

EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

SUPPORTING BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

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wrap
edition

Micromanagement - what it is, its impact and how to prevent it

How to avoid becoming a micromanager
and how to deal with a boss who is one



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HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

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best foot forward

DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS FOR YOUR SCHOOL

Five tips for successful and
sustainable partnerships

WHY IS EVERYONE TALKING ABOUT PEDTECH?

The possibilities of tech
in the classroom

Editor's comment

Well, what a glorious bank holiday we had! The sun finally put its hat on for more than five minutes and treated us all to some long-awaited blue skies. I hope you all enjoyed the long weekend, and that the Easter Bunny treated you to some chocolate to help get you through your Easter holiday to-do list!

We are now halfway through April which means EdExec LIVE North in Manchester is only a month away on the 18th of May, and EdExec LIVE South in London is only two months away on the 7th of June. All our brilliant speakers are now confirmed for both events, so head to <https://www.edexeclive.co.uk/seminars-workshops> to take a look at the stellar line-up we have curated with the SBL role firmly in mind. We hope you will be able to join us for a day of

learning and networking which you can tailor specifically to you and your role. If you're interested in attending, email hello@edexeclive.co.uk quoting the code 'EDLETTER' in the subject line to express your interest in FREE tickets - but be quick, they're disappearing faster than hot cross buns!

This month's issue is jam-packed with advice, opinions and guidance from a range of expert contributors. Stephen Mitchell explores some of the most common leadership styles and how they might apply to your role in your school setting and, running with this theme, David Carne explains how to avoid becoming a micromanager - and how to deal with a boss who is one. If you have a boss who is a micromanager that you can no longer work with, you might be searching for a new role... If so, Laura Williams has some timely advice on how to put your best foot forward when going into a job interview.

Someone who isn't sure whether they are looking for a new role or not is Sue Birchall. In her article this month Sue ponders the future of her role, and reflects on the journey she has already been on as an SBL. Justin Smith shares his top five tips for developing successful - and sustainable - partnerships in your school and Phil Burton explains how you can master the art of listening.

In our ICT MATTERS section, Dr Fiona Aubrey-Smith explores how technology can be used in the classroom to address deficits in learning and open up new possibilities and opportunities for pupils and, thinking about how that vital classroom technology is supported, Neil Limbrick looks at the two categories that cover the majority of day-to-day work handled by your IT service desk, while Nigel Milligan gives his expert advice on how you can streamline operations and save costs on IT.

As always, we'd love to hear any suggestions you have for the magazine. If you'd like to get involved with EdExec, or if you'd like us to cover a certain topic, please do let us know. Contact eleanor@intelligentmedia.co.uk or tweet @edexec with your ideas, opinions or success stories.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Is your school doing something wonderful? Do you have an opinion or experience you'd like to share? A story suggestion? Or some advice you'd like to share with your peers? Get in touch - email eleanor@intelligentmedia.co.uk

ELEANOR POTTER
EDITOR

Contributors

The education sector can be difficult to navigate at times, and those in school business management play a pivotal role in steering schools to success. Tasked with everything from finance and procurement, to HR and admin, you keep the education cogs turning.

Education Executive addresses the most pressing matters faced by SBMs, offering meaningful insights and practical advice.

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Education Executive is the first business management magazine written exclusively for school business managers and bursars, bringing you the latest issues affecting your role, from finance to premises, procurement to HR. *EdExec* delivers the lowdown on all the hottest topics in education management right here, every month.

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NEWS

The latest news and views from the world of education



One-in-five pupils in England were persistently absent in past school year

The Guardian has reported that one-in-five pupils in England were reported as persistently absent during the last school year, with COVID and other illnesses the biggest contributors to soaring classroom absence rates compared with pre-pandemic years. The figures from the (DfE) showed the aftermath of the pandemic continued to significantly affect state school attendance into the summer of 2022; the national absence rate of 7.6% was well above the rates of 4%-5% before COVID.

Illness accounted for nearly 60% of the absences, including pupils who had tested positive for COVID, with the proportion of children absent through illness close to twice the rate seen before the pandemic. The DfE also reported an increase in unauthorised absences, from 1.3% in 2020-21 to 2.1% in 2021-22. The figures showed that 22% of state school pupils were missing for more than 10% of sessions, about 19 days or more during the school year, leading to them being classed as 'persistently absent' under the DfE's definitions.

While children eligible for free school meals were absent for 37% of sessions, the fastest increase came among children not eligible, whose absence rate more than doubled to 17.5% compared with the previous two school years.

@msetchell: Also, just a heads up to SBMs and others who set budgets, 2025 Windows 10 is no longer supported. Win 11 requires certain hardware - lots of schools don't have it. So start budgeting now. My recommendation is to move to cloud on Win 10, then run Intune and endpoint analytics

@susie_dent: Word of the day is a reminder of 'eye-servant' (16th century): one who only works hard when the boss and others are looking.

Mum says Suffolk SEND issues remain despite apology

A mother who received an apology from a council after her daughter had no education for six months has said there are still issues with her support, *BBC News* has reported. The local government and social care ombudsman (LGSCO) said the girl, from Suffolk, could not go to her school and should have got alternative provision. Her mother said a member of school staff threatened her with imprisonment when her daughter stopped school. The council's Allan Cadzow apologised "for the distress this has caused".

A report from the LGSCO said the mother of the young girl complained that her daughter was not provided with suitable alternative education after she became too anxious to attend primary school. There had been 'numerous decisions about Suffolk County Council's poor performance' in similar cases, it said.

The mother, who wished to remain anonymous, told the Local Democracy Report Service that her daughter was in her final year of primary school and spent November 2021 to April 2022 with no education other than what her mother could teach at home.

Cadzow, corporate director for children and young people at Suffolk County Council, said: "In addition to the recommendations made by the ombudsman, which have been implemented, we have also introduced our own reforms in this area."

CCTV mooted to tackle school parking problems

Schools facing problems with parking outside could have CCTV with number plate recognition technology installed, *BBC News* has reported. The plan by Flintshire council is aimed at tackling the problem, following a council report which acknowledges there is inconsiderate, irresponsible and dangerous parking outside schools in the county. However, it warned that there were no easy fixes to solving these problems everywhere.

The council's environment and education scrutiny committees looked at a joint-report, according to the Local Democracy Reporting Service. 'Parking within the vicinity of schools is a longstanding problem and many schools are located within densely-populated and built-up residential areas on narrow roads, where much of the infrastructure and buildings were constructed at a time when vehicle usage was significantly lower than the present day,' the report said.

'Inappropriate, inconsiderate and, sometimes, dangerous parking is an increasing issue around schools and puts the safety of children and other road users at risk. There is no one single solution to fix the issue and it will require a range of measures applied regularly throughout the school year and commitment from the school and wider school community.'



Liverpool to launch anti-racist network in schools

Schools in Liverpool are to share anti-racist knowledge and best practice through a dedicated network in a ground-breaking new partnership between Liverpool City Council and Leeds Beckett University, the *Liverpool Express* has reported. It will be led by the Centre for Race Education and Decoloniality, which is based within the Carnegie School of Education at Leeds Beckett University.

The initiative forms part of the Council's commitment to promote and enhance racial equality and diversity within the city's education system, and follows the appointment last year of Paul Olubayo, the council's first education race equalities officer. Professionals from all schools and colleges in Liverpool will be able to attend programmes aimed at transforming the institutional culture and structures of schools in the city.



Union raises concern over funds for school building repairs in England

School leaders in England are concerned that the government is cutting back on school building refurbishment and repairs, despite the Department for Education's recent disclosure that there was a 'critical – very likely' risk of buildings collapsing.

The NASUWT union said the DfE's capital expenditure limits had been cut by £400m - from £6.3bn allocated in last November's autumn statement to £5.9bn. There is longstanding concern over the safety of England's school estate, with buildings from the 1960s and 70s nearing the end of their structural life and many riddled with asbestos and other dangerous materials.

Patrick Roach, the NASUWT's general secretary, said: "Now is the time for greater investment in school buildings, not less, with the warnings that some school buildings are at risk of collapse. Schools are already reporting increased revenue pressures as they have less available to spend on repair and upkeep of buildings."

@CherylSBM: Is anyone enrolled in the contract management foundation course being offered by the Cabinet Office for SBLs? #SBLTwitter #SBM



SEND school for 130 children to be built in West Sussex

A new school for children with special educational needs and disabilities is to be built in West Sussex

The new state school will provide 130 full-time places for children who have autism spectrum and social, emotional and mental health needs. West Sussex County Council said it will help to “ensure every child in West Sussex has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of their needs”. The council has not specified where the school will be located.

The Department for Education (DfE) announced the news following a successful bid by the council, saying its application demonstrated the growing need for specialist sites. Across West Sussex 18% of school-age children currently receive some kind of SEND support - higher than the national average. The school, one of 33 SEND sites to be built across England, will offer primary and secondary education for boys and girls aged from four-to-18.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

“This new school will provide much-needed places and an excellent learning environment specifically for children who have special educational needs and disabilities,” said Nigel Jupp, cabinet member for learning and skills.

This news closely follows the publication by the DfE of the long-awaited SEND and Alternative Improvement Plan. Commenting on the plan, Margaret Mulholland, SEND and inclusion specialist at the Association of School and College

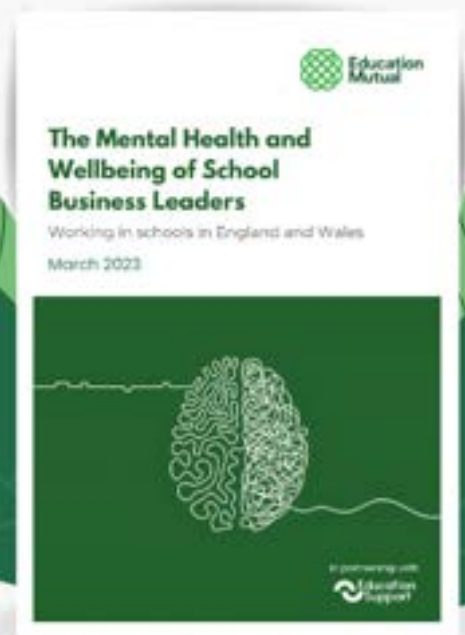
Leaders, said, “The current system for supporting children with special educational needs is badly broken and critically underfunded. Children and young people are not receiving the help they need, and schools are left without the resources needed to best support them.

