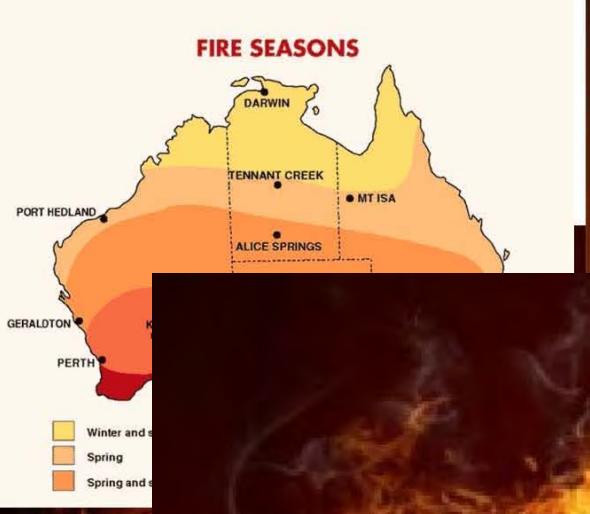


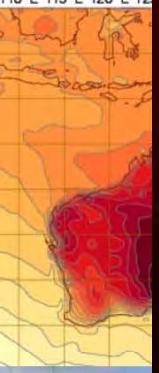


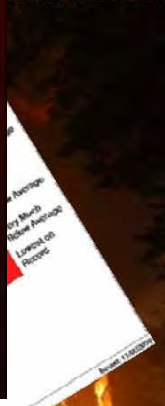












NATURE ... *Abhors A Vacuum & Finds Human Rules Inadequate!*

Neville Garnham

"The Productivity Philosopher"

Managing Director

Today4Tomorrow Group Pty Ltd

Brisbane, Australia

neville@theproductivityphilosopher.com

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ABSTRACT: *More education alone is not the panacea for the ills affecting society when it's flooded with more information than in past history combined and the range of communication channels is unprecedented. There are fundamental people skills to which we must return or develop to reduce the associated hard costs in all types of human endeavour that impose additional costs on ratepayers, taxpayers, shareholders and donations to charity/NFP organisations. If we do not do so, these impositions will have adverse consequences or reduced services in all organisations including those charged with responsibility to deal with disasters and emergencies. There is a need for an holistic approach to everything — an approach which has been fractured by specialisation of industrial practice and knowledge gathering. Past practice has allowed individuals and organisations to finger-point responsibility "somewhere else" and has reduced the application of common sense to situations. Rules derived from policies for "groups" that are not adequately people-focussed are deprived of their power to inform people and are too often ignored. Rules around risk are too often included in "the ones that are ignored".*

Keywords: *Policy and Rules; Risk-taking; People skills; Education; Stress and mental health; Infrastructure and community costs.*

Introduction

It's a beautiful world!
But together we can make it better...

This paper is not an academic peer-reviewed treatise pertinent solely to the people who work in the organisations represented at this Conference. It's an appeal to common sense that seeks to look at some shifts in attitudes and practices undertaken.

Let me ask you a question.

Have you ever seen a ***RULE*** -

1. wake up any time day or night & stretch,
2. go have a shower and get dressed,
3. eat a meal and then clean it's teeth,
4. go out to protect, save or rescue people?

Of course you haven't ... What a silly question! Yet, we continue saying that "*Rules are there to protect us"*. Often they are there to deal with the consequences of actions/behaviours. Some professions have a feast in dealing with those consequences.

The protecting, saving and rescuing is being done by the fantastic men and women of the organisations represented by delegates at this Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference 2015, and, at other similar organisations throughout the world. Why shouldn't it all be much simpler?

We live in an age of gadgets and technology — allegedly called an "Information Age". This paper, if anything, is a plea to individuals, to society, to managers and to organisations generally to use and to foster the use of the greatest piece of software that we have at our disposal: ***the brain*** of every individual on this planet. That brain, despite mistakes made, exists in every human being in all parts of our societies and our organisations (which are simply "gatherings of people" for undertaking particular tasks and achieving outcomes). It's an appeal to think holistically and to employ common sense in all situations.

