

The Behaviour of People at Work

**Lecture Title: The modern organic workplace –
built around people**



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Course Outline



Module 6. Life outside work: parental care and relationship with kin



Module 7. Solutions for the individual in the team: self-esteem



Module 8. Solutions for the team: status, rank and hierarchies



Module 9. Solutions for the team: cooperation, alliances, and friendships



Module 10. The modern organic workplace: built around people





The modern organic workplace: built around people

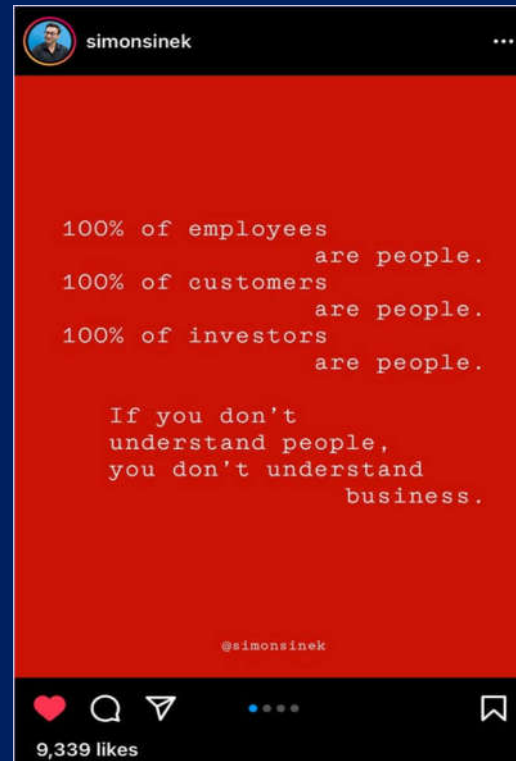
How an evolutionary perspective can improve our relationships and behaviour at work




Back to the beginning

We said when we first met that we need to keep in mind that:

1. the enterprise is built around a series of human activities;
2. companies are made up of people;
3. if we want successful enterprises and an attractive workplace, we need to understand human nature, and the biological basis of human behaviour.



We had started by looking at some of the problems we encounter at work.

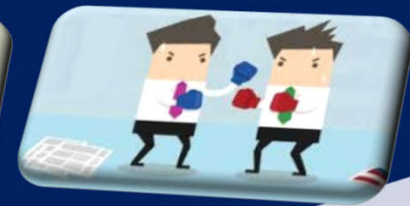
 Business vision not clear. Poor communication. Building not comfortable. Low motivation. Unhealthy corporate culture.

 Fear of failure. Risks. Low performance. Work-related stress. Anxiety. Conflicts.

 Family unfriendly work policies. Limited opportunities for progression. Sexual harassment.


 Poor leadership. Tolerance to aggression and manipulation tactics. Unfair competition.

 Favouritism. Poor relations with customers. Negative reputation, no pride.




And mentioned which skills we would need to solve them

 Organisational capacity building. Recruitment and selection. Preparing employee job descriptions.

 Setting performance agreements. Conducting performance appraisals.


 Project management. Communicating effectively and with impact.

 Ensuring employees' well-being and satisfaction. Policies for people management.

 Resolving conflicts. Building trust, consensus, and cooperation.




Let's now look at some of these problems and seek solutions within the organisation

 Business vision not clear. Poor communication. Building not comfortable. Low motivation. Unhealthy corporate culture.

Let's start with the vision. This is where the organisation sees itself going in the future, depending on its core purpose. What is the purpose, the vision, and the mission of your organisation, and how is this translated by the leaders and communicated to all staff? Which tools can be used to achieve this? Marketing strategy, with focus on PR, ESG, vision leaders, communication strategists, engagement with community, in-house social events, etc. All these elements are also part of a healthy corporate culture that is designed to help workers nurture a sense of belonging to an organisation that upholds values that align with theirs.



Let's now look at some of these problems and seek solutions within the organisation

 Business vision not clear. Poor communication. Building not comfortable. Low motivation. Unhealthy corporate culture.

The next big question is motivation. This is what pushes people out of bed and to work rather than do something else. Evolutionary speaking, there might be different reasons why it is worth it for people to be motivated to come to work, including having adequate access to resources (a salary commensurate with their competence), needing that money to also provide for others, self-esteem, status and reputation, etc. People are highly motivated when what they are doing at work aligns with who they are in terms of their 1) survival needs; 2) sex; 3) personality; 4) social, emotional, and physical well-being; and 5) skills, passions, and aspirations. What could be the reasons for low motivation at your workplace, and what can the business owners, leaders, and top management do to address this?



More problems and more solutions



Fear of failure. Risks. Low performance. Work-related stress. Anxiety. Conflicts.

We have seen how fear, anxiety, and stress are normal emotions designed for our fitness, meant to guide our behaviour in beneficial ways so the key message is that we need to be aware of the triggers and work to address the underlying cause rather than fight the feeling. We can do this for ourselves, and also for our employees, offering them support, on a personal level as well as through professional training, mentoring, coaching, and also psychological therapy if needed. It is important to change the narrative, though, from one in which we see ourselves as 'super-humans', capable of handling the impossible, to a more realistic version in which we acknowledge that our biological systems and our psyche are designed to handle what is 'feasible' in terms of fitness, and that means, for example, that we are by nature 'risk sensitive' and 'risk averse' and that the way to combat stress is to take decisions and to make choices according to priorities.