“Efforts to fix this crisis are very welcome. Expanded training for staff, and the standardisation of education health and care plans (EHCPs) are important steps but we are concerned about the length of time it is going to take to implement some of these policies. More special schools are desperately needed, but will take years to build. The promise of additional places in the future will be of no comfort to those missing out right now who have a special school named on their EHCP but who can’t get a place as the relevant school is over-subscribed, nor will it help the mainstream schools currently struggling to meet the needs of these pupils. Funding must also be made available to convert existing buildings and ensure they offer the bespoke provision young people deserve.

“It has taken an awfully long time to get to this point. We look forward to reading the plan in detail, and to an explanation of the level of funding available and the timeframe for when these policies will be implemented. We are yet to see anything to suggest the government understands the gravity of the situation and the urgency with which they need to act.” ■

The mental health and wellbeing of school business leaders

As part of their ongoing commitment to the education sector, Education Mutual are proud to launch 'The Mental Health and Wellbeing of School Business Leaders 2023'. This ground-breaking research, in partnership with Education Support, could play a vital role in offering your education staff some strategies of support



School business leaders play a critical part in the life of a school. Like many other professionals, they can struggle with their mental health. The position can come with its challenges which can have a significant impact on their wellbeing as they may face long working hours and a need to balance competing priorities.

Education Mutual and Education Support work in partnership on this newfound research to collectively understand the working role of an SBL in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools across England and Wales. They aim to support the underestimated mental health and wellbeing of SBLs to accelerate more fulfilling, successful, and effective educational institutions.

THE FINDINGS

Half of SBLs considered excessive workload as the main work-related factor which impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. Managing multiple projects simultaneously with the demand to deliver quality work

alongside the pressure of keeping the school running is becoming intense.

A familiarisation with others' roles can help to promote a collaborative working environment. We found a surprising, varied lack of understanding of what the SBL role entails. A confusion with other administration roles was a common occurrence along with no acknowledgment for the time it takes to undertake such tasks.

The most staggering finding was the feeling of isolation within the job role. With a lacking understanding of their role, SBLs struggle to bounce ideas off others and communicate their issues with peers who recognize and relate to the obstacles they encounter.

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are an SBL, we strongly suggest sharing this report with your headteacher and mark your relatable findings to ensure that changes are made throughout your school to prioritise your wellbeing. Additionally, are you on Twitter? If the answer is yes, there's plenty of networking to be done with large groups

of other SBLs – a frequent reminder that you are not alone!

If you are a headteacher reading this report, when was the last time that you checked in with your SBL? This report could spark some important conversations and highlight specific areas of improvement to benefit your SBLs. Have you considered the services your staff have available through your staff absence protection? Education Mutual member schools are entitled to face-to-face counselling sessions, stress coaching and a 24/7 GP line. It's important to reassure all staff that wellbeing services are confidential as there shouldn't be any fear of potential consequences. ■

Read the report here:

<https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/about-us/sbl-wellbeing-report-2023/>

Contact details: 01623 287840

learnmore@educationmutual.co.uk



SPOTLIGHT ON

School funding statistics for the 22-23 financial year

This DfE publication provides statistics on school revenue funding from financial year 2010-11 through to 2023-24. It aims to provide an overview of trends in school funding over recent years, as well as detailed information about funding allocations for individual schools for 2022-23

The total amount of funding allocated to English schools for five-to-16 year-old pupils has grown since 2010-11 as the total pupil population has also grown.

In cash terms, the total funding allocated to schools through the grants covered in this report is £57.3bn in 2023-24, an increase of 64% compared to the £35bn allocated in 2010-11. The decisions contained in the 2022 Autumn Statement means that funding will increase further in 2024-25.

On a per-pupil basis the total funding allocated to schools for five-to-16 year-old pupils, in cash terms, in 2023-24 was £7,460, a 44% increase compared to £5,180 allocated per pupil in 2010-11.

When adjusted for inflation, funding per pupil was broadly flat between 2010-11 and 2015-16 at about £6,700 when translated into 2022-23 prices. It then fell by 3.8% over 2016-17 and 2017-18, only to increase again by 1.3% during 2018-19 and 2019-20. Since then, funding has increased by 10.3% over the course of the following four years, reaching £7,220 in 2023-24 (still translated into 2022-23 prices). ■

Figure 1.1: The total amount of funding in cash terms allocated to English schools for 5-16 year olds has grown since 2010-11 as the total pupil population has also grown

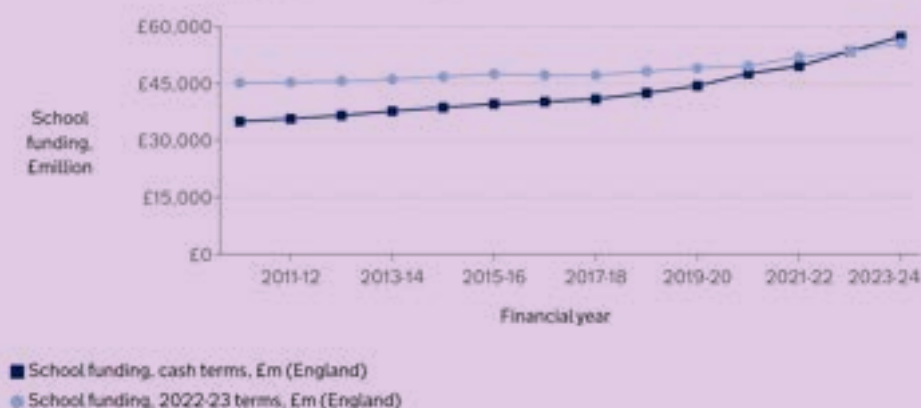
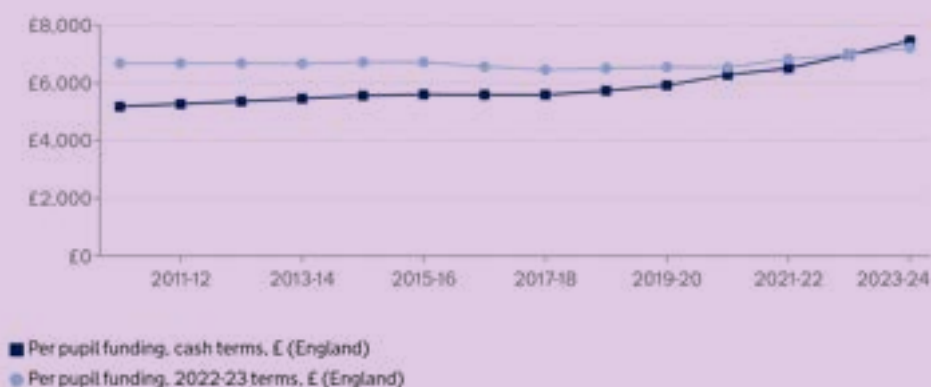


Figure 1.2: Per-pupil funding for 5-16 year olds in English schools is expected to be 8.1% higher in 2023-24 than in 2010-11, when adjusted for inflation





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Leadership styles - which one fits best for school business managers, CFOs, and COOs?



STEPHEN MITCHELL, director, Keystone Knowledge, explores some of the most common leadership styles and how they might apply to your role in your school setting

Being a school business manager, CFO, or COO can be tough. You're responsible for managing the finances and operations of a school, and you play a crucial role in shaping its culture, direction and success.

As a leader in your school, it's essential to choose a leadership style that fits the needs and culture of your organisation. In this article we will explore some of the most common leadership styles and how they might apply to your role in a school setting.


1 THE AUTOCRATIC LEADER

As an autocratic leader you take control and make decisions without consulting your team. This approach can be effective in some situations - such as during a crisis when quick decisions are needed - but it can also lead to resentment and disengagement among your team members. Remember, it's important to listen to your team's opinions and insights, and not be too rigid in your decision-making.

An example of an autocratic leader is Sir Michael Wilshaw, former chief inspector of Ofsted. Sir Michael was known for his tough stance on underperforming schools and his no-nonsense approach to school improvement.

He was often criticised for his top-down leadership style, which some felt was overly authoritarian and lacking in collaboration although, arguably, he got results in revitalising the inspectorate at the time. Current day discourse is, of course, now challenging some of those changes. Nothing stays the same, does it?!

If you find yourself leaning towards an autocratic leadership style, try to find ways to involve your team members in decision-making. You can start by asking for their input or feedback on decisions, and taking their opinions into account when making final decisions. This can help build trust and engagement among your team members.



Start by creating opportunities for team members to share their ideas and opinions

2 THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

Democratic leadership involves shared decision-making among team members. As an SBM, CFO, or COO, you may find this approach helpful when making financial decisions or deciding on the best course of action for your school. This approach can lead to better decision-making and greater engagement among team members but it can also be time-consuming and may not be effective in situations where quick decisions need to be made.

An example of a democratic leader is Sir David Carter, former national schools commissioner. Sir David was known for his collaborative approach to school improvement, and

working closely with headteachers and other educational leaders to develop innovative solutions to complex problems. He was committed to empowering local leaders and building a culture of collaboration and partnership, and still does this actively now through his positive reinforcement of the sector and networking.