The criticisms are not new. They are many and varied covering behaviours of many people regardless of gender or race or role. Nevertheless, in many male-dominated organisations, I'm reminded of the words of Robert Kiyosaki:

> *".. I would venture to say that based on what I've seen so far, women are better at business than men. Men are like moose with antlers.*
>
> *Too often decisions get made on the size of the antlers rather than on good sense or true knowledge."* [1]

The human species is comprised of about 52% women. Let's use common sense and the different thinking styles and capabilities to ensure improved survival chances for our species.

Economic specialisation

The Industrial Revolution and subsequent events have specialised occupations leading to considerable lack of integrated thinking, or beliefs espousing that *"it's not my job/problem/responsibility"* or *"why should I care, I won't be here when it goes wrong!"*

This Revolution coupled with two major international conflicts in the 20th Century has had considerable impacts on our societies (as also did other events and inventions).

[1] Robert T Kiyosaki, ***Do you need to go to school to be Rich & Happy***, Heinemann Asia, Singapore, Reprinted 1994, p128.

These and persistent other wars have become critical catalysts for breaking activities into their component parts, for shifting gender-role views, for specialising knowledge and teaching many people that they are only needed (only "useful") for doing a specialised bit of the total puzzle — for doing part only of "the process", because that's all they were taught.

Admittedly there have been some areas where this separation has been lessened, often coupled with robotics, to produce better team functioning and increased productivity (*eg* some car and other manufacturing processes). But this seems only to have happened in limited areas of activity and does not include a fuller creative set of principles. It has certainly not spread to general work activities, though we appear often disingenuously to hold the view that if you call a group a team, then they are a team and will act accordingly.

Major wars and other conflicts have produced great uncertainty which led to advice like: *"Get yourself a sound education, get a job, work hard at it and stick with it if you want to succeed."* Success was mostly defined in material terms, if at all.

Then along came business gurus, who among other things taught that you should *"work smarter, not harder."* While I've no opposition to working as "smart" as one can work, those people often seemed to imply that the *"smarter"* was way more important than the *"hard work."* Short-cuts gave results! Short-term is a paramount value! Work hard often meant *"follow the rules"* and do as you are told. Perhaps we need to consider that advice in the light of the message contained in the box to the right. A couple of these students were undertaking post-secondary studies.

Follow the rules ... is it good advice?

If you were standing with other pedestrians at an intersection waiting for the "WALK" to light up in green; what would be the first thing that you'd do when it turns green?

Most students and groups tell me that they'd "walk". I tell them that they have a death wish; and, they look at me with great puzzlement.

When they inquire (finally), I tell them that I'd pause to check that there's no driver (another person) planning to "break the rules" and "try to beat" the red light that should now be against them for their direction of travel.

Then, they tell me that "of course" that's what everybody does. But, everybody doesn't!

I know of 3 older teenagers of friends who have been killed or seriously injured in the last four years because they walked when the light turned green. They were distracted by other things; phones or talking to friends or simply being in a hurry. They didn't see the lorry and cars that "couldn't" or didn't stop!

The Importance of Education

The more deeply and widely I've read over the years, the more I'm told by various people that the answer to most challenges is "more education". Institutions are constantly competing with all types of claims for their courses to win the "education dollars" from prospective students or the student-families or government.

Am I hinting that education isn't important? Most emphatically I'm not making such a suggestion. Education in its various forms is crucially important for society and its organisations, as well as for people within society. But *"paying for the course, shouldn't automate the right to pass the course!"* Too often this is the assumption in students' minds and in the minds of those (often parents) paying for the course in which too many of the students expect to do little work.

In the 1970s I was administratively responsible for admission, progression and re-admission (students who had been 'expelled', for want of a better term) in a new tertiary institution. Predominantly, teacher training was the major student composition.

In my seven years in that role, admission requirements for some courses dropped by almost 45 % to gain students and meet quota requirements. What jobs might have been available for a graduate was a moot point — assumed to be someone else's responsibility. How those not graduating might have been able to transfer their knowledge to something else was of scant, if any, importance. They were dross from the system. Some graduates went on to brilliant careers, while others floundered. Some of the better teachers were ones granted entry based on lower entry score requirements (often they had better rapport with the kids in the classroom and studied harder, because they'd experienced how hard it had been for themselves).

