



Alternative Facts: Research in Applied Organisational Psychology – IOSIG 21 March 2017

**Panel: Keith Macky, Carl Sanders-Edwards, Cynthia Johnson,
Helena Cooper-Thomas**

Evidence-Based Management in a Post-Truth World. By Dr Keith Macky (AFHRINZ)

It is now said that we live in a “post-truth” world – one where ‘appeals to emotion and personal beliefs are more influential than objective facts’ (Oxford Dictionary). Indeed the statement ‘we live in a post-truth world’ may itself be post-truth! Apparently ‘post-truth’ was used “2000% more often in 2016 than in 2015” according to the Oxford Dictionary. An ‘alternative fact’ anyone?


But hang on a minute - haven’t we always lived in a post-truth epoch. Heard of politics anyone? And haven’t there always been multiple truths based on beliefs? (anything ending in “ism” meets this criterion – capitalism, communism, globalism, internationalism, fascism, etc etc.)

And since the advent of post-modernism, don’t we also now allow for the possibility that truth is relative rather than absolute?

And don’t constructivists explicitly assert that truths can be socially manufactured through discourse; that in effect through language shared meaning is produced and reality therefore constructed. “A lie told often enough becomes the truth” (Vladimir Lenin)

Plus there are mathematical truths; truths based on logic that defeat falsification; and truths based on empirical observation.

So given all these opportunities for multiple truths to exist simultaneously, I am pretty relaxed about a ‘post-truth’ world.



Evidence-Based Management in a Post-Truth World. By Dr Keith Macky (AFHRINZ) - continued

“**ALTERNATIVE FACTS**” are much more dangerous. Because these are not facts at all. They are opinions, assertions, assumptions, rhetoric and outright lies presented to us as if they are knowledge. So while not all things that we believe to be true constitute knowledge; **all knowledge must have a truth requirement. If it's not true, it's not knowledge!** (aka epistemology 101) And the idea of evidence-based management means **making decisions made on the basis of knowledge**; on the basis of evidence that is reliable, valid and verifiable as true (within stated levels of confidence).

Alternative facts are not evidence! We should NOT make decisions based upon them. And therein rests the real problem - when those in positions of power and authority spread alternative facts / **lies** as if they are true. Leaders who not only blatantly lie, but who then accuse those who challenge them as the ‘real liars’, as purveyors of “fake news”. **Does any of this matter?**

YES because what those hawkers of alternative facts are really doing is undermining is **TRUST** – the glue that holds human society together and the basis by which informed managerial decisions are made under conditions of uncertainty. Without trust, we retreat into the safety of cliques; into ingroups with shared ‘isms’ hostile to outgroups who believe in different ‘isms’. And we all know as psychologists where that takes us...And in business, without trusted sources of fact-based knowledge, decisions instead are made on hearsay, assumption, ‘gut feeling’, and whatever passes as the current management fad, fashion or folderol.

To counter this we need to maintain and strengthen our credibility and integrity as IO Psychologists; as sources of reliable, valid and value adding evidence based advice. Do not succumb to the temptation of becoming a purveyor of fads and fashions. And put a lot more effort into preserving the integrity of our peer review processes. So while there may always have been a “post-truth era”, the advent of the notion of ‘alternative facts’ (lies, clichés, and empty rhetoric) is a scourge on society and the nemesis of business.

And ultimately are a means to deceive, control and exploit a population. Believe me. It's true. Awful. I heard it somewhere...



People performing at their potential makes a difference



COSTS OF DISENGAGEMENT

Disengaged workers cost the US \$450-\$550 billion

Top quartile teams outperform bottom-quartile teams by **10%** in customer ratings, **21%** in productivity, and **22%** in profitability



IMPACTS ON COMPANY GROWTH

Companies on the global productivity frontier combine **technological**, organisational, and **human capital improvements** – and grow between **2X** and **16X** faster than their competitors



SMALL TWEAKS IMPACT PERFORMANCE

15min reflection at the end of a day boosts individual performance by 23%



IMPACTS ON PROFITS

If a leader does just three things well, they move from the **34th** percentile in performance ratings to the **81st** percentile in ratings
These extraordinary leaders **double profits**