If you want to adopt a more democratic leadership style, start by creating opportunities for team members to share their ideas and opinions. You can hold regular team meetings, conduct surveys or polls, or create online forums where team members can share their thoughts. Be sure to listen actively and take their ideas into account when making decisions.

3 THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their team members to achieve a common goal. They set a clear vision, and communicate it effectively, inspiring others to work towards that vision. This approach can be effective in creating a sense of purpose and direction for your school. As an SBM, you may find this style helpful in motivating your team and achieving your institution's goals but it can also lead to burnout among team members who may feel like they are constantly striving to meet high expectations. Make sure you're not setting unrealistic expectations for your team.

An example of a transformational leader is Elon Musk. Musk has a clear vision for his companies, such as Tesla and SpaceX, and he inspires his team members to work towards that vision. He is known for his high expectations and relentless pursuit of innovation. I'm not sure many of us would want to work for him for a long time though!

To become a transformational leader, focus on setting a clear vision for your school and communicating it effectively to your team members. You can create a vision statement or strategic plan that outlines your goals and objectives. Be sure to involve your team members in the process and empower them to work towards achieving the vision.

4 THE SERVANT LEADER

Servant leaders prioritise the needs of their team members above their own needs; they focus on empowering and developing their team members, rather than controlling them. You may find this approach helpful in building trust and loyalty among your team members.

An example of a UK servant leader in education is Dame Alison Peacock, – a respected education leader who has worked tirelessly to empower and support UK teachers, and chief executive of the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT). She is committed to putting the needs of teachers and students first, and advocates for a collaborative and supportive approach to teaching and learning. Under her leadership the CCT has become a powerful advocate for teacher professionalism and development in the UK.

If you want to adopt a servant leadership style, focus on developing and empowering your team members. You can provide training and development opportunities, delegate responsibilities and offer feedback and support. Be sure to prioritise the needs of your team members and create a culture that values collaboration and teamwork. ▶



Don't forget to inject some humour and personality into your leadership style

5 THE LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADER

Laissez-faire leaders take a hands-off approach, delegating most decisions to their team members. As an SBL you may find this style helpful when working with highly skilled and motivated colleagues but it can also lead to confusion and lack of direction among team members. Make sure you're still providing guidance and support to your team members, even when delegating decisions.

An example of a laissez-faire leader is Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group. Branson is known for delegating decisions to his team members and giving them the autonomy

to make decisions. He values creativity and innovation, and believes in creating a culture that fosters entrepreneurship and risk-taking.

To adopt a laissez-faire leadership style, focus on delegating responsibilities and providing your team members with the autonomy to make decisions. You can set clear expectations and guidelines, but allow your team members to find their own solutions and approaches. Be sure to provide guidance and support as needed, but avoid micromanaging or taking over decisions and remember that, when you're busy, it can be very hard to give the support and structure that your team will need.

SO, WHICH LEADERSHIP STYLE IS BEST FOR YOU?

The answer depends on the culture, goals, and challenges of your school. As a SBL you need to consider the specific needs and challenges facing your school/trust and choose a leadership style that will help you achieve your goals.

Different leadership styles may be more effective in different school settings and at different times, depending on the situation. For example, a democratic style might be more effective in a school that values collaboration and teamwork, while a transformational style might be more effective in a school that needs to go on a rapid improvement journey, or is a trust at the beginning of its growth path.

In a school where collaboration and teamwork are valued, a democratic leadership style can be particularly effective; by involving team members in decision-making, and valuing their contributions, this style can create a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among team members. This can

lead to greater engagement and commitment to achieving the school's goals.

On the other hand, in a school that values innovation and change, a transformational leadership style may be more effective. By setting a clear vision and inspiring colleagues to work towards that vision, this style can create a sense of purpose and direction for the school. This can help motivate staff to take risks and embrace new ideas, leading to greater innovation and progress.

In general, a democratic or transformational leadership style can be effective in most situations. These styles prioritise collaboration, empowerment, and clear communication, which are essential for a successful school.

Don't forget to inject some humour and personality into your leadership style! A positive attitude and a sense of humour can go a long way in building a strong team and achieving your institution's goals. ■

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How to prepare yourself for a job interview



LAURA WILLIAMS, school leadership coach, trainer and SBL podcast host, gives advice on how you can put your best foot forward when going into a job interview

The biggest trap I see SBLs fall into when preparing for an interview is trying to predict every single question that they'll be asked. Sure, there are some classics like:

What would you say is your biggest weakness? And...

Tell us about a time that you made a mistake and what you learnt from it.

But to try and forecast every scenario and memorise every possible response is just going to turn your brain to spaghetti at the worst possible time. Couple that with good old imposter syndrome, and the fact that SBLs generally aren't comfortable stepping into the spotlight and talking themselves up (which

is what an interview is all about!) then we're really getting into scary territory!

If you've got an interview coming up, here are my top tips for SBL recruitment readiness.

APPLY AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO JOB SEARCHES AND JOB APPLICATIONS

Forget what you think you know. Don't make assumptions. When it comes to how we view ourselves, it's easy to talk ourselves down and out of applying for a job at all! Instead, look at what's on paper in front of you and work from that.

Read through the job description and person specification and highlight where



You might have to meet a prescriptive criterion but, in terms of *how* you meet it, you can be creative!

you think you've got it covered and where you feel you may not meet the criteria. This will give you areas of focus for your CPD such as attending a course, studying for a qualification or requesting input into areas currently outside of your remit.

If you feel that you're 'kind of' matching what they're asking for, consider why that specific thing is on the list. What do they want you to demonstrate? What is it they're actually looking for? You might have to meet a prescriptive criterion but, in terms of *how* you meet it, you can be creative! If you're really not sure if you hit the mark or not, ask someone you trust for their perspective on it.

FORGET QUESTION PREP, FOCUS ON YOU PREP

As I said before, there's no way of knowing what questions are going to come up in an interview. I've walked out of a lot of interviews and been gutted they hadn't asked me specific questions because I had knock-out answers prepared and didn't get the chance to get across everything I wanted to - so, instead, do this.

Pick some of your career highlights – e.g., managing a big project, leading a new team, implementing a big change. Make sure they're meaty. For each highlight (*ahem*, example of your awesomeness) - write down all the great things you did, the issues you had and how you fixed them,

and the impact you had on the school.

Now write down the key things that each example might demonstrate to an interview panel such as overcoming adversity, recovering from a mistake, evidence of negotiating skills, managing a difficult team member, saving a large chunk of money (always a winner!) and if you can hook these examples up to your personal statement in your application, even better. If you can use the vocabulary referenced in their person specification, double points, but keep this subtle.

You can summarise all of this in a notebook and take it with you into the interview if you feel you need to. You can't know what they will ask, but you can prepare your answers to pretty much any question by focusing on you and the impact you have!

A RECRUITMENT PROCESS IS ABOUT TELLING THEM WHAT YOU KNOW, TALKING UP WHAT YOU'VE DONE AND SHOWING THEM WHAT YOU'RE ACTUALLY CAPABLE OF

We're good at the first two (mostly!) but when it comes to talking about how great we'll be in that new job, how much value we'll add and how much of an impact we can have... well, we either forget because we're too busy trying to prove we're worth interviewing in the first place, or we're scared to take that ►



extra step and be so bold as to tell them what, if they were to give us the job, we'd actually do with the opportunity.

When you wrote your job application and as part of your general interview prep, you'll have conducted lots of research and accrued lots of information about the organisation. Broadly speaking, you should know what they're good at and where their strengths lie, what they're not so good at and where their weaknesses lie and, crucially, what their current priorities are. Based on this, you should be able to match up the notes in your notebook to these areas with ease.

How can you make the organisation stronger? How can you help them fix their vulnerabilities? What new ideas do you have to help move them forward? How can you get them where they want to be faster? If you find yourself struggling to weave this into your answers, pose some questions to the panel at the end and use them as openers to show them how much of a match you really are.

FINALLY, IF YOU DO ALL OF THIS AND YOU STILL DON'T GET THE JOB, DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

I know you just tutted when you read that!

The thing is, when it comes to recruitment, if you've hit all the criteria, and you've proven you can do the job and are a credible candidate then, fundamentally, there's only one question left to ask. Are you a good fit for the organisation? If there's more than one credible candidate then the question becomes, which candidate is the best fit?

This comes down to a number of

The right role in the right organisation is out there

things but it's not something you have any control over. In truth, you should be sitting there thinking along the same lines. Is this organisation a good fit for you? Can you see yourself working there? Will you be able to work and progress the way you want to there?

Sure, it's going to hurt if you're saying yes and they're saying no, but all it means is that this role isn't the one for you. You've probably sat on the other side of the table and made similar decisions but, for it to be the right role, it has to be right for both sides.

It doesn't mean you're not capable, it doesn't mean that you're unemployable, it doesn't mean that you should stop applying for jobs or that you're not interview-ready. It just means that you haven't found 'the one' yet!

Allow yourself to be disappointed. Consider the feedback...then brush yourself off and go again. The right role in the right organisation is out there, I promise - and when you find it, it'll be so worth it!

If you need help through the process, then reach out - to me, to your SBL friends, to your network, to a trusted colleague. You don't have to go it alone, so don't! ■

What's the true value of your time?

What's your local primary school got in common with a Fortune 500 company? You're forgiven if you feel stretched to find something



Primary schools are full of youngsters learning their times-tables, figures that'll seem small-fry to high-powered Fortune 500 execs. But when you consider the fundamental aims of both types of organisation, i.e. running as efficiently as possible to meet (or surpass) performance targets, the similarities aren't as abstract as they once seemed.

And whether you're an SBM experienced in running your school's back-office show or a graduate starting out at Amazon, there's something you'll have in common: the time you spend – waste – switching between applications on your computer.

