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|  | CASWELL CORPORATE O COACHING COMPANY   *Making good companies even better – worldwide*  **July 2020 Newsletter #191**  2 | |  |
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|  | **WILLIAM E. CASWELL** | Coping with Irrationality ***In 2011, Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman wrote a best-seller1 on how people are pre-disposed to be irrational, a human state that is far more frequent than we think. The book describes how irrationality overtakes us without our knowing it during which we are quite certain that we are behaving logically. But Dr. Kahneman did not tell us what to do about it.***  However, for twenty years, CCCC has been guiding companies in many parts of the world to turn irrational thought to rational action. As well, CCCC has authored numerous books2, papers and presentations on this topic.  Anyway, the dent made by this effort is so tiny that the good old irrational world (including businesspeople) continues to march on its merry way to what seems like a predictably premature oblivion through environmental excesses, etc.  I categorized the world as consisting of three parts: (a) working brains of the world (10% of the population) responsible for achieving all the things we enjoy (bridges, cars, tunnels, rockets, cell phones, jeans, brassieres, etc.), comprised mostly of rational thought. This 10% is constantly left out in the cold during the strategizing of human directions because the working brains are over-ridden by (b) the 1% of the population, made up of leaders3, who themselves are egged on by (c) the unthinking, follow-the-latest-trend public (89% of the population). The sketch of human distribution below, although originally referring to the global situation, is redrawn on the microscale for companies as follows.  Rational brains  Business do-ers  (10%)  and productivity      Business political minds (1%)  Controllers of it all  General staff (89%)  All are beneficiaries of not only salaries, but also achievements of the business  No one needs my pointing out daily irrationalities in our society; the evening news is full of it: wars, conflicts, public arguments, murders, accidents, etc. Within enterprises irrationality is rampant. I am sure you will have no difficulty highlighting recent irrational events and actions in your company.  *“Thinking Fast and Slow”*, Doubleday Canada, 2011, Daniel Kahneman  2 *“How Humans Fight the Laws of Nature – and Lose”*, *“Danny and Me”*, *“Why Didn’t Someone Tell Me?”,* *“Human Mysteries”*,  W. E. Caswell, Ottawa Canada  3 Quite often, politicians are elected not for what they offer, but because they appear better than the previous set of incompetents. So, the public has no idea of what they will be getting in the coming timeframe.  **CCCC Events**  **20 July 2020**  *Launch of online courses:*  *-PAVF*  *-OAK*  *-Painless meeting*  *-BKMS English*  *-BKMS Spanish*  **Summer 2020**  *Planning, Cornwall Ontario, Canada*  **Summer 2020**  *Practical MBA, Ottawa Canada*  **Summer 2020**  *Best Kept Mangmnt*  *Secrets (Spanish)*  *Fiesta Americana*  *Puerto Sao Paulo*  *Guadalajara Mexico*  **Summer 2020**  *Planning*  *Holiday Inn, Estampida*  *Guadalajara Mexico*  **Summer 2020**  *Planning*  *Alamo Industrial P.*  *Guadalajara Mexico*  **20 October 2020**  *Best Kept Mangmnt*  *Secrets*  *Grand Hotel*  *Toronto Canada*  **18 November 2020**  *Best Kept Mangmnt*  *Secrets*  *Best Western O’Connor*  *Ottawa Canada*  **25 November 2020**  *Best Kept Mangmnt*  *Secrets*  *Hotel A. Kensington*  *Calgary Canada*  Since most readers value and lean towards rationality4, how do we explain the rest of the world being rampant with irrational thought? Four noted psychologists from the University of Arizona5 outlined three sources of universal irrationality calling them: “Shortcuts”, “Confirmation Bias” and “Social Pressure”.  **Shortcuts** are defined as at the point where we shut down our brain to jump to a quick simplistic (rule of thumb) conclusion: blondes are dumb, Canada is just ice and snow, Mexicans are lazy, Russians are drunkards, American are spoiled, all religions, but mine, are bad. (In CCCC parlance, we call this Brain 1 connecting the dots and forming the wrong conclusion.)  This is the easiest of the three irrationalities to overcome. What we must do to avoid forming such quick conclusion, is to force ourselves to devote just a few more minutes to look at obvious facts.  Example facts that can be applied to the above are: Blonde Lady Gaga is a near genius. Ottawa endures two months of 300 C. heat each summer. Mexico has the 15th most productive economy in the world. Russia was the leading country of the world a century ago and continually challenges to be among world leaders today. Spoiled Americans sacrificed millions of their youth to bring an end to the globe’s two World Wars on distant continents. Why would God choose to favor my religious fervor over that of other human faith options?  **Confirmation Bias** occurs when we look at a large set of data, selectively rejecting all things we do not believe and latch onto those few that confirm what we already accept. For example, I may view a dozen parameters associated with global warming, ignore most of them, but accept the one that confirms my existing understanding that the earth is not undergoing human-induced warming at all.  A solution is to discipline yourself to be your own devil’s advocate. For example, assuming you believe that humans are not contributing to global warming, you play the role of someone who believes human activities are aiding our global rise in temperature and see how the thinking pans out. (Psychological researchers have already demonstrated that bias disappears when making a case for a situation that contradicts one’s own view.)  **Social Pressure** has us doing silly things, that later generations laugh at, but which seem extremely important to us, at the time. They become clear justification for our irrational behavior. In days of yore, no sex before marriage, a man of status wearing a wig, or bell-bottomed trousers, were social obligations. Today’s irrationalities include women’s jeans with holes in them as a fashion statement and gas-guzzling SUV’s as the vehicle of choice to navigate, what appears to be, the swamps and jungles of downtown New York, Toronto and Sydney.  We can attack the social-pressure issues by determining if the social group is united in this opinion. Is one party not convinced of the issue’s appropriateness? Studies have shown, that if a single person in a group disagrees with the majority, consensus will break down. Thus, your suggesting, honestly, that you do not accept the wisdom of this or that particular behavior, may have others join your skepticism bandwagon.  **Conclusion**  Since the most important component of business are humans, and since business, too, has continuous irrationalities to deal with, some of the suggestions above might help you. Usually, in business, the path towards rationality is easier to realize than within the broad public. The path that you can take is to get your teammates involved: have someone else read over that criticizing email before you send it off; have associates review your new policy before you pass it on; set up a group discussion to toss around ideas. Do not be afraid of criticism; embrace its advantages. In CCCC parlance, have regular group meetings6; they’re the best investment possible.  Good luck  Bill  *P.S. to our May 2020 newsletter about the huge amount of methane gas that will be released from Siberia as it warms. As well, the warming of Siberia has caused numerous forest fires, not only in forests but in the low seated tundra flora – releasing, currently, 180 million tons of CO2 per year. Because of the immense area of Siberia, the amount will be a hundred times larger which will add another, very significant dimension to the world’s accumulation of unwanted gases in the atmosphere. Siberia, itself, is warming at twice the global rate. All the more reason for you to shut off your unused lights.*  4 Readers are people who seek information, therefore have open minds, minds usually aimed towards rationality.  5 “The Science of Anti-Science Thinking”, *Scientific American*, July 2018, Douglas T. Kenrick, Adam B. Cohen, Steven L. Neuberg, Robert B. Cialdini.  6 Assuming that you hold meetings that ensure all are listened to and all ideas are considered. |  |
| *Bill Caswell* is an experienced coach of CEOs and executives around the globe.He is the author of 27 books, written, by a CEO for CEOs. |