What alarms me is a continuing disconnect and/or lack of synchronicity between numbers pumped through the systems and available jobs in rapidly changing national economies and globalisation that's often not understood pro-actively by graduands of the various education institutions, their parents or people generally.

Education alone, in some broad sense, is not the total answer. The technical knowledge and skills we teach across all disciplines and professions are not enough.

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Things that concern me are not so much **what is taught** on the various rungs of the education ladder, but rather, **what is *not* taught, as well as the ability of some to absorb it**.

Many suggestions are made about teaching secondary students more life skills: finance, budgeting, mortgages, sex, parenting and so on. There is merit in some suggestions as children do not come with user-manuals that will guide parents and themselves through life and all knowledge that's needed for their journey.

What I'm more concerned about is that we teach neither, children nor adults, sufficient skills in thinking, logic and quite particularly **people skills**. Reasonable "social skills with mates" do not translate into solid people skills in work and other environments for efficient goal-achievement. Neither do slogans like *"Just do it"* encourage any wealth of risk-assessment — yet, I hear that slogan often from students and others when they are certainly not talking about footwear!

Lack of adequate "people skills" have hard costs in delays, over-runs and reduced services in everything we do in society. The "sandpaper-ish relationships" among individuals, in occupational/professional criticisms and jealousies, as well as general societal prejudices have immeasurable impacts on costs. Those hard costs are most often reflected in unnecessary financial burdens being placed on ratepayers, taxpayers, shareholder funds and donations to not-for-profit and charitable organisations, in both P3M [2] programs/projects and operational activities, and they cause increased unmitigated stress for people. Hence, I argue that with these hard costs "adequate people skills" are hard skills. These costs come to bite also the services of the men and women *"at the coalface"* engaged in disaster and emergency situations. The stress increases, yet these workers *"at the coalface"* know more about what is needed than any office-bound alleged manager.

Listen carefully in teams and organisations and you'll hear the tell-tale symptoms: *"Why should I/we ask 'xxx' about 'yyy'; they are **just a** 'zzz'!"* You can substitute virtually any individual, team or group for the 'xxx', any occupation, profession or specialisation for 'zzz'. The 'yyy' could be just about any topic you might care to name.

[2] P3M = Portfolio / Program / Project

Statements like these I call the ***Justa Mentality*** and it depreciates the value of the human person. Regrettably, when this is done too often, at least some individuals or teams or groups begin to hold the same view about themselves. *"I'm just a cleaner! What would I know?"* undermines the person's value to the health of our societies in eating establishment, hospitals, schools, care facilities, etc.

This Information Age flood and lack of an holistic approach to our information (knowledge, if you feel brave with that term) contribute to the fracturing of an integrated psyche in many leading to -

- Rising levels of aggressive behaviour (not simply assaults)
- Rising levels of stress & depression, especially among youth less than 25 years of age
- Rising youth suicide, and broader mental health issues
- Rising levels of escapism (drugs, *etc*)
- Inadequate life and work coping skills.

These realities coupled with high youth unemployment (both in cities and rural/regional areas), some entitlement mentality in a small proportion of the population, and extensive new communication tools with often less satisfactory communication, all make for

Have we always been safety conscious?

Thirty years or so ago, I knew of two long-distance truck drivers who were friends. Periodically they would meet by the roadside to eat their "crib" together and chat. Immediately they were finished eating, one of them jumped in his rig and left promptly. He knew what his mate was about to do: have a smoke!

The "problem" was that the mate would sit on top of his petrol tanker to have his smoke. He was a conscientious bloke who didn't want to be irresponsible like drivers who threw their cigarette butts out car windows and started grass fires.

So to ensure the stub of his cigarette was properly extinguished when he was finished, he'd open the top of his tanker and dip the butt in the petrol. His logic was "it's only the petrol vapour that's explosive: the liquid doesn't burn!" Theoretically he might well be right, but would you want to be anywhere near his tanker when he extinguished his cigarette? His mate certainly didn't.