THE TOGGLING TAX

Last year, the *Harvard Business Review* took time to research this exact activity, studying the behaviours of 137 employees across three Fortune 500 companies. All participants worked in mid- or back-office roles like those found in our schools and MATs: HR, recruitment, and finance. The study looked at how much time each employee spent moving between tasks on their computers/laptops.

On average, each employee spent just under four hours per week reorienting themselves after switching to a new application. That's over 200 hours per year, a whopping nine per cent of the annual time each user spends at work. The *Review* coined it the 'togglings tax' – though Fortune 500 companies aren't exactly pulling employee details from one application to another to complete the *School Workforce Census*, your organisation might be.

HOW PRODUCTIVE IS YOUR WORKING WEEK?

Apply these stats to your team's standard 37.5-hour week and you're all pretty much spending an entire morning back-and-forth between different programmes.

Log out. Log in. Click. Swipe. Type. No matter how minor the seconds your staff spend on each of these miniscule activities, it all adds up. So, how much more could be achieved collectively if you used those hours more effectively?

CAN YOU EVER 'SAVE' TIME?

Our director, Adam Watson, takes trouble with the common saying that this or that can help you 'save time'. Supermarkets have yellow label power to reduce the price of the food shop, but no-one can stop the clock. The amount of time we have is fixed, especially in a school day, so we've got to focus on making every second as rich as possible.

It starts with spotting the activities that are making aspects of your role inefficient, a departmental function repetitive, or an entire organisation disconnected. While your ATS might feel like your unsung superhero, if it's not connected to the actual job applications, then it's contributing to inefficiencies in your time.

We can't give you time and we won't save your time. But we can support you to reconsider how you're using your time and empower ways for you to spend your time more effectively. ■

HAVE YOU GOT TIME FOR A LITTLE MORE?

Head to our EdExec Live seminars this May and June where we'll be exploring the value of time further!

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Musings of an SBL



SUE BIRCHALL, long-standing SBL, ponders the future of her role and reflects on the journey she has already been on as an SBL

I have recently been involving myself in research for various groups, particularly the DfE, and it got me thinking about my journey through my professional development. Now that I am of an age, I am often asked how long I will work for and, most recently, how long the profession would hold my interest.

I had to think about this long and hard because, as you know, being a school business professional involves many varied tasks which I have always loved and has never really bored me or left me feeling that I would leave. It is the variety that ensures that I am always looking at new things and being innovative in the workplace, and thus not getting complacent and stuck in my ways. This is one of the qualities that I believe makes a good SBP - not only the ability to multi-task to a high level but also to act as an influencer and champion for change.

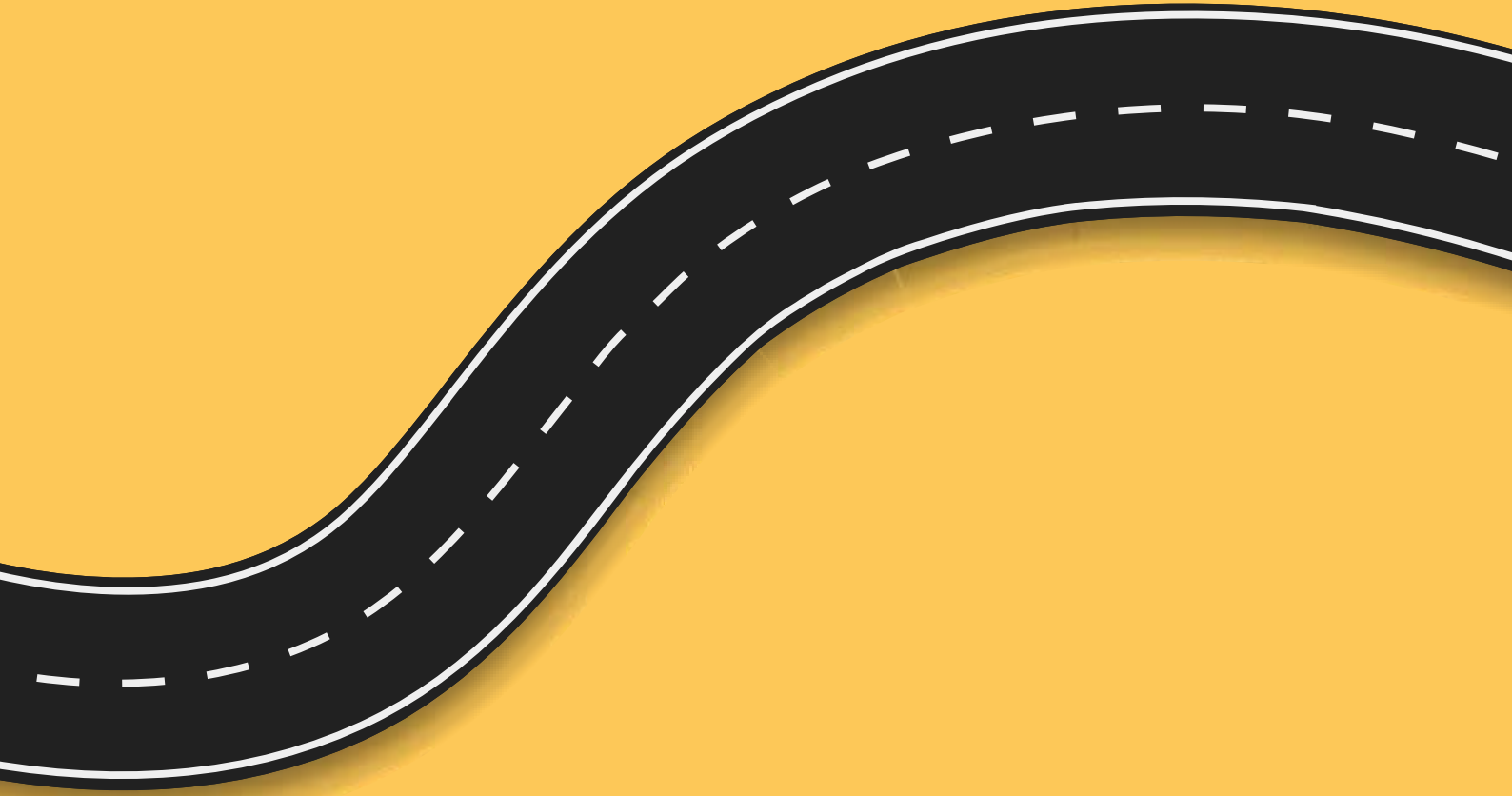
When I look at the development of the profession since I joined it in the early noughties it is pretty unrecognisable when compared to my first post. I have seen the profession rise in importance in schools, and then academics, moving from merely

operational to a much more strategic approach and a true profession. The influence that the ISBL (nee NASBM) has had, added to the hard work that many like myself have put in, has paid dividends and it is heartening to see how much has changed, for the better.

Going back to my first musings, at the start of my journey I joined a small church school doing payroll for a few hours a week. Circumstance led to this becoming a greater role and, very early on, I recognised that this could be something that I could learn to love. Enrolling on the Certificate of School Business Management took me to training residential; the first I can clearly remember terrified me in its breadth and content - so much so that I brought it home and hid it in a cupboard for a few weeks!

LEAVE THAT WITH ME...

Once brave enough to start the course I soon relished the study and took it on to the diploma and then a degree with Manchester Metropolitan. To this day I think it all taught me more about myself as a person and an



SBP than it did about how to do the role. I learnt to think in a different way and take on board all that was going on around me and use this to inform my work. I can still remember my first role with the title 'school business manager'. I was so proud. It was my first outing with 'education speak' and I used to write down all of the acronyms and go away and look them up. My favourite phrase was, 'Leave that with me and I will come back to you'.

What this approach achieved was that I became partially self-taught, learning about my role as part of my own personal journey to learn about how schools and the education sector operate. It is an approach that I have maintained to this day - you can never know everything, but that doesn't mean you can't learn. When I carry out end point assessments for SBP apprenticeships it brings it all back to me, and how I enjoy seeing their journey and also learning from them. I love that the fact that there are so many people out there who are keen to drive the profession and would say to anyone, either current or aspiring, take time to learn the role and yourself in it, you will reap the rewards tenfold.



The SBP challenge continues and I am still keen to be a part of it whilst being aware that it is changing



The SBP challenge continues and I am still keen to be a part of it whilst being aware that it is changing. The advent of multi academy trusts, and the different ways of working that this brings with it, is enforcing change on the profession. Maybe there will come a time when SBPs such as myself that have such a breadth of responsibility will no longer be required - perhaps that is the point at which I will 'hang up my boots' - but I am hoping that will not be for a while yet. ■



Developing successful partnerships for your school



JUSTIN SMITH, MD at Chameleon Consultancy and Training Ltd, shares his top five tips for developing successful - and sustainable - partnerships for your school

The way we view our schools and their relationship with the outside world has evolved enormously over the last 20 years. In their book *Leadership for Tomorrow* authors Groves and West-Burnham highlight the accumulation of evidence that points to external factors outside the school's direct control that also influence educational outcomes. As such, the attention school communities pay to their wider stakeholder groups is more important now than ever before. An outward-facing school that comfortably interacts with, and develops, partnerships with outside agencies can leverage all sorts of support to benefit their pupils.

There are some inspirational examples of schools and multi-academy trusts doing just that and I'm delighted to share this article with David Churchill, director of opportunity at The Kemnal Academies Trust, a large MAT of 45 schools across the south and east of England. I had the great pleasure of supporting David with training and with developing their income-generation priorities. David and I have pulled together our top five tips for developing successful - and sustainable - partnerships for your school.

1 Clarity and purpose

Be clear on your school priorities and long-term plan. You will have a much better chance of developing partnerships when you have a clear strategy in place that you can communicate easily to potential partners.