More problems and more solutions



Fear of failure. Risks. Low performance. Work-related stress. Anxiety. Conflicts.

There is a lot to say about conflicts. Evolutionary speaking, we use the term 'strategic interference', this is when one person interferes with the strategy of another. There are different layers to conflict, and it is important that we identify and understand the contexts. The most apparent – the emotional reaction – usually consists of anger and even rage. We then need to understand what the different strategies are and where they come from. Consider, for example, someone driven by principle and ready to challenge the proposal or position of another who is motivated by the need to, 'defend their turf', please their superior, keep the status quo out of fear of failure, build a reputation as someone who always has their way, greed, etc. The last part is how do we resolve conflicts. It is important to make the distinction between small disagreements and bigger issues; and also between one-time and recurring conflicts, and to have systems in place to escalate and resolve impactful conflicts that rely on a knowledge of the root problems and offer a solution that is fair by someone who can be impartial and non-judgmental.



More problems and more solutions



Poor leadership. Tolerance to aggression and manipulation tactics. Unfair competition.

The absence of strong leaders is often the reason behind many problems within the organisation. Evolutionary speaking, we saw how essential leadership is, as a strategy to solve problems of the group, and to support followers to grow. There are different questions we might need to ask if we suspect that we have a problem with our leadership, such as: 1) do we have enough leaders in our organisation? 2) are these leaders in the right place? 3) are they competent as leaders? 4) if they are failing, where is this, are they failing to solve the problems of other people, or are they using the wrong tactics? 5) what can we do to address problems of poor leadership – replace the leader; abolish the leadership position; put in a delegate; retrain the leader; assign a leadership mentor; establish a network of leaders; change the performance metrics that are being used to assess the leader and shift attention to people and their needs instead of productivity, profits and results; etc. What is your experience with leaders within your organisation?



More problems and more solutions



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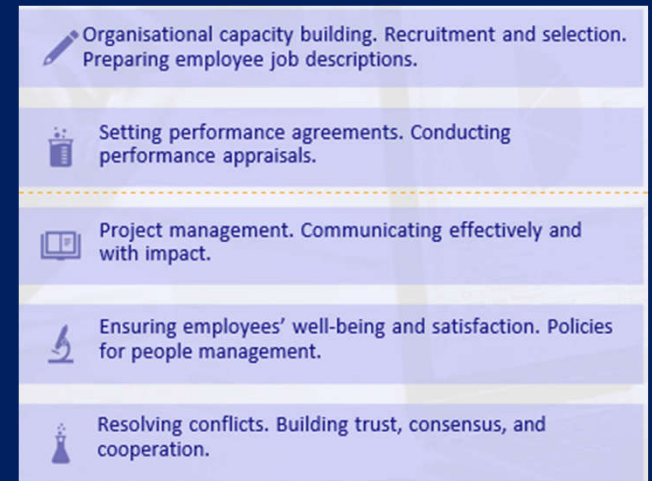
We are designed by natural selection to compete, so how can competition ever be fair? This is indeed a tricky one. We have seen how people use manipulation tactics to dominate; how difficult it is to promote cooperation in the modern environment; how altruists are vulnerable to cheaters; and how certain traits and emotions, like greed, envy, jealousy, and aggression, are effective from an evolutionary point of view because they promote the interest of the perpetrator. So are we helpless in the face of all this? We have already seen how we are equipped with tools to recognise and combat cheating and immoral behaviour, with our detection mechanisms and reactions through emotions. We also know how to promote collaboration through tactics that work. No one is saying that any of this is easy, but it is better to use the awareness that EP gives us to construct a true narrative and to use the adaptations that we have in hand to design a fairer working environment than to be ignorant of what goes on and to let ourselves and others fall victim to injustice and wrongdoing.



A quick look at how we can apply knowledge from EP in organisational systems, policies, and processes.

An organisation is a structure made of people, so we can use EP insights in most of our organisational systems, policies, and processes. We can sharpen our organisational and people management skills using knowledge from EP in activities such as:

- Selection and recruitment – using knowledge about personality traits to match jobs to people better.
- Performance assessments – using knowledge about personality, esteem, status, sex differences, etc.
- Capacity building and organisational structure review – using our insights from personality, sex differences (sex ratios), leadership and status hierarchies, collaboration (teams), etc.
- People policies/codes of conduct – using knowledge from EP in general, and more specifically, e.g. sex differences (anti-discrimination, zero tolerance to harassment), conflict, manipulation, deception, etc.
- Communication – using knowledge of emotions, leadership, and people's needs and aspirations.
- Mental health at the workplace – using knowledge of esteem and emotions to support employees address problems rather than symptoms.



A last word

- Over the past weeks, we have used an evolutionary lens to take a deep close look at human nature, learning things about ourselves that originate from our ancestral past.
- We have learned that some things – such as personality traits, emotions, esteem, status, hierarchies, altruism, sex differences – are rooted in our evolution and have been designed with purpose for our fitness and advantage.
- Some of you have asked me what is the difference between things that are evolutionary in nature and others that are socio-cultural, and I hope by now you can make the distinction instinctively, with speed and precision.
- Some of you have asked me if it makes a difference to know whether something is rooted in biology or in culture, and here I also hope you have the answer by now.
- I think the takeaway from all this is that it pays to know human nature because this knowledge brings benefits in our relationships and to our well-being.



The keywords:

1. Awareness.
2. Connectedness.
3. Alignment.



Thank You!



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