So you might want to tell me that "we're much more safety conscious these days!" Let's hope so, but let me proffer these questions to you about recent year events -

- *How is it that a construction site was closed down because the project manager kept having his smoke in the building where paint thinners and other explosive materials were stored, despite being warned against such practices?*
- *How is it that deficient shift-handover procedures and failure to follow proper electrical lock-out practices almost caused death or serious injury on another construction site?*

RULES ARE WONDERFUL... ...UNTIL IGNORED!

an explosive mixture in our society.

Media reports have too often carried stories of how people represented at this Conference bear the brunt of dissatisfied individuals, groups or communities in relation to the invaluable work done by them despite the fact that they often have little or no control of mishaps in communications that have occurred.

Unless addressed, it will become more difficult pre-and-post-crisis events for those dedicated to dealing with disasters of all kinds and the communities served.

Anyone who suggests that we as a society are becoming more risk-conscious might care to examine the cases cited in the box to the right of this paragraph.

Safety awareness and practice...

- ***"This is the way I've done it for years!"***
  This often leads to a "tick and flick" attitude at start-up and site meetings when it comes to safety. Often, the focus of an individual is purely on the specific work area they will occupy. Or, they are in a rush "to get on with it" rather than dealing with "all this paperwork." There is also the very real possibility that such a person could suffer from the same syndrome as the people in the next group.
- **The embarrassment of it all!**
  It's all very well for someone to have devised a form for completion in regard to safety procedures and checks. But what about the person who cannot read or write? Often, very few people if anyone knows about this limitation that they have or the embarrassment they feel about it. The concept of a blanket "more education" will not help to solve this problem unless it is dealt with sensitively and with reduction of the panic they likely felt while at school.
- **The over-enthusiastic apprentice.**
  It was the end of shift. He'd dropped a spanner as he was getting up away from the 20 metres gaping shaft down into a turbine. It had lodged on an edge just a short way down. He didn't want to hold up his work-mates from getting away. But, he couldn't quite reach it. Just a little more. Just a little more. And, he released his safety harness "just a little more" — but managed to unclip it in the process. Fortunately, the turbine wasn't running when he greeted it at the bottom.

Organisational

We've certainly stumbled into the "information age" of "big data" and indiscriminate confusion. Regrettably, in various industries we fail to recognise and take account of the fact that many workers have lower numeracy and literacy skills than desirable. The box to the right gives but a few examples of areas for concern. These things will not be solved through the traditional mantra of "more education" — especially when "safety training" often

involves the student completing a "response sheet" by writing down the answers given by the trainer, or having the trainer write them down if the student has problems with writing! Valueless certificates or tickets!

The world has changed and changed again over the last couple of decades or so. But, the seeming complexities of this "new world" are no less solvable than in a seemingly "simpler world" which was often just as reliant on adequate "people skills". Attitudes then might well have been more hierarchically adaptive and respectful. But they haven't necessarily produced a better world than what more rebellious younger generations aspire to change today. We need to listen. We need to harness creative energies to serve our societies and communities better through the organisations within it or create new organisations to do so. And this most emphatically includes the men and women of our organisations that strive to keep us safe, and to deal with disaster and emergency situations.

With all our data, we yet still seem only to have the skills to label or categorise things, people, events, and so on. We even carry on and make public policy about these categories and almost completely forget about the people who are impacted by the confining rules or regulations that we impose without recognising differences inherent in the people who have been grouped together somehow, almost haphazardly.

All peoples in all parts of the world and within organisations need to stop living in ***Labelsville*** and start living in ***Peoplesville***. This should not stop us from being proud of where we live, our cultural heritage, achievements of our communities, and so on, but it should help encourage more open perspective about people and the world in which we live. Inside many organisations Labelsville thrives and flourishes!