2 A win-win approach

Embrace the fact that partners will often be looking at how they can benefit from a strategic relationship with you. It may be as simple as something like a 'thank you' to a company's employees, or the chance to speak to your students about future career opportunities with their company. Think about how the relationship can benefit all partners.

3 Define expectations

This can be done informally or formally, using a verbal or a written agreement. The key thing is to set out clearly what your school expects from the partnership, and what the partner can expect in return. If you can get this right then there is a far greater chance of this partnership



becoming a long term relationship, benefiting all parties. Thanking a supporter is really important and can be done via your website, newsletter, invitation to a launch event or a physical 'Donors' thank you board'.

4 **Select the right partner (due diligence)**

Educators have a strong moral compass. Our values are evident every day, such as respect and care for our students and our colleagues. It's vital to be comfortable with the values and mission of any partner. Carefully selecting and inviting supporters to partner with you is more likely to reap long-term benefits and save any unnecessary, and potentially damaging, reputational issues.

5 **Acknowledge support**

It's so important to say thank you and recognise support. It could be a private or a public thank you, such as in a newsletter or via social media. It's the right thing to do and it is a crucial part of sustaining and developing new relationships.

Embrace the fact that partners will often be looking at how they can benefit from a strategic relationship with you

CASE STUDY – TKAT AND THE OGDEN TRUST

"One of our widest partnerships currently is with the Ogden Trust, whose aim is to make sure physics matters in all schools (www.ogdentrust.com). We are the largest network they have ever worked with, and their school partnership programme will be supporting and working with all 45 of our special, primary, secondary and all-through academies.

"We were in dialogue with their trust for almost a year. Hosting a visit to one of our primaries, and introducing them to some of our primary directors, helped develop the relationship. The range and the quality of the support they offer is fantastic. All our primary science leads get free training on a physics topic every year, and they go back to their schools with a wonderful box of teaching resources. There is also free CPD for our secondary staff, with a particular focus on non-specialists teaching physics.

"They fund release time for one of our team to be the partnerships manager, and they also provide financial support to facilitate enrichment activities. For example, we've just run a Diversity in Science competition across all our schools, and we've got a wealth of other activities planned, such as stargazing for families and physics workshops for high ability students. I would recommend the Ogden Trust to any partnerships of schools, which could be a MAT or a less formal network." ■

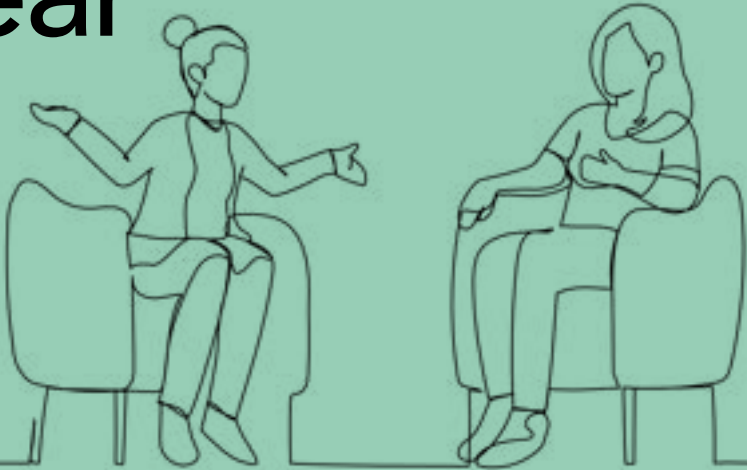
To learn more about the work of The Kemnal Academies Trust click here - <https://www.tkat.org/>

For more ideas and support on developing partnerships with your school or MAT contact us here <https://chameleon-training.co.uk/contact>

Lending an effective ear



PHIL BURTON,
business manager,
Hallbrook and
Cosby Primary
School, on how you can
master the art of listening



I recently came across a great article about leadership and listening which was pulled together by a fellow member and friend of the Institute of Leadership and Management; it really made me think about what exactly good listening looks like. As a leader, listening plays a key part in our ability to do our roles effectively and whilst being good at listening is not the only attribute to being a good leader, it certainly helps.

To use a word the writer shared - listening is the 'horcrux' to which people attach emotions and feelings. If someone feels listened to, they are more likely to engage, feel empowered and valued. If you can harness this you can see transformational change, build relationships and, ultimately, improve productivity. With this in mind here are the top six tips to improve your listening skills.

1 Listen to the language used - every discussion and conversation will contain pieces of information that you can use to help you understand and guide the conversation. The choice of words and language can tell you a lot about what is happening, or what the person is trying to tell you.

2 Ask questions to clarify - a little like the above, listen to what is being said, or implied, then ask follow up questions to clarify your own understanding of the conversation. You may ask a question that allows the individual to open up a little more about the subject.

3 Silence is your friend - depending on the situation, a strategically placed silence can really work. Most people don't like silence, and feel that they need to fill the gap. Silence actually allows the brain to focus and process what has been said - therefore, a pause is a good thing. As an aside, I used to be a fraud

investigator and found that if I asked a challenging question and waited in silence, the interviewee would feel compelled to talk and, more often than not, would say things that helped my investigation.

4 Listen with your eyes - a little bit like point one. A conversation is only partly to do with the words; observing the other person will often give away small hints to what they really mean. Now we are not experts in facial micro expressions such as *Cal Lightman* (a reference to *Lie to Me* which was a fictional series all about micro expressions) but there are some signs that we can all recognise - happiness, joy, sadness, concern and anger. Pay attention to these as they may give you a bit more insight.

5 Don't leak - The way you behave, sit or conduct yourself will affect the way the other person talks to you. They say people show their thoughts on their faces so if you are rolling your eyes at what is being said then you are not really doing a good job at listening because you are stopping the other person from saying what they feel.

Take some notes - you cannot remember everything so making some key notes will help you to remember what has been said. ■



Most people don't like silence, and feel that they need to fill the gap



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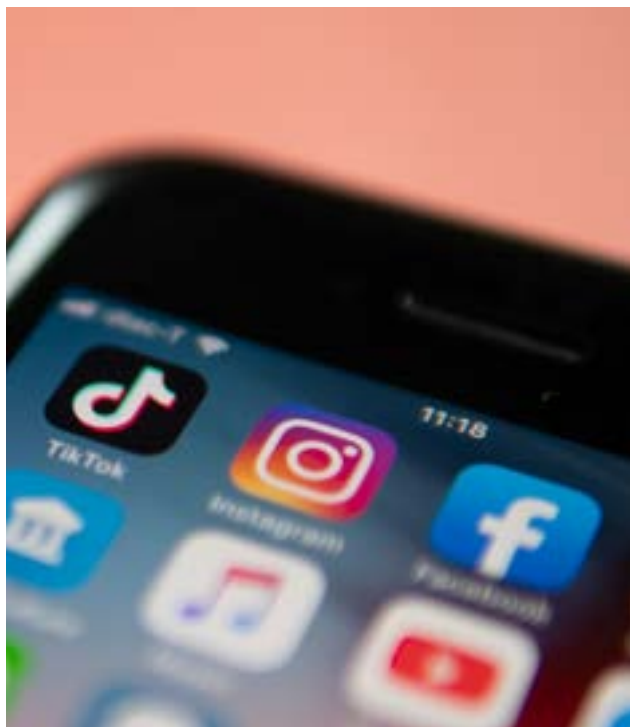


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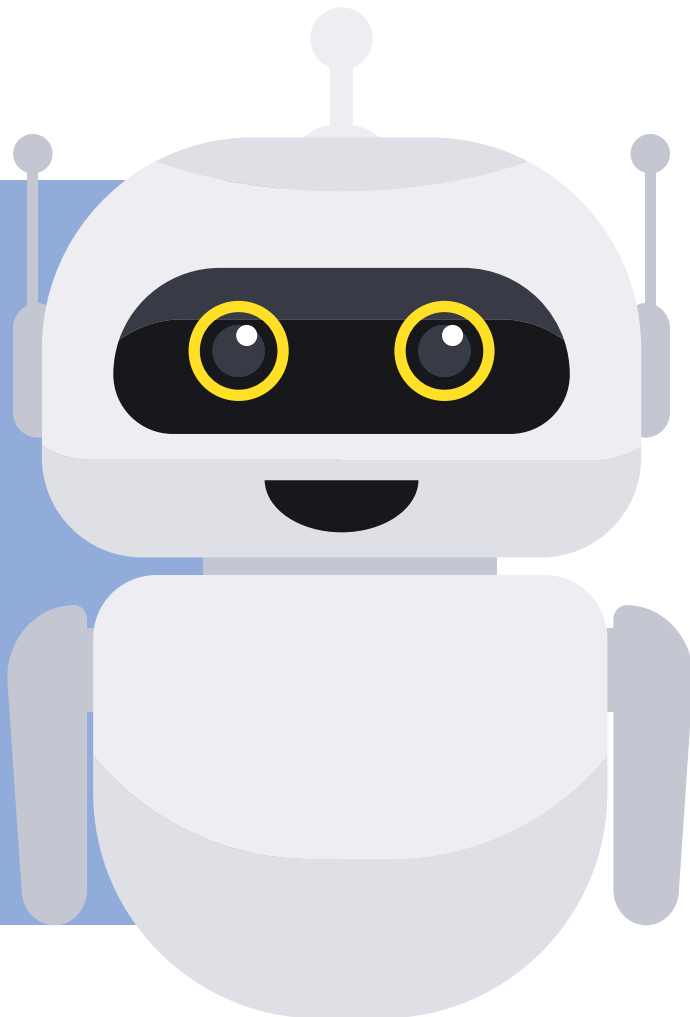
UK government considers taking action on TikTok

TikTok could find itself in the crosshairs of UK authorities as they consider whether the video-sharing app should be banned. Security minister Tom Tugendhat told Sky News he had asked the National Cyber Security Centre to look into the Chinese-owned platform, which has more than one billion users worldwide. Despite its popularity, it has come under heightened scrutiny in Europe and the US over its links to Beijing - with concerns that it could be used to collect user data en masse. Sky News contacted TikTok about the increasingly hardline approaches, as the UK mulls over following its allies in banning the app from government devices. A spokesperson for TikTok said they would be "disappointed" by such a move.

