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
- 16) To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
- 17) The wind was too strong to wind the sail
- 18) After a number of injections my jaw got number.
- 19) Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
- 20) I had to subject the subject to a series of tests
- 21) How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple. English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France (Surprise!). Sweetmeats are candies while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

Quicksand works slowly, boxing rings are square and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig. And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth?

One goose, 2 geese. So one moose, 2 meese? Doesn't it seem crazy that you can make amends but not one amend. If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one of them, what do you call it? Is it an odd, or an end?

In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Ship by truck and send cargo by ship? Have noses that run and feet that smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out, and in which, an alarm goes off by going on.

Also when the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible.

English was invented by people, not computers, and it reflects the creativity of the human race, which, of course, is not a race at all.

No wonder, communication is a tricky business!

"In life, the issue is not control, but dynamic connectedness."

... Eric Jantsch, *The Self-Organising Universe*

Our Coach Development Program

We have decided to open up some positions in our Coach Development program. If you are interested in the work we do or ideas and would like to learn more in terms of their practical application, you might like to consider being part of our coach development program. This program is designed for people who want to develop their coaching skills as they can be applied as a professional coach or as an internal coach. It is a two year program that is self-paced in relation to your progress.

If you are interested, you can find more information can be found at <http://www.talkingabout.com.au/Documents/TACP/CoachDevelopment.htm> or give us

a call on 613 9507 2464.

Interested in Spiral Dynamics?

The Centre for Organisation Development is running a half-day work shop on Spiral Dynamics in Melbourne on Friday 5th May. Spiral Dynamics is a fascinating model of insight to waves of social and individual human development and has many applications in the world of coaching and organisations. For more details, please contact Martine Dickie at CfOD on (03) 9645 4466.

More Interesting Links

We are always receiving links to interesting places on the internet and we thought might share some of them with you. Some foster our thinking and others are just plain amusing. Enjoy!

For those of you who enjoyed the juggling last time check this out <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6283096511750618839&pr=goog-sl> - Truly amazing! - Thanks to Mary Jo Asmus for the link

If you are a Coach or interested in the world of coaching, why not check out the Coaching Forum - <http://www.lifewright.co.uk/the-coachingforums/index.php>

If you are interested in exploring your emotional life further, we invite you to have a look at the MoodGym - <http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/>

Finally, we utilise Human Synergistics profiling tools as part of our work. Their web site has a wide range of interesting articles on organisations and leadership. They can be found at <http://www.human-synergistics.com.au/>.

Our Web Site

More articles and information about our work can be found at our web site, www.talkingabout.com.au. We invite you to take a look.

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