

## Baddeley and James<sup>1</sup> Political Skills Model - Reading and Carrying

**Reading**.....” an individual’s ability to read an organisation: to read it’s decision processes, it’s overt and covert agendas, the location and bases of power inside and outside the organisation, one’s own power bases and abilities to exercise influence, the organisational culture and it’s style, it’s political purpose and direction, it’s small and large ‘p’ politics”

**Carrying**.....” an individual’s predisposition to act with integrity or engage in ‘psychological game playing’ (as described in Berne’s Transactional Analysis model, 1968). “Game playing is self oriented.....the pay off for playing psychological games is that the player’s feelings about himself or herself and about the rest of the world are conformed. In the process, someone ends up feeling bad. When people act with integrity in their dealings with others their behaviour does not involve the compulsion to engage in exchanges with this kind of pay off

In the research carried out by James and Arroba<sup>2</sup> the two dimensions that are found to be key in the political environs of public sector organisations were the ability to place a focus on

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<sup>1</sup> The contents of this handout are taken from:a) an article by Simon Baddeley and Kim James of the Institute of Local Government, University of Birmingham: Owl, Fox, Donkey or Sheep:Political Skills for Managers’ (published in Management Education and Development Vol.18 1987

<sup>2</sup> b) an article by Kim James and Tanya Arroba, Cranfield School of Management: Reading and Carrying: a framework for learning about emotion and emotionality in organisational systems as a core aspect of leadership development: Management Learning, Vol. 36, No. 3, 299-316 (2005)

reading the situation, combined with the ability to manage what is personally being carried into **the situation**.

The dimension of Reading means having the willingness and ability to turn attention outwards to Read the context. There are two poles to this dimension. At one end lies the ability to clearly focus outwards and grasp the less than obvious aspects of the organisational setting, gather intelligence and act on it appropriately. At the other end, behaviour is reflected in an unwillingness or inability to focus outwards, or only to Read the situation through a constrained and limited lens. It is the ability to appreciate the need to Read the situation, backed up by skill in doing so, that characterises good Reading capacity.

The dimension of Carrying, managing what is being carried into a situation, means having the ability to tune into the internal world and be aware of what thoughts and feelings are present, understanding the basis for what is being carried, using this information and making conscious choices about action.

To be able to 'Read' and 'Carry' well requires the manager to become aware of aspects of the organisation that are usually not attended to and even actively avoided because they are perceived have a negative affect for the organisation. Without awareness of difficult emotions that underpin observable behaviour, much organisation behaviour is puzzling; the manager who can't understand why a perfectly good plan is not being executed may have few choices for intervening if s/he doesn't grasp that it is underwater rocks their ship has run into.

#### **Using the 4 box matrix to understand behaviours:**

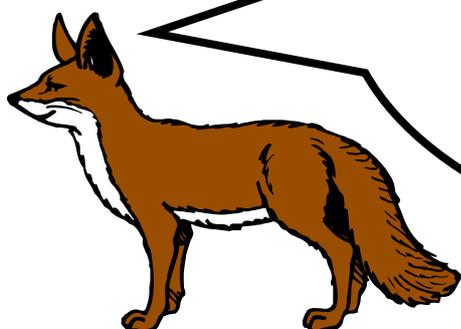
- Where an integrated sense of self resulting from the experience of being either comfortable with one's capability or perception of being on familiar territory meet an unskilled Reading of the environment, the result is **Innocent behaviour**
- Where unskilled Reading meets lack of self-insight, the 'choice' is frequently ego defensive behaviour as a way of defending the self in situations that one cannot make sense of or feel good in. We call this option **Inept**.
- Where skilled Reading meets self-serving and defensive ego needs the resulting behaviour is likely to be controlling and manipulative. We call this **Clever** behaviour.
- Where skilled Reading meets self-insight and willingness to put oneself at the edge of what is familiar, to risk new options because the situation calls for one's highest values to be exercised then the **Wise** option is chosen.

In complex organisational settings, people need the ability to simultaneously understand the world 'out there' and their interior world, make sense of both and choose appropriate behaviour and that we all have the ability to act in all four ways. The strength of the model lies in understanding how each of us can be Wise one minute and Inept the next. The external world we need to Read is in constant flux and the interior world is equally variable and the interface between the two is crucial in making informed choice of action.

## Typical “clever” behaviours

- interested in power and in associating with the focus of power
- unprincipled, inner goal oriented, not ethical
- wants to be seen as powerful
- thinks before speaking, aggressive but well masked, charming manner
- can stimulate feelings, plans, actions
- doesn't display feelings spontaneously
- asks 'what information do I have? What information do I need?'
- checks gossip, rumour, is aware of others viewpoints
- sees realities, knows how the formal processes work
- basically insecure, but well defended
- always leaves jobs before mistakes are discovered
- manipulates situations so as to appear never to make mistakes
- can make procedures work for them, hustler, wide-boy, card shark
- knows how the formal and informal organisation works
- knows 'who cares, who can, who knows'
- gets support, good at ingratiating, bargains, manipulates
- likes games involving winners and losers
- can recognise and exploit key weaknesses in allies and opponents

### Most likely to say ...



- 'Leave it to me, I'll have a word with him, he's out of touch'
- 'I think it would be unwise for me to take this one, it's very delicate. How about you... you know how good you are'
- 'I have discussed this very thoroughly already and were united in this' (actually rubbish!)
- 'I share some of his / her feelings on this matter, if not quite so passionately'