OpenAI announces ChatGPT successor - GPT-4

OpenAI has released GPT-4, the latest version of its hugely popular artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT, BBC News has reported. The new model can respond to images - providing recipe suggestions from photos of ingredients, for example, as well as writing captions and descriptions. It can also process up to 25,000 words, about eight times as many as ChatGPT.

Millions of people have used ChatGPT since it launched in November 2022. Popular requests include asking it to write songs, poems, marketing copy and computer code, and helping with homework - although teachers say students shouldn't use it. ChatGPT answers questions using natural, human-like, language, and it can also mimic writing styles, such as those of songwriters and authors. It uses the internet as it was in 2021 as its knowledge database.



Teach UK schoolchildren about harms of online misogyny, says police chief

A senior police officer has recommended teaching schoolchildren from primary level about the risks of online image-sharing and misogynistic social media figures such as Andrew Tate, *The Guardian* has reported.

Maggie Blyth, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for violence against women and girls, said pupils should also be taught how to deal with the likes of Tate, who has become an emblem of a culture of online misogyny. Tate, a British-American national, was being held in Romania where he was under investigation for alleged sexual assault and exploitation.

In an interview with *The Times*, she said, "I think there's so much more that must and should be done at primary school into secondary about boys' behaviour, and what boys feel they can get away with.

"There is exacerbated risk around Instagram and Snapchat, where behaviour goes online that is unchecked – including the sharing of images, pornography, misogyny. The whole Andrew Tate line is really grave."

Blyth's comments came as a survey showed significant numbers of young people aged 14-to-18 were watching pornography regularly, with some becoming addicted. The study, conducted by Dignify, a charity that researches sexual abuse, spoke to 4,000 children in Hertfordshire.

It found that 22% of students had viewed pornography on multiple occasions. Of those, one-in-five said they had developed a habit of watching such material and one-in-10 said they felt addicted. It also found that non-

consensual image-sharing had also become a serious issue among schoolchildren.

Maggie Blyth is a deputy chief constable in Hampshire and said the problem of male violence and misogyny was "much bigger than policing" because some offenders would receive only community sentences, while other forms of misogynistic behaviour would not reach a threshold for conviction. "We know that we won't be putting every offender or suspect of these types of crime in prison; we have to be aware we are dealing with a lot of risk in our society," she said.

"Being clear about the *modus operandi* of the ones that are dangerous, and trying to be able to predict that, is the way to go - but it's very difficult and complex because risk is changing every day. The bigger debate for society is around prevention and how do we stop men and boys developing a harmful type of behaviour or attitude?"

Blyth said she was working with the Department for Education to produce a package that could be used in schools. Teaching unions have said they need extra help in coping with the demands placed on them in dealing with harmful online content such as pornography.

Unions have also described a decision last week by the government to conduct a review of sex education in schools as 'politically motivated', saying there was no evidence of claims made by Conservative MPs that children were being shown age-inappropriate materials in classrooms. ■



Why is everyone talking about PedTech?



DR FIONA AUBREY-SMITH explores how technology can be used in the classroom to address deficits in learning and open up new possibilities and opportunities for pupils

Every single decision in a classroom, school or educational organisation is ultimately a pedagogical decision because it opens up - or closes down - choices that learners and teachers are able to make as part of the process of learning.

PedTech is quite simply about putting pedagogy (rather than practice) in the driving seat of digital technology in education. We might think of it like this;

- Conversation about *Tech* keeps our focus on *what* we use.
- Conversation about *EdTech* encourages us to think about *how* we use that tech to support teaching and learning and the immediate impact we expect that to have (i.e., pedagogical approaches or teaching methods).
- Conversation about *PedTech* encourages us to think about *why* we use particular approaches to teaching and learning, and the impact we expect that to have on our learners longer term (i.e., our pedagogical beliefs).

For example, why do we want learners to collaborate through cloud-based workspaces – how will it affect individual learning trajectories and confidence levels? Why do we use audio-note feedback, online marking, or digital inking – how does this affect when learners engage with feedback and the quality of future work? Why do we want our learners to use adaptive learning websites – how will it affect the depth of learner knowledge and application in other contexts?

These deeper questions invite us to consider the subtle messages that we are communicating to our learners, and the impact of the decisions we make about using digital technology in our classrooms. In other words - what are we subconsciously telling our learners about what it means to be a learner and what we value about their learning? What are we inferring about who defines new knowledge? What are we suggesting to learners about the role of other students or adults in their learning? Views about these questions begin to surface embedded pedagogical beliefs.



These deeper questions invite us to consider the subtle messages that we are communicating to our learners

SO, WHAT DOES PEDAGOGY REALLY REFER TO?

The word ‘pedagogy’ has joyfully been embraced by an evidence-informed teaching profession - leading to far more purposeful conversations about classroom practice. However, pedagogy is often used as a generic term, variously referring to theories of pedagogy, pedagogical beliefs and stances, pedagogical intentions and strategies, pedagogical approaches and methods, pedagogical practices and politicised pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. As a result, conversations that use the word ‘pedagogy’ can often be wide-ranging and immersed in assumptions, leading to a lack of precision when identifying exactly what we, as educators, need to do next to improve teaching and learning.

Being precise matters because it creates clarity in our understanding, and that understanding leads to clear and tangible actions and clear intentions about the impact we expect our learners to experience.

For example, if you believe that dialogue is a core component of effective learning, how might you use digital technology to make dialogue more inclusive and equitable for all learners - not just for the benefit of those who are confident at speaking and listening? What about learners with social anxiety or those who are neurodiverse? What about learners with speech and language difficulties or English as an additional language?

If you believe that scaffolding learning is fundamental

to knowledge development, how might you use digital technology to provide individual learning pathways and increase teacher classroom capacity to action interventions? What about learners who are capable and autonomous? What about learners who are, perhaps, too confident or maybe not yet confident enough?

If you believe that addressing misconceptions is a core component of knowledge acquisition then how could you use digital technology to identify and automate corrections or to provide whole class, real-time, data to power-up responsive teaching? What about learners who have found unusually creative, non-traditional, or innovative solutions? What about learners who are missing foundational building blocks in their knowledge?

Digital technology has a great deal to offer in removing barriers that are present in nearly every classroom – both in addressing deficits in learning and opening up new possibilities and opportunities - but meaningful impact that goes beyond short term ‘engagement’ narratives only happens if we are clear about what we want to achieve, how we want to achieve it, and why we want to achieve it.

As you think about product purchases or renewals, you are encouraged to engage with suppliers and practitioners to probe deeply into conversations about pedagogy and practice. In each conversation about digital technology, be a champion of the four domains of pedagogy: ►



Being precise matters because it creates clarity in our understanding

Knowledge: what does this product or idea tell learners about where knowledge comes from? (and then consider how this aligns with your personal view about how knowledge is formed).

Learning: what does this product or idea suggest that ‘being a learner’ means? What does the product or idea suggest ‘learning’ means and looks like? (and then consider how this aligns with your personal view about what it means to be a learner, and to learn).

Teaching: what does this product or idea suggest it means ‘to be a teacher’ and what ‘teaching’ means and looks like? (and then consider how this aligns with your personal view of what it means to be a teacher, and to teach).

Schooling: how does this product or idea make meaningful links between ‘schooling’ and a learner’s experiences beyond school?

Remember, too, that every device in your classroom - and every programme or app that you subscribe to - will have simple, yet powerful features which you may not yet be using - features that will help you to break down barriers to learning.

Ask suppliers what you already have access to and to seek out practitioners that can talk about how they have used them in action and what kinds of impact they are seeing on learning. Keep your focus on how this digital technology can be used to support what you believe is important about learning. Where there are claims about the impact of a particular product or idea, probe deeply to understand the context – what else was going on, what did the teachers do, and why, and what were the learners doing, and why? Make sure that you understand the embedded pedagogical beliefs – and consider how these align with your own context and values.

We probably all aim to encourage things like curiosity, creativity, innovation, metacognition, progress and attainment, but let’s consider which of these we emphasise most through our current classroom interactions and choices. Furthermore, how does this emphasis affect the sense of inclusivity and equity experienced by our learners? Does every learner have an equitable opportunity to learn in every lesson? If not, what are the barriers, and which digital technologies might help us close the gap?

For example, small-scale and simple ideas such as voice-note feedback for learners, and automated subtitles in teacher presentations, can reduce cognitive overload and keep learner attention on formative actions (and they are usually free or part of accessibility features on most devices!)

Above all, be a pedagogical champion. Be clear about what you believe is important within learning, and then keep asking questions until you have absolute clarity on how any digital technology will help you to achieve those aspirations. ■



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An incident vs a problem



In the next article in his series on getting to grip with IT in your school, **NEIL LIMBRICK** looks at the two categories that cover the majority of day-to-day work that will be handled by the service desk

In previous articles I have talked about the 10 areas that make up the IT operation in your school and highlighted the benefits and basic requirements of having a service desk as a single point of contact and the place where people can go to make requests. However, recording those requests is obviously just the beginning.

THE 10 AREAS OF IT OPS

- Service desk
- Incident management
- Problem management
- Change management
- Configuration management
- Release management
- Availability and capacity management
- Service level management
- Service continuity management
- Financial management

These requests could fall into one of a number of categories – and understanding those different categories - and how they relate to each other is key. The two categories that cover the majority of day-to-day work that will be handled by the service desk are:

- Incident management.
- Problem management.