The 'knowing
doing' gap

The world has
changed

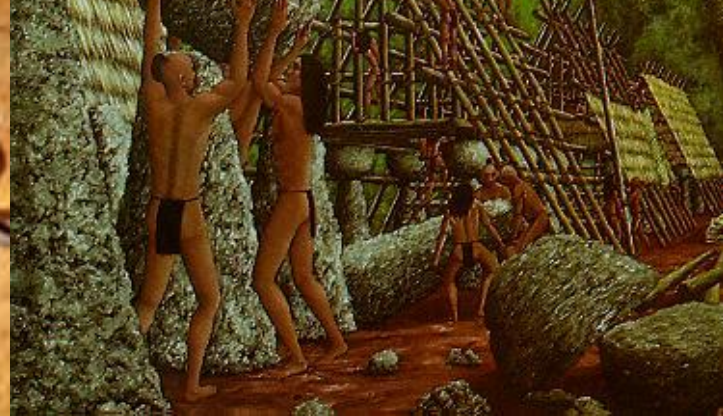
Back to the
future

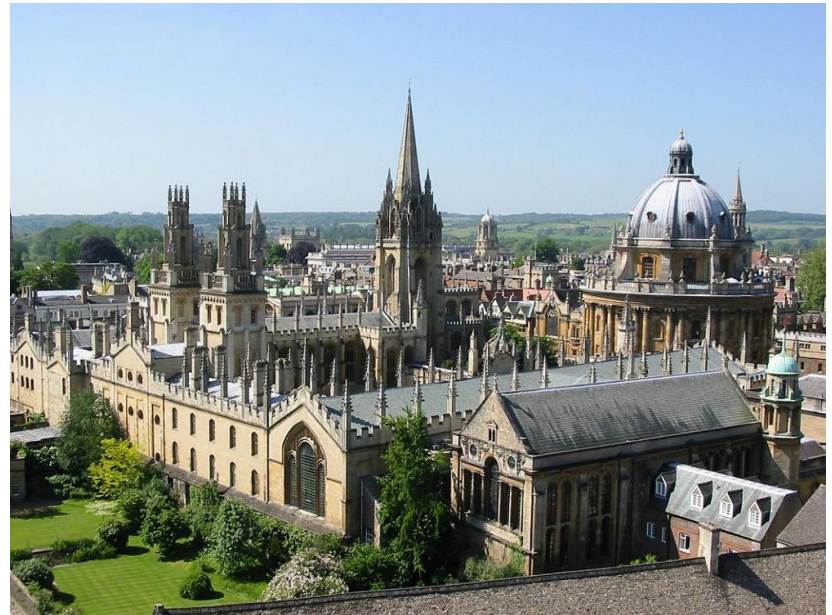
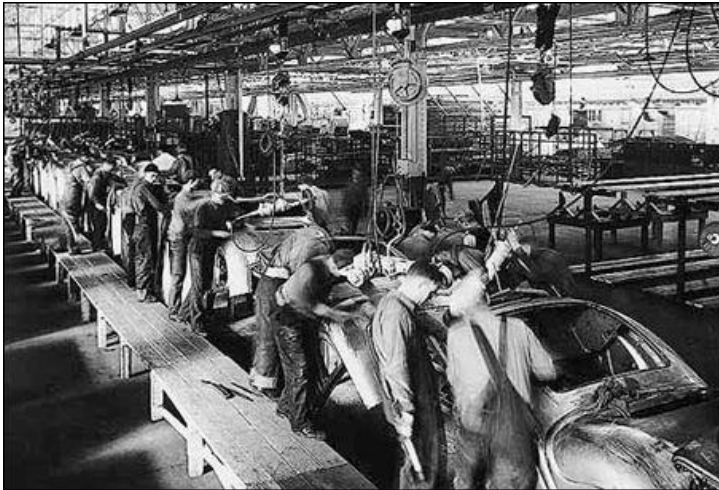
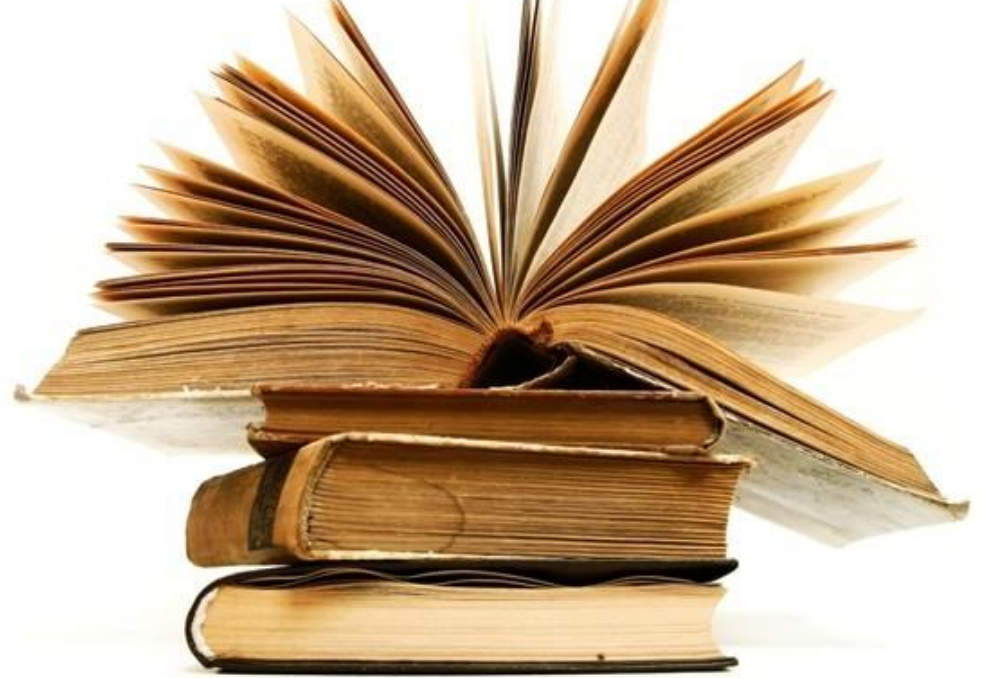


