



Working Against Nature - A Lesson in Futility

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Do you have topic ideas? Comments or questions?

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Many businesses are confronted with performance below expectations, and like most of humankind, do not realize that the disappointments are because they insist on working against nature. They institute measures or procedures that their intellect says should be so – despite the fact that it flies in the face of a million years of human evolution and billions of years of natural evolution. It is time to wake up.

Consumer Examples against Nature

City fathers in Ottawa (and around the world), adamant about reducing our CO2 foot print, continue to pour millions into rapid transit in the city. After 25 years of trying (and billions of dollars), most Ottawa commuters still choose to drive their cars to work at a greater expense to themselves, while rapid transit keeps losing money. Why? Because a **dominant human trait is to maintain control over issues within their own domains** – such as driving to and from work. The auto is so successful because it allows individual control. So is the cell phone, etc., etc. After survival, procreation and status, self-control is our number one priority.

It does not take much intellect to realize that the more bicycles on the street, the better that desired CO₂ footprint – so far so good because it also affords people that highly prized individual control. But then the intellectually-challenged city fathers pair bicycles with cars instead of with pedestrians. **Natural laws weigh in with the momentum of a moving bicycle vs. a moving car at 50:1**, whereas the difference between a moving pedestrian is 5 to 1 in the bicycle's favour. That is, if a human and a bicycle collide, the damage will be slight whereas the collision

between the bicycle and the car can be fatal – and often is. As long as the car-bicycle road-sharing program and laws are continued, deaths will mount and keep growing. Is anybody listening?

General Motors created a brand of cars with women in mind, the Saturn. Success at first turned to less than success a few years later with the closing down of this division in 2009. Why? **Human nature has made men interested in machines (cars) as a natural evolution of making tools for hunting, defence and home building** to provide protection from the security threat women seek for themselves and their offspring - her primordial driver. Women have evolved to have a greater interest in the everyday practicality and cleanliness of the cave or home interior to ensure survival (security) of the family within.

Those of you in major Canadian cities are aware of the daily Sunshine Girl in the Toronto Sun, Ottawa Sun etc. The intellects say: "That's trivial, why are men so shallow? And why are the publishers so insensitive?" In fact, those publishers used their sense of fair play and gender equality to introduce a daily Sunshine Boy about ten



years ago. Where is it today? Gone! And why? Because **natural evolution has put ‘security’ at the top of the female list when viewing males**, whereas mother nature has put ‘visual beauty’ at the top of the male list when viewing females. The examples abound. Those who have the widest choices – athletes, models, movie stars, millionaires, for the most part follow this formula. More often than not, you see a famous athlete or millionaire with a beautiful wife, rarely the opposite. Of course, we humans are not alone: the peahen seeks the most beautiful peacock to mate with; the doe goes for the strongest buck, the female woodpecker responds to the male with the loudest rat-a-tat-tat, etc. – all designed to create stronger and healthier, well-protected, babies of the species.

Business Examples against Nature

Businesses insist on **setting quotas from above**. This flies in the face of the human desire for self-control. The worker, not being part of the decision-making within the worker’s own domain, may attempt to attain that goal, but for the most part shrugs it off if it is viewed as unattainable. The worst part of this perversity is that if the worker participates in goal setting, not only this goal will be attained eventually, the goal is most likely to be exceeded – by a long shot. Fortunately there is plenty of evidence¹ to show such positive results.

Businesses insist on **putting people into jobs not suited to their character**. In fact, businesses rarely use a character study to fit people to jobs even though they apply Myers-Briggs etc. to all applicants and then stuff the results in a file cabinet somewhere. Evidence¹ is clear but why not look at the physical suitability as comparable misfits? Would you put a 7-foot man on a job as a jockey? How about bringing in a 110-pound woman to play left tackle for the Toronto Argonauts? This is what businesses do every day by ignoring personality traits, which are equally important to physical and intellectual traits

for jobs.

Last month’s CCCC paper made the case (again supported by indisputable evidence¹) that a **wide status difference** works against cooperation and team work. So all these companies with “teamwork” and “our employees are our most important product” emblazoned in their corporate hallways ignore the facts by creating different classes somehow thinking that will create incentives. Yes, it does create individual incentives, but not team incentives. They do this with extraordinary pay packages for executives, offices for some but not for others, special washrooms and other perks. The hockey team with an overpaid superstar rarely is successful.

Most businesses refuse to get **constant feedback** from staff. If you don’t think feedback is important try driving your car for 30 seconds with your eyes closed (i.e. without visual feedback to keep you on track). On the natural side, animals evolve due to feedback that makes the deer swifter and the elephant stronger. How should you get frequent feedback? Do quarterly employee reviews, not the dreaded annual circus that everyone hates. Have weekly group meetings that start on time and end on time for every single group in the company. Our studies show that the common factor of all companies that die is that they get off track due to a steady decline of listening (feedback). Are you putting yourself on the endangered species list?

So, it’s up to you. Keep fighting nature or work with it? The next move is yours.

Bill Caswell

¹ The brevity of this article does not allow a show of evidence, but write to the author at bill@caswellccc.com to have some reports sent your way.