As Richard Branson says (in relation to a *Virgin Unite* brain-storming event):

> *"Well, we started talking about how the name had to capture the new level of responsibility that each of us had for others in the global village and how this needed to be a movement that went beyond a handful of businesses or one country. When someone mentioned that the circumference of the earth is 24,902 miles, Capital 24902 was born! Very simple really, it does what it says on the tin - that every single business person has the responsibility for taking care of the people and planet that make up our global village, all 24,902 circumferential miles of it."* [3]

[3] Richard Branson, ***Screw Business As Usual***, Virgin Books, 2011, page 19.

On a number of occasions inside government, I've pointed out how particular policies biased intended outcomes. That specific points had been overlooked in the development of the policies was acknowledged. But there was a complete lack of willingness to change policies that had been approved by Cabinet because quite obviously it would have been necessary to admit to error. I've found it amusing that some of these policies have been changed subsequently because other circumstances had made the change imperative in other parts of the policy.

Too often, policy puts categorisation on groups and doesn't properly work through the people implications. There is a very real need to write "exemption clauses" into many if not all policy documents with delegation levels to exempt at the lowest suitable level. Sometimes there is even a need to ask whether a particular policy is actually being created because someone has too little to do. Is the policy really needed? Is the policy actually striving to solve a clearly identified problem and/or could the matter be dealt with in a different way even through ("God forbid!") a different part of the organisation or another organisation?

Reform Programs in South-East Queensland

Circumstances (drought) forced significant water and waste-water reforms in South-East Queensland over the last 10 years. This region has been crying-out for such reforms for the last 30 years, *at least*.

It was inevitable that a State Government would need to resolve "the water issue" at a level higher than local government. In this regard, I'm reminded of John Cleese in Fawlty Towers: *"You can talk about anything you like; but don't mention 'the War'!"* In the 1980s, the region was plagued at local government level with an attitude that might best be stated as: *"We'll talk about anything; but don't mention 'the water'!"*

Inevitably and understandably, these reforms impacted waste-water as well. The nature and function of some of this infrastructure require that it be built in flood-prone areas. The health implications of some of this infrastructure, if it's breached, needs to be more fully assessed with Health Departments and better information needs to be available to medical practitioners and the public. For months post-flood people, especially children, were stomping through and playing in sewerage-coated playing fields and parks. Little seems to have been said or

reported about this aspect at the time.

Both in these forms of infrastructure and generally built areas, historical flood levels need to be clearly marked in the area and such information ought to be readily known to the people in the area. Flood maps are good, but cannot adequately be converted from two-dimensional to three-dimensional reality by many people. Relying on someone's memory of where the last event peaked (if such a person is still living near or associated with the site) is unreliable. Such historical markers will not save the site (Mother Nature has her own will and determination) but, it might allow the movement and storage of some items above the last known peak in the hope that it's not exceeded.

Enormous numbers of community volunteers made great efforts to assist after the 2011 Brisbane Flood. But, there were still accounts of owners inspecting their own property, securing it and deciding that they would deal with their own property after they had gone out to help neighbours. Upon their return later they found that the volunteers had entered their property (often forcefully) and had thrown out into the street as rubbish for collection things that the owner had assessed as being recoverable in their own homes. One person's view of the world is quite different from that of another — particularly, where the owners are cost-conscious or the items held sentimental value!

The amalgamation of organisations relevant to (say) water and waste-water pose considerable risks within communities unless the highest possible priority is given to contingency planning for possible extreme events with a sense of imminence for the event or events.

While disaster planning had been well advanced at a high level, the detail of asset connections at the lower levels was incomplete for assets brought together from different entities. It made it harder to be searching through drawings to see what connected where to what, while in the midst of managing the crisis. New entities need to ensure that they give the highest possible priority to disaster recovery and contingent planning at the earliest opportunity after a new entity is formed.

I see no reason to suspect that the same would not be true where amalgamations occur among entities that are directly involved in other disasters and emergency situations.

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In regards to Disaster & Emergency Management, everyone in organisations needs to have a clear and visceral understanding that *uncertainty has no standard*. The fullest possible and best available information must be readily available and distributed to staff and public.

Public

"There's no such thing as an accident!"

