

60 Second Leader

The Balance of Positive and Negative Feedback

How often should you praise and how often should you criticise/correct your staff and colleagues?

The frequency of positive feedback in relation to negative feedback is critical in relationships and the workplace.

The Relational Research

John Gottman's research predicted an ideal ratio of 5 to 1 of positive to negative interactions for a successful marriage. As the ratio approached 1 to 1, relationships were likely to end in divorce. In a study testing this model, Gottman recruited 700 newly-married couples. They videotaped a fifteen-minute conversation with each couple and logged the ratio of positive to negative interactions. Based on the ideal 5 to 1 ratio, they predicted whether each marriage would succeed or fail.

Ten years later, they followed up on their predictions. They had a 94% accuracy rate for the couples they had predicted would divorce.

The Workplace Research

In another study, focusing on the workplace, Frederickson and Losada developed a similar mathematical model for work groups. They found that work groups were significantly more productive when the ratio of positive to negative interchanges was 3 to 1 or greater. Losada also suggested an upper limit of a 13 to 1 ratio, implying that being too positive is perceived as false.

The research shows being mainly positive with people (but not always)



Mick Sital-Singh is a Director of **Cygnet**.

He has a Master's degree in Management and is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Mick's working roots began in HR at the local production unit of a multinational corporation. Progressing quickly to become Head of Department and gaining significant experience as a generalist, Mick then entered the independent consultancy field in 1986. He has gained considerable experience and expertise in the private, voluntary and

produces better results and better relationships.

The Implication For Leaders

In more than 20 years of studying leadership, Kouzes and Posner identified the quality of 'encouraging' as an essential attribute of the effective leader. Jim Collins identified 'Level 5 leaders', those that built enduring organisations, as having a remarkable blend of humility and fierce resolve. Linking the two, it is impossible to 'encourage' without thinking seriously and sincerely about the other person - that requires 'humility' - getting yourself out of the way.

And You?

So what's the ratio of positive to negative interactions in your team and your organisation?

And what can you do today to encourage a colleague?

Sources

- 'How Full Is Your Bucket?' Tom Rath and Dr. Donald O. Clifton
- 'Good to Great' Jim Collins
- 'The Leadership Challenge' James Kouzes and Barry Posner

This is an occasional E-Letter that we send to those of you in our Cygnet community that will hopefully stimulate your thinking about leadership. The reason we have called it *60 Second Leader* is not because we believe leadership can be accomplished in an instant, but rather that it is about leadership and should only take you about a minute to read.

Feel free to feedback any comments to us or use the link at the bottom to send it to colleagues that you think may be interested.

public sectors.

Mick's primary focus is leadership and team development, particularly at Senior and Board level.

Cygnet can help your organisation achieve its business goals by partnering with you to develop your people as leaders and managers.



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6 Weldon Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 5RA

Phone: 01509 241428 **Fax:** 01509 241429 **Email:** info@cygnet.org.uk **Website:** www.cygnet.org.uk

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