The aim of incident management is to restore service to the end-user as quickly as possible – sometimes this may involve some sort of quick fix and other times a permanent solution may be achieved. An incident is



often referred to using terminology like ‘a fault’ or ‘an error’ – but, as far as the end-user is concerned, it is simply when something is not working as it should.

Problem management is different from incident management in that the main goal is to get to the bottom of what is causing the incident and find the best resolution. A problem could be a wider occurrence of the same issue, often affecting a wider number of users or, alternatively, it could involve an underlying problem that has only been identified by some form of routine analysis rather than because a user has reported it.

Often these two areas can be in conflict with each other – as solving, and getting to the root of a problem, may mean extended investigation, delaying the resolution. It is also important to separate resolving the incident from solving the problem – resolving the incident is about getting the user back up-and-running quickly, even if that means a temporary workaround.

This is where schools can run into problems if systems are not properly maintained and tracked. Too often technicians’ focus is on resolving incidents – particularly if their performance is managed by the number of tickets they close. Resolving incidents, but not solving the underlying problem, can overload a technical support team, resulting in lots of extra tickets being raised and then closed.

Having the wrong measures in place could give the appearance of a successful department – but the reality could actually be a department that cannot see the wood

This is where schools can run into problems if systems are not properly maintained and tracked

for the trees because they are focused on individual incidents and are failing to see the underlying problem that needs to be resolved.

If this situation is allowed to continue then more and more problems can occur as a result and, ultimately, this could lead to a complete failure of computer systems.

Make sure that incident management and problem management are firmly in the vocabulary of both your service desk teams and your senior leadership team. Have reporting mechanisms in place that help support the identification and resolution of problems, and not just the more apparent issues.

For a lot more information about implementing incident management take a look at the EdFITS framework on EdTech Central - <https://edtechcentral.uk/framework/> ■



TECHNO GEEK

Reducing on-site IT support



Want to streamline operations and save costs around your IT? **NIGEL MILLIGAN**, IT manager to schools and businesses, has some strategies that you can implement

The way that IT support in schools is delivered has not changed for many years. A regular visit from a technician offers a regular feeling of comfort for all staff - however, this isn't always an effective use of the time that is being paid for.

It's a common scenario that busy staff don't think to be proactive and contact their support at the time when something isn't working as they wish. Instead, they carry on and once, they see the technician arrive in school, they all pounce before they can even get through the door! In many cases there are often so many verbal requests given that the technician can't possibly remember and can miss, and not follow-up these requests.

There are many ways that schools can change this way of working to either get full benefit of the on-site time - but schools should also consider that reducing on-site IT support time can help to reduce costs or free-up more budget to spend on much needed resources.

I have written about some of the ways this can be achieved in other articles. Here is a summary of strategies that can help schools to streamline operations and save costs.

1 Set up a self-service portal: one effective way to reduce on-site IT support is to provide a self-service portal where staff and students can access information and troubleshoot common IT issues - this could include instructional videos, step-by-step guides, and FAQs.

2 Deliver regular training sessions: providing regular training sessions to staff and students can help to reduce IT support requests. These sessions can be used

to teach basic troubleshooting skills, demonstrate how to use new software and hardware, and provide tips and best practice for using technology.

3 Use remote support tools: remote support tools allow IT staff to access computers and devices remotely to diagnose and fix issues without having to be physically present. This can save time and reduce the need for on-site visits.

4 Develop a standardised hardware and software environment: standardising hardware and software across the school can help to reduce IT support requests. It can help to ensure that all devices and software are compatible, reducing the likelihood of issues arising.

5 Use cloud-based services: cloud-based services can help to reduce the need for on-site IT support by allowing students and staff to access software and data from anywhere with an internet connection. This can also help to reduce the need for on-site hardware maintenance.

6 Insist on proactive maintenance: conducting regular maintenance tasks, such as updating software and performing system backups, can help to reduce the likelihood of issues arising - this can help to reduce the need for on-site IT support by minimising the number of issues that need to be addressed.

By implementing these strategies schools can reduce the need for on-site IT support, which can help to save time and money, as well as improving the overall efficiency of the IT support function. ■



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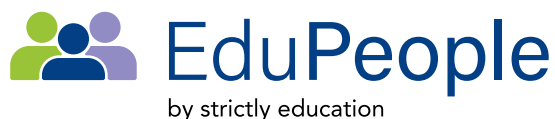
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Navigating a complex IT market to get the best deal



IAN NETHERCOT, MCIPS, supply chain director, Probrand, explores some of the challenges holding back the education sector

Education providers have faced a series of challenges in recent years when sourcing the right technology for students and staff. The COVID-19 pandemic created disruption that meant schools had to scramble to source equipment that could facilitate learning outside of the classroom. The sheer demand meant many products simply weren't available – or if they were, they came at a premium. Three years on and the rise in food, energy and wage bills means budgets are being squeezed even further. As such, it's never been more important to maximise every penny spent on IT and enable digital education.

Even without these added pressures, browsing and buying multiple IT products and services has always been incredibly tough. In the first of a series of articles, Ian Nethercot, supply chain director at Probrand, explores some of the challenges holding back the education sector.

A COMPLEX MARKET

The IT sector has to navigate a complex supply chain, often involving distributors, suppliers, and manufacturers. The pace and speed of change is also volatile, with up to 30,000 product prices changing every day, along with thousands of new items and stock fluctuations. Too often, buyers will spend hours manually searching for the right item, at what they believe is a trade price to compare against, only to discover



that it's out of stock, the listing is outdated, and the price is far from trade level. We carried out research that highlighted the huge drain this is having on buyers' time, with a quarter of organisations spending the equivalent of one day each week just researching IT purchases.

A VOLATILE MARKET

If buyers are going to identify opportunities and manage their budgets better, easy access to accurate product, stock and price information is critical. Anyone that is working with yesterday's information will simply lose out - the IT market is just too volatile. Given that a lack of accurate data severely inhibits the ability to acquire the best equipment quickly and at the lowest prices, it's little wonder that 81% of organisations fail to achieve value for money on their IT purchases.

When manual processes are combined with rapid price fluctuations, it can be hard to police the prices suppliers are quoting. It's little wonder that, on average, companies pay a nine per cent margin above the trade price on all IT products – three times higher than the industry best practice level set by the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM). We've found examples of educational institutions paying margins as high as 1266.3% on their purchases – that's more than four hundred times higher than the recommended mark-up.



LACK OF VISIBILITY

Manual approaches and a lack of visibility is also causing schools to miss out on extra discounts they are entitled to. Vendors will often create pre-approved pricing catalogues for specific sectors, including education. There can be in excess of 50 of these catalogues from different major vendors available, all of which will offer aggressive discounts of five to 50%. And yet schools will regularly miss out for two main reasons.

The first is that these catalogues are often poorly communicated. They might be shared as an attachment or spreadsheet in an email and will get lost. Added to this, they aren't published or made visible on frameworks like Crown Commercial Services (CCS) – simply because those types of platforms don't have the technical functionality to compare and present multi-catalogue pricing and data streams. Secondly, buyers must rely on the fact that these discounts are being passed through the supply chain to reach them. So, there is an element of trust involved too. If buyers aren't seeing the added value that these discounts offer, then it's highly likely that they are paying over the odds for products and effectively throttling budgets.

Given the complex set of challenges, it's easy to see why researching the right products (and, most importantly, identifying which are worth buying) is difficult. But there is

light at the end of the tunnel. In next month's edition, we'll explore how buyers can overcome this stormy landscape and share tips to ensure you're getting the best value. ■

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LIVE IT

Time to take a few moments out for some light and interesting reading – a well-earned break from numbers and statistics!



Caption competition

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your funny caption
ideas by tweeting us
@edexec

THUMBS
UP!

A race to the top

As reported by *BBC News*, a boy climbing the equivalent of Mount Everest to support a children's hospice, as we wrote about last month, has now joined a well-known fundraiser to go up Wales' highest peak. Oscar Burrow, from Lancaster, and his family are racing Michael Cullen - known as Speedo Mick - up Yr Wyddfa, also known as Snowdon.

The six-year-old is in the process of climbing 12 peaks to match Everest's 29,030ft (8,849m) height while Mr Cullen has raised more than £800,000 walking the UK in blue swimming trunks. The 58-year-old said he had been "made up" when Oscar's father asked if his son could join him in climbing the mountain.

Speedo Mick is currently on his final fundraising walk, which will see him walking from John O'Groats to Land's End, taking in the UK's three highest peaks on the way, while Oscar is halfway through his 12-peak challenge.



LIFE HACK

"Coffee grounds can be mixed with washing-up liquid and boiling water to unclog drains," says Alex Azoury, founder and CEO of Home Grounds. Alex recommends mixing the grounds with soap and adding the mixture into your drain and following this up with a lengthy pour of boiling water. This mighty combination will break up whatever's clogging your pipes.

Pub quiz

1. What is the name of Dua Lipa's 2020 album?
2. Matt Goss, Luke Goss and Craig Logan made up which band?
3. In what year did The Beatles split up?
4. What is rapper P Diddy's real name?
5. Complete this Spice Girls lyric: "If you wanna be my [BLANK], you gotta get with my friends".

Answers: 1. Future Nostalgia 2. Bros 3. 1970 4. Sean Combs 5. Lover (from the song Wannabe)

DID YOU KNOW?

Australia is wider than the moon!
The moon is 3400km in diameter,
while Australia's diameter from
east to west is almost 4000km.



The only limit to our realisation of
tomorrow will be our doubts of today
Franklin D. Roosevelt

Well,
knock me
down with
a feather!



Flamingo friendships

'Birds of a feather flock together' but, within their flocks, flamingos form smaller cliques of like-minded individuals, a new study suggests. While previous research showed that flamingos formed friendship groups, the findings of this latest study, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, indicate that these friendships are partly decided by individuals' intrinsic traits.

Researchers at the University of Exeter and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) studied a flock of 147 Caribbean flamingos and a separately-housed flock of 115 Chilean flamingos at the WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre in Gloucestershire between March and July 2014.

Both groups were found to have individuals with varying behavioural traits, and they appeared to use these traits to choose which flamingos they would associate themselves with the most.

"For example, bolder birds had stronger, more consistent ties, with other bold birds, while submissive birds tended to spend their time with fellow submissive flamingos," study co-author and animal behavioural scientist Dr Paul Rose, a research associate at WWT and lecturer at the University of Exeter, explained.



VERY LOST IN THE POST

A letter written in February 1916 has arrived at a flat in south London more than 100 years later, *BBC News* has reported. The envelope, which has a Bath postmark and a 1d (one old penny) stamp bearing the head of George V, eventually arrived at Finlay Glen's flat on Hamlet Road, Crystal Palace. "We were obviously pretty surprised and mystified as to how it could have been sat around for more than 100 years," said Finley, while Royal Mail said it remained 'uncertain what happened in this instance'. The letter was sent two years before World War I rationing was introduced and King George V had been on the throne for five years.



Micromanagement - what it is, its impact and how to prevent it



DAVID CARNE, school business professional and executive coach, on how to avoid

becoming a micromanager - and how to deal with a boss who is one

At some point in most people's careers, they will encounter a micromanager - according to data, at least 79% of the workforce have worked for a micromanager at some point in their career. Instead of providing a healthy balance between autonomy and accountability, the micromanager needs to control everything. In some specific situations this can be positive

but, as a general style, it has the potential to seriously harm an organisation. Typical behaviours of a micromanager include:

- Requiring all actions to be approved through them.
- Dismissing the knowledge, skills, and experience of others.
- Believing others lack the competence to complete their work to an acceptable standard.
- Requiring constant updates on trivial details.
- An inability to move out of the operational into the strategic.
- Focusing on mistakes, problems and weaknesses over achievements.
- Failing to recognise improvements and efforts made by others.
- Not listening to, or dismissing, ideas, suggestions or alternative courses of action without proper consideration.

Consequently, micromanagers often work long hours to fit in a stream of back-to-back meetings with subordinates, and complete work they don't trust anyone else to do. They quickly

Micromanagement is usually a symptom of weak and insecure leadership

become a log-jam, as nothing can proceed without their say so. Ironically, the micromanager will often interpret this inaction as evidence of incompetence, further boosting their view that their subordinates cannot be trusted. However, rather than coach, train and develop their team, the micromanager will usually become overly directive and hypercritical.

Micromanagement is usually a symptom of weak and insecure leadership, in the same way as styles like coercive leadership are. There is a wealth of research on micromanagement and, to summarise, in almost every situation over the long-term, micromanagement is highly destructive. Findings include reductions in employee engagement, motivation, trust, performance, creativity, collaboration, focus, staff morale, self-confidence, self-esteem and commitment, and an increase in stress, frustration, workplace conflict, risk-aversion, communication breakdowns and defiant behaviour including aggression, depression, anxiety, fatigue, sickness absence and staff turnover.

The lack of growth and development among employees, and the perception that their work lacks substance and is unfulfilling, usually leads to stagnation. So how do you avoid becoming a micromanager, or deal with a boss who is one?

1 Figure out why the micromanagement is occurring

Usually, the need to control things comes out of fear. This might be a fear of failure, fear of not delivering adequate quality, fear of not knowing what is happening, fear of not appearing to be the smartest person in the room, or a fear of loss of power. If you can identify the source of fear, you can begin to develop strategies to provide reassurance and reduce it.

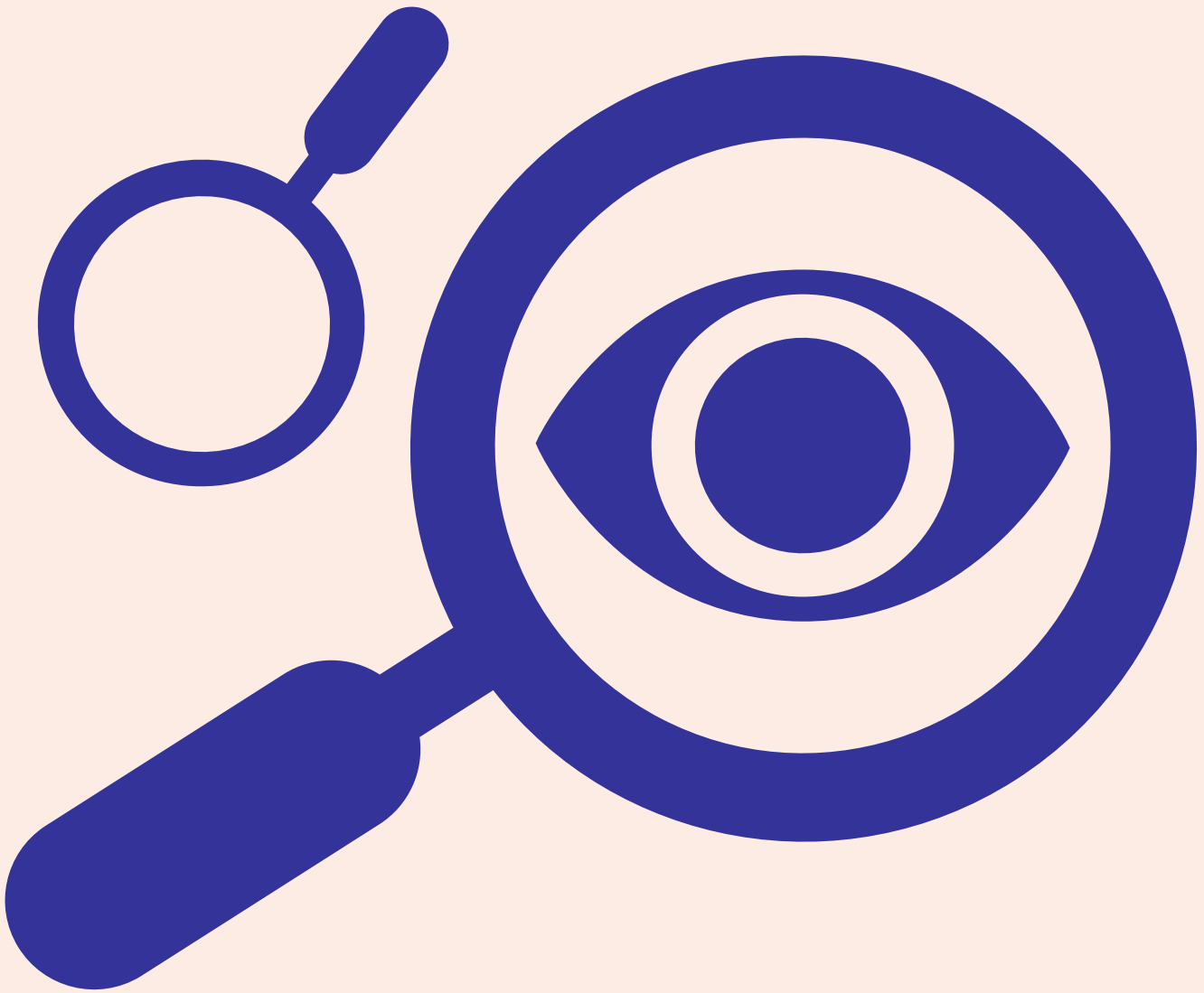
2 Consider whether there is a way to build trust

Consider how you can develop your team/yourself to a point where you trust them/your boss trusts you with more autonomy. You might consider a coaching approach and provide or ask for coaching; in this way you could work on creating a shared understanding of what meeting expectations means. Start small by providing or asking for autonomy on something which is not mission critical and then, assuming that goes well, move on to something more significant.

Are there behaviours you are demonstrating which might be adding to the lack of trust or fear of sharing information with you? If subordinates fear they will be criticised, or if your boss fears they will be left uninformed, that may be contributing to the need to adopt a more micromanaging style. You may not be able to build the trust, but it is important to at least try.

3 Try a structured approach

It might be helpful to introduce a more systematic approach to managing tasks. Introducing a project management tool, or using software, might help keep track of progress, rather than requiring frequent updates. Personally, I like a good Gantt chart; at the very least, agreeing and sticking to deadlines at the outset should allay some fears. ►



Statistics show that around 30% of people have quit their roles because of being micromanaged

4

Address real concerns

If you are micromanaging because those you have responsibility for are underperforming, put in place the support, training and encouragement needed so they can improve. Conversely, if you are experiencing a boss who micromanages, try asking for feedback on what they perceive to be the areas you need to address - that might be uncomfortable, but maybe they will respect the fact you are willing to address them.

5

Communicate clearly

Establish clear expectations and be clear about what is expected of you. Get clarification if you need to. If you have a concern about an individual, raise it in a supportive way and put together a plan to address it. If you are being

micromanaged, consider tactfully saying you don't feel your manager trusts you, and that you deserve the chance to complete your work and be judged on the outcome - you will know whether that conversation is likely to have impact; often a good way to tell is to see if there is anyone on the team they do trust and, if there is, you know it is at least possible to achieve that lofty status.

6

If you have tried everything else, walk away

Clearly you can't walk away from yourself if you are a micromanager, but you can walk away from a role which causes you to be fearful and that is driving you to over-manage others. If you have tried every other strategy, and there is no improvement in your manager's behaviour, it may be time to consider a change of role.

Both the decisions above require deep and careful consideration, weighing up the impact the situation is having against the potential risks of changing role. Deciding well may require professional advice, counselling or coaching. However, statistics show that around 30% of people have quit their roles because of being micromanaged.

I strongly encourage you, as a leader, to do what you can to avoid micromanaging others - and if you are the one being micromanaged, to work through the six steps above to try to tackle it. ■

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