

## How to minimise biased thinking when briefing your teams

By Martin Murphy

“Humans never communicate as effectively as they think they do”

Christine Comaford

So, I am working with this group of team leaders and I notice that they are greatly biased towards a certain style of behaviour and communication. They're very collaborative and inclusive when they are briefing their teams for a task to be carried out. The problem is that they continue to collaborate and communicate until they leave themselves little time for achieving their task.

This is because the group of leaders have grown up in a certain type of culture. Their culture drives their way of thinking and behaving. Just as an individual has a personality, an organisation or country can have its own culture. There is much to be said for being aware of such biases and overcoming them because neuroscience is finding that to have a diverse and inclusive culture creates better performance. But it's one thing to be aware of them, that alone will not stop biased thinking and behaving. What we need is a process to overcome this when briefing teams.

### **The BIG Five.**

In building, leading and briefing what I term [ELITE Teams](#), I use these particular intelligences for decision making, communication and coaching:

**Strategic intelligence:** Which is the ability to see the big picture and also be self-aware. There is a 'YOU' who is doing the behaviour and then there is another 'YOU' who is observing you doing whatever it is you're doing. You might even find yourself saying:

*“I'm doing that thing again!”*

**Behavioural Intelligence:** This is the type of intelligence that is task focussed and people utilising this preference, like to get the job done now. There is little planning and it usually comes with a '*jump in with both feet*' type of attitude, adjusting course as they go.

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**Cognitive intelligence:** You share your what you think is a great idea with this type and there is little reaction. They internalise what you have said and let their ability to critically analyse the idea for benefits and weaknesses, get to work. The more you rush these types of people the more they prefer to think the problem through.

**Ecological intelligence:** These people are great at collaborating but they're averse to actually making a decision and running with it. People using this style will be prone to inertia. They're often fearful of upsetting people by getting the task wrong. The team I was working with behaved in this manner and as this is their main focus, there was little concern for time constraints.

**Environmental intelligence:** Socially aware, these types of people love to come up with creative solutions and indulge in affirmative communication. This means they find it hard to make a decision because it limits choice and freedom. This can lead to spinning lots of plates in the air.

So, it's important to know that there are different styles of operating systems within your team and also understand there is also likely to be an underlying cultural bias. The Leader's challenge is knowing how to brief a team in a way that is engaging, inclusive and diverse enough to see multiple perspectives but then also be decisive at the appropriate time.

*"Diversity is getting asked to the party whilst inclusion is getting asked to dance!"*

Verna Myers

### **The POWER Briefing Template**

I developed the POWER model which is a robust tool that can be used in several arenas including meetings, coaching, communicating and decision making. When briefing a team, the model can be used in the following way:

**Purpose:** As leadership thinker Simon Sinek so ably puts it:

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### *'Start with why'*

When you bring your team together, first tell them the overarching purpose of the task which is to be accomplished or the challenge to be overcome.

Next explain and give an **overview** of the present situation.

Then using the same environmental intelligence style of possibility thinking, ask the team for **options**. This serves several purposes. The seal of effective leadership is to instil a sense of ownership within the team who are about to tackle a challenge. By engaging the team in the solution early on in the project, you will achieve more buy-in. By giving the team a platform to be heard, you will also leverage more of the creative potential of the team.

First let the team think about possible solutions individually, then ask them to put forward their ideas. Then discuss all the ideas collectively. One idea proffered here and another offered over there, added together, often makes for remarkable solutions. The sum of the whole is truly more than the individual parts when using the POWER model.

Once all the ideas have been brainstormed you then ask the team to think critically about the ideas which have been presented and look for the weaknesses in each one, even their own. The team now has to decide **Which option?** is the one most likely to succeed.

**Ecology check:** Of course, it's one thing to *'think'* about a solution but next we have to have to understand or *'feel'* our way around the complexities involved. For instance; what support will the people expediting the plan need? How will this solution affect the rest of the organisation? People are complex creatures and that needs to be taken into account. If everybody in the team feel comfortable that the solution does not contravene any internal values then they can move to the next stage.

**Road MAP:** Now that everybody has had a say and understands what is required, the leader can now take hold of the reins and decide on the **Massive**

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**Action Plan.** The leader can direct the team towards the right results and also make the right people **responsible** for those **results** within the appropriate time constraints. It is also important to designate a time for the results to be evaluated to ensure everybody is on the right track.

This model promotes several peak performance behaviours within the team.

**Flow states:** a characteristic of the peak performance flow state is to lose the sense of self, a short-term condition known as *transient hypofrontalis*. Aligning people around a process like this, lessens the negative impact of egoic behaviours.

**Mental agility:** Giving people the task of stepping outside their normal modus operandi increases the team's ability to switch perspective increasing mental agility.

**Mindfulness:** Giving people a process like this promotes mindful thinking and feeling. Individuals within the team can learn more about their own biases by being taught how to use this process.

**Excellence:** As it is a process of decision, action and evaluation, continued use of this leads to excellence of thinking and behaviours.

If you would like to learn and experience the 'power' of this model of team briefing as a one-day team development course; feel free to get in touch.