## Typical “wise” behaviours

- aware of purpose
- interested in direction in association with power and purpose
- can cope with being disliked, good interpersonal skills
- personal values / ethics, thinks before speaking, assertive, tactful, emotionally literate, plans actions, checks gossip / rumour
- excellent listener, is aware of others' viewpoints
- takes account of other people personally
- sees realities, knows how the formal processes work
- non-defensive, learns from mistakes, reflects on events
- can make procedures work for them
- sense of loyalty
- capacity for friendship
- knows the formal and informal organisations
- open, shares information
- in tune with the grapevine
- recognises who knows, who cares, who can
- gets support
- negotiates / co-operates
- likes win-win situations

### Most likely to say ...



- ‘how are we going to get this sorted out?’
- ‘I wonder what’s lying behind these ideas?’
- ‘Let’s look at the ways we can speed this up and get over the difficulties’
- ‘Let me make sure I understand what you’re asking for’
- ‘I don’t think I’ve been understanding you, can I have another go?’

## Typical “inept” behaviours

- not skilled interpersonally
- unprincipled
- hates to be ignored, likes to associate with authority
- inner-goal oriented
- doesn't recognise 'direction', doesn't appreciate political purpose
- plays psychological games but doesn't read those of others
- emotionally literate
- concerned with own feelings rather than others
- predisposed to projection, attribution and paranoia
- makes judgements / decisions based on feelings rather than knowledge of the bureaucracy or organisational procedures
- not ethical
- interpersonally inept at making alliances / coalitions
- tends to say 'shall we take a vote?' in the wrong setting
- doesn't listen to others
- tries hard to be nice but doesn't know how
- sees things as 'either / or'
- not tuned into grapevine, blocked antennae
- given to clichés – 'you know me', with all due respect'

### Most likely to say ...

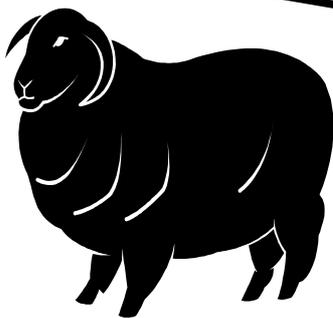


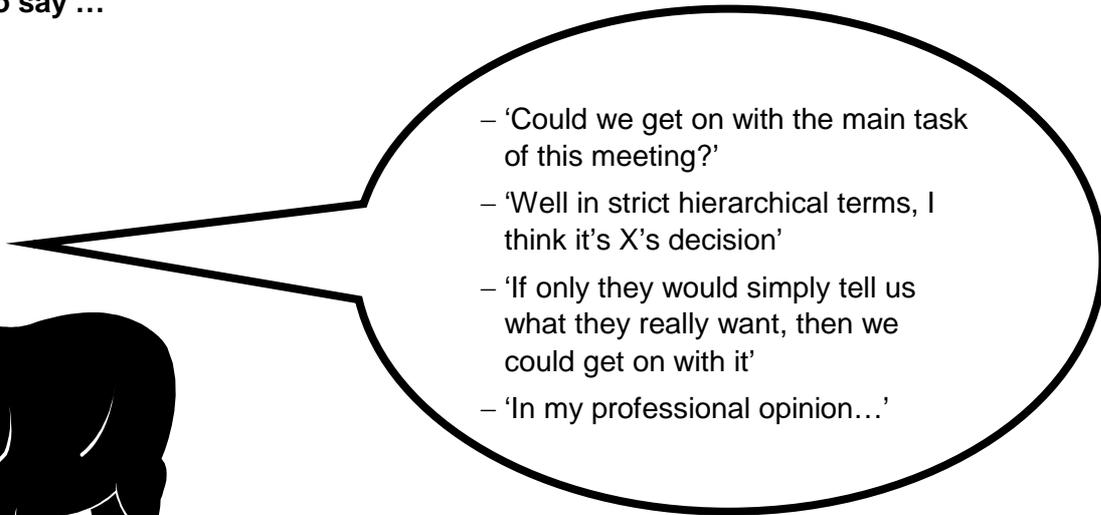
- 'Let's decide what we want and make it look like what they want'
- Well, we all know how he got his job, don't we?'
- If the chairman wants to come to our meeting, we'll just have to tell him he can't come'

## Typical “innocent” behaviours

- principled, ethical
- tends to rely on authority
- doesn't appreciate political purpose
- doesn't network, doesn't know how to get support
- listens but does not hear
- sticks to ethical, organisational and professional rules
- understands content, but not process of procedures
- exaggerated respect for rationality
- literal
- believes you are powerful if you are right
- wouldn't know a double message if it hit between the eyes by it
- sense of loyalty
- capacity for friendship
- open, shares information
- sees things as 'either / or'

### Most likely to say ...



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- ‘Could we get on with the main task of this meeting?’
  - ‘Well in strict hierarchical terms, I think it's X's decision’
  - ‘If only they would simply tell us what they really want, then we could get on with it’
  - ‘In my professional opinion...’

Political awareness has been adapted from the work of Simon Baddeley and Dr. Kim James, of the Institute of Local Government Studies, Birmingham University.

<http://www.inlogov.bham.ac.uk/>