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BIG Discussion: Emotion Drives Connection

Following a thought provoking and enjoyable first BIG Discussion around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Babcock International Group hosted their second BIG Discussion at Glaziers Hall, London Bridge, in early February 2020. Delving deeper into how emotion drives connection, an impressive cross-sector group of Babcock's training customers came together to debate and explore this topic.

The afternoon was facilitated by Lou Banks, Founder and Director of Rising Vibe Ltd (rising-vibe.com) and brother brand Calling Out The Men.

Emotion in Business is Critical

Focusing on why emotion in business is critical, Lou started the discussion with language as a powerful tool for change: this came with a warning “choose your words wisely”. When it comes to mental health, it's essential that we frame the language we use around it in a more helpful way.

There is way too much pressure on ‘positive psychology’ in the workplace, with a perceived need to show up and be happy all the time at work, we are creating a workforce of Functioning Fakeaholics. Of course, genuine happiness is not to be sniffed at and it's amazing when it happens. But it's the pressure to be happy that's the issue. It's everywhere. And it really isn't helping people who are struggling.

When we aren't feeling this way and are surrounded by this kind of language, the pressure to ‘be happy’ has the opposite effect. It actually makes us feel worse. We feel terrible because we aren't feeling positive and this ultimately translates into social pain.

The impact of Social Pain is huge

When people within a business are in social pain they feel isolated. Fearful. Unheard. Misunderstood. Judged. Blamed. Excluded. Undervalued. Disconnected. Social pain affects us in exactly the same way as physical pain. And it's having a huge impact on business performance. We can trace every cultural challenge within a business back to social pain and it is cited in every piece of research on work-related stress. Put simply, social pain affects the bottom line, so looking after the wellbeing of the people within your business isn't pink and fluffy. It's fundamental to business success.

In a round table debate, using the Rising Vibe 'Smart Cards' the question was posed ‘how do you feel right now about emotion in business’ sparking some lively conversation.





Uncertainty of Change

The room began the discussion by addressing the link between emotion and change. Whether you have a large and diverse workforce or a small team, change in the workplace can feel huge for people. Some will see this as an **'adventure'** and others an **'ordeal'**. Whichever way you feel about change the sticking point can often be the clarity around what change looks like and what is expected versus accepted.

We are hardwired to scan for danger and look for the worst-case scenario so some people prefer to stay stuck in acceptance, hiding where they are now rather than face the unknown. Others have a **'what will be will be'** attitude, they feel unheard so have no control over change, and some will have a need for assurance during times of change which can't always be given - leaving them feeling isolated and out of control.

These are all forms of social pain in the workplace. Although many businesses in principle are totally committed to supporting the wellbeing of their teams, and are doing their best to enable a culture that provides emotional support, there is still an extortionate amount of social pain impacting all the obvious metrics around absenteeism, presenteeism and work-related stress.

In addition to this there was a feeling that we are getting ourselves stuck in a rut of transformational change and there is a need to **'slow down to speed up'**. We operate at such a pace that no programme of change ever has any chance to embed.

Addressing emotion in the workplace is a **'wild card'** – helpful disruption that is the key to unlocking true transformational change, but for it to stick and be part of a culture we need to keep showing up with it and make it safe. There is a need for attention density – expose me to new ideas, repeat it and apply it in different scenarios. It takes a long time to become an overnight success.

However change happens, when one person is brave enough to go first and speak up about how they are truly feeling, it makes it safe for others to follow.

It's Time To Talk

Many of us feel unsafe **'telling the truth'**. Yet honest conversations, don't have to be aggressive and equally you don't need to dance around the issue. People ingrained in process and are too afraid to **'say it how it is'** through fear of repercussion.

Many agreed the problem in the workplace is conversations can feel more like a parent and child dynamic rather than peer to peer, this dynamic can stop us feeling safe and get stuck worrying about consequences. For organisations to **'get amongst it'** they need to be prepared to listen to individuals' views and opinions. There is a need to move away from the process of measuring people by numbers. If you don't target the individual you won't impact the collective.

The saying "treat people how you want to be treated" is actually very unhelpful, for a healthy workplace culture to exist and get the most out of our employees we should be focusing on treating people how THEY want to be treated. The problem is people don't know where to begin having these conversations.

The Rising Vibrational Scale is an effective check in tool that can be used as part of conversations and is used to support every programme, piece of work and coaching Rising Vibe does. The scale helps to raise awareness around an individual's inner world, how they are feeling and therefore what they are thinking. Using their emotions as a guide, an individual can get to grips with their thought patterns, start to raise their vibe and fulfil their true potential.



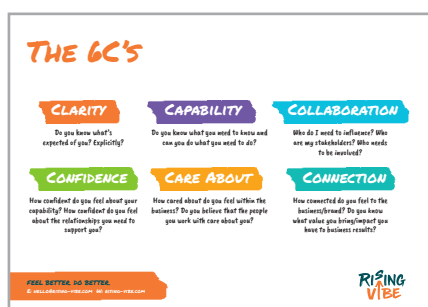
The Tide is Turning

There was a definite sense in the room of 'opportunity & possibility' especially in the nuclear and engineering sectors when it comes to diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. What feels like an open door could be lip service, but the perception is it is more than this. Whereas the concept of emotion and wellbeing at work was alien to businesses a few years ago it is now being recognised and this feels like the year to own it, stop just talking and do something about it now.

Outdated management styles that promoted resilience as a great leadership quality, but in reality manifest as endurance are being called out. This open door is manifesting in more honest conversations for example men feeling excluded from the diversity and inclusion movement and employee's mental health being acknowledged – people are more comfortable bringing emotion into business.

Understanding our Needs & The 6C's

Following this lively discussion Lou shared some further tools and ideas with the group around the importance of understanding our needs. Many of us rely on someone else to get our needs met, or to help us feel better, but we are not responsible for how other people feel, we are responsible for how we feel and meeting our own needs. Too often in business we hear 'I need to motivate my team' when in fact we should be hearing 'how can I help my team motivate themselves'. Checking in around the scale and using the 6 C's model (Clarity, Capability, Collaboration, Confidence, Care About and Connection) can really help to better understand the levels of social pain in your organisation and build that emotional connection.



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Bringing individuals together from across various sectors it was clear to see that no matter what industry we work in, we all share the same view: **Emotion in Business is critical to drive connection.**

If you would like to find out more on how Rising Vibe can help use emotion to drive cultural change, head to the website or get in touch using the contact details below.

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