What "happens" is the result of a set or sequence of events over which people did not have the control they thought they had or couldn't maintain the control they had or didn't take into account other factors that came into play that they hadn't identified or adequately taken into account in what they were doing or the circumstances.

While I concede that this is not the way most people think about "accidents" *("I had an accident — but it wasn't my fault!")*, we cannot continue in anything we do to take the existing superficial view of accidents, whether in relation to motor vehicles, flood and storm preparedness, fire or any other environmental or human instigated event.

We must think differently. We need different messages in our advertising. We've *"had an accident"*, so we ring our insurer and are comforted that it's now shuffled off to being *"someone else's problem!"* But what if the resolution of the solution drags on for years because of "the fine print"? Can the added stress be handled adequately?

We're still trying to reduce the road toll (both death and injury), yet people don't believe they are driving a lethal weapon. We still have advertising that glorifies *"speediness"* or *"power"* of vehicles. It might not say it, but, it's there visually — virtual reality made real!

To win *hearts and minds*, particularly younger generations, we must think differently about policies and flow-on-rules and shift people from virtual to real reality. Rules are not real to many people, regardless of age!

Even in professional circles there is an underlying belief that the adoption of standards and application of standards will resolve problems. That may well be very true theoretically, but, it fails often to recognise that standards are developed by humans and therefore they can be

misinterpreted, ignored or adjusted by other humans to fit a set of circumstances or their justification for what they do.

The public believe they are safe because of improved standards (for example, cyclone-ratings for buildings, siting of new energy plants) and then Mother Nature proves them wrong. Mother Nature is rarely consulted as a stakeholder in any new policy, procedures, practices or rules that are adopted! The universe wasn't established to comply with our rules!

Human communications

Today, we have more communication channels, but often don't communicate well. We often have less tolerance and resilience. Awareness suffers as well. It was said about forty years ago that 100,000 people dying from floods in Bangladesh was about the equivalent in awareness of a next door neighbour having a heart attack. Today, there often seems to be less connection in many population-dense communities or parts of communities such that we often care less seriously about the people around us — home, community, work and elsewhere. Trade and professional communities take precedence over neighbourhood communities. And, whenever we do talk in any community ("community consultation", for instance) we tend to suffer from the syndrome described by Stephen Covey years ago, hearing what we want to hear:

> *"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They're either speaking or preparing to speak. They're filtering everything through their own paradigms, reading their autobiography into other people's lives."* [4]

We don't seriously engage at the person level, for as Professor Dalton Kehoe says:

> *"Meaning is in the person; not in the words."* [5]

Comparatively, we really know very little about the people with whom we share life's journey. Much of the press, coming from the mouths of politicians and big business, deals with a macro-economic reality. But the decisions that people make and the point at which

[4] Dr Stephen R Covey, ***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***, Free Press, New York, Reprint 2004, page 239.

[5] Professor Dalton Kehoe (York University), ***Effective Communication Skills*** (The Great Courses), Virginia USA, 2011.

they hurt is at the micro-economic level.

It's at this lowest level that we need to focus to most dramatically improve our productivity and society's well-being, as well as, moving to ensure the survival of our species and other species.

Slashing jobs to balance budgets is a short-term strategy (which at times may be necessary) but, in the longer-term, we fail to glean from people the best of their range of knowledge, talents and capability so as to improve productivity and enhance innovation — including an effort to secure gains in disaster and emergency events. This won't happen unless we undertake realistic forward projections based on anticipatory analysis of future scenarios affecting our respective businesses. Anticipation is the key to adaptation and survival. Many of the mechanisms of our societies focus too much on training monkeys — badge gatherers rather than thinkers. Had it not been for the "rules-thinking" and valiant men of the past like Sir Douglas Bader, we might all be suffering a different fate.



In order to get things done, there must be a greater appreciation of boundaries (artificial or real) within organisations and across various parts of our communities. People at the coalface need to be listened to more often than happens. Boundaries must be overcome, when

necessary, to ensure adequate resourcing that doesn't adversely impose extra stresses.

As I've said elsewhere about internal boundaries across professions and occupations [6]:

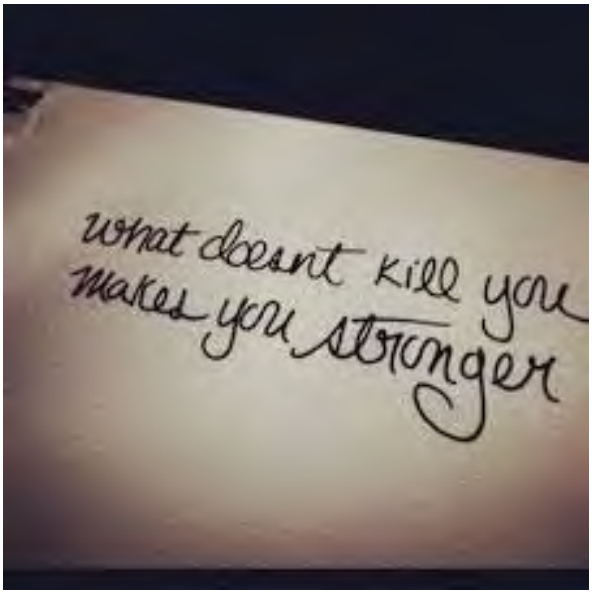
> *"As a general rule, such organisational "walls" are intended solely to keep 'desirable people' inside them and 'undesirable people' out! They are general tribal barriers. However, if some organisationally approved projects are to proceed it is necessary to find ways to burrow underneath them, climb or jump over them, go around them, make them invisible (ie sideline them) or explode them (with some subtlety, of course). You need to develop the skillsets to facilitate one or more of these creative assault strategies and prevent them from being roadblocks for your project or your parts of the project."* [7]

But this analogy of walls applies just as much to the rest of our societies as to any particular organisation within it.

Cultural

In various parts of our diverse society, many myths persist across age groups. Many others could be cited, but they would undoubtedly include:

- It won't happen to me/us...
- We're different than them...
- We're just having fun! What's the harm?
- I'm too smart for that to happen.
- "They" should fix all this...
- We'll have time later!
- We'll do it later...
- "They" do nothing, even if you report it!
- It's not my problem!
- Their problem if they run the light!
- I mustn't be late... no time now!
- I'll get compensated if I'm injured...



[6] Neville Garnham, ***Integrative Leadership in Projects***, Global Publishing Group, Melbourne, 2013, page 28

[7] Harvey Robbins & Michael Finley, ***Why Change Doesn't Work: why initiatives go wrong and how to try again - and succeed***, Orion Business Books, London, 1997. If you can find this book in a library, I'd suggest that you have a read and learn from it. It doesn't appear to be easily available elsewhere from online booksellers.

Listen to the music

The lyrics of a song quoted above this paragraph might well be about losing a relationship; but there's an increasing focus on the idea that unless an activity is mortally dangerous then the person doesn't feel alive. This sense of risk-taking has considerable implications for our society generally and for the men and women who endanger their own lives in disaster and emergency management situations when working to protect, save or rescue other people.

Do we really understand these shifts in ideas of risk and attitudes to personal safety in the things we do as "ordinary activities" of our lives, as well as, the "newer" extreme activities in which some engage? Coupled with increasing aggression (domestic violence, road rage, daylight assaults, *etc*) and fear engendered due to these, the concept of risk and traditional approaches to risk management are being pushed to the limit or beyond.

Look at the pictures and videos

We might see a picture in advertising or documentary or elsewhere in which a person (athlete or whomever) is standing precariously (though it seems to be with absolute confidence) on some peak or outcrop of planet earth. The message seems to suggest: you can do this too — but, if you don't you're weak! The person in the picture might have been delivered to the actual spot by helicopter. That person might have been photo-shopped onto a scene photographed from a helicopter. Today the boundary between *"seeing-is-believing"* and actual reality is becoming much more bleared than it ever has been with the creative tools at our disposal. Many aspects of reality have always been counter-intuitive to perceptions (*eg* sun revolving around earth or vice-versa). But, we still blithely say: *"Seeing is believing!"* Do we really mean it?

The concept of risk has changed. Policies and rules alone will not change these perceptions or the attitudes forming from them that are not just found in youth, but in older people who want to push the boundaries of their youth. While some ethnic differences exist, an approach to more dangerous activities and "extreme sports" suggest that we should take greater account of some of these shifts in attitudes. Behaviours such as "planking" and "drifting", among others, are examples that won't be quelled by rules. Selfies matter more than safety!

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Each person and community, within the current context of what is perceived as reality, needs -

- to become more risk aware and assessment capable within the newer contexts of life;
- to dampen beliefs and attitudes like those listed above espoused in mantra-like fashion;
- to develop personal responsibility and ownership of what happens leading to positive change within communities, nations & the world, through changing oneself first.

We need a broader spectrum of community involved in changing beliefs, misconceptions and mythologies. Behaviours resulting from these often need *"un-learning"* to occur as a pre-requisite to change. However, awareness must occur first before any change can be affected in individuals, groups or society.

In conjunction with various communities, we need to develop programs to encourage devolution of attitude-changing to the most basic levels of our societies — rules alone don't cut to the significance of purpose. By these programs I don't mean that we should live in ***Labelsville*** and point-the-finger at who should be held responsible for any breaches of behaviour. It's easy to blame "parents" or "peers" or "society" generally, but, it doesn't help.

For instance, the Neighbourhood Watch program might be a useful vehicle for deployment of various community-engagement opportunities and safety education to a broad-base of society. There are moves to broaden the Neighbourhood Watch program in Australia and incorporation into this program might be worth considering. There are undoubtedly other existing forums for such action. But, it needs to be much more than expensive programs (TV advertising campaigns) designed simply for *"getting the message out there"*; and, it must be recognised that horrifically graphic images of youth in accident scenarios have been shown not to overcome the *"it won't happen to me/us"* mindset. Youth tend to be numb to such pictures. After all, "people are killed" in computer games and they are alive and well ready to respond to the next challenge in the next level or episode!

Where to from here?

What makes one person seek to lead, while another is content to follow? What makes one person accept everything they are told, while another questions everything? What makes one person keep doing everything the same way, while another seeks to find a better way to do

everything they do?

The answers are unclear, but, ***brain software usage*** is fundamental to preservation of our species, our positive societies and our planet.

Rule-driven societies ultimately perish!

Let me cite simply an example from the command economy of the former USSR. In the various factories across the Republic managers had tight delivery quotas centrally imposed on them for monthly production of products.

A classic example often cited was that of a shoe factory that had to produce 1 million shoes a month. It always met its quota: even in the month when significant equipment failure occurred. It was just that in that month the factory produced 700,000 right shoes and 300,000 left shoes. But, the business still met its quota!

If we ultimately count the wrong things, our societies are destined to fail.

In this regard, Albert Einstein's sage words come to mind —

> *"Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted."*

The human spirit and will to succeed at doing well what needs to be done is immeasurable! However, we need to ensure adequate and respectful ***brain software usage*** at all levels of organisations and communities generally.

About the author



Neville Garnham is an author, public speaker, trainer, mentor and P3M practitioner. He has more than 40 years' experience across all tiers of government, the corporate sector and privately owned businesses. His experience spreads across many P3M initiatives and executive management.

His experience covers strategic and organisational change, innovation, continuous improvement, business development, local/regional development, construction in the built environment (residential, commercial and industrial) and water/waste-water industries, as well as, various other P3M initiatives. Teams have been critical for him in all endeavours.

Neville adamantly believes in the improvement of productivity through people; and, the need for people to develop personal leadership; as well as, the need for leadership in all roles by all people at all levels of organisations. He believes that ***People Skills*** are in fact ***hard skills*** (with hard costs) for many people to develop and apply in many situations of uncertainty and change. Old ideas of hierarchical *"command structures"* do not deliver the best outcomes.

He's the author of ***Integrative Leadership in Projects***, published internationally in 2013.

He has lectured in program/project management at undergraduate and post-graduate levels at Bond University (on the Gold Coast, Australia) and at the University of Southern Queensland (Springfield Campus).

He can be contacted as shown on the front of this paper during business hours (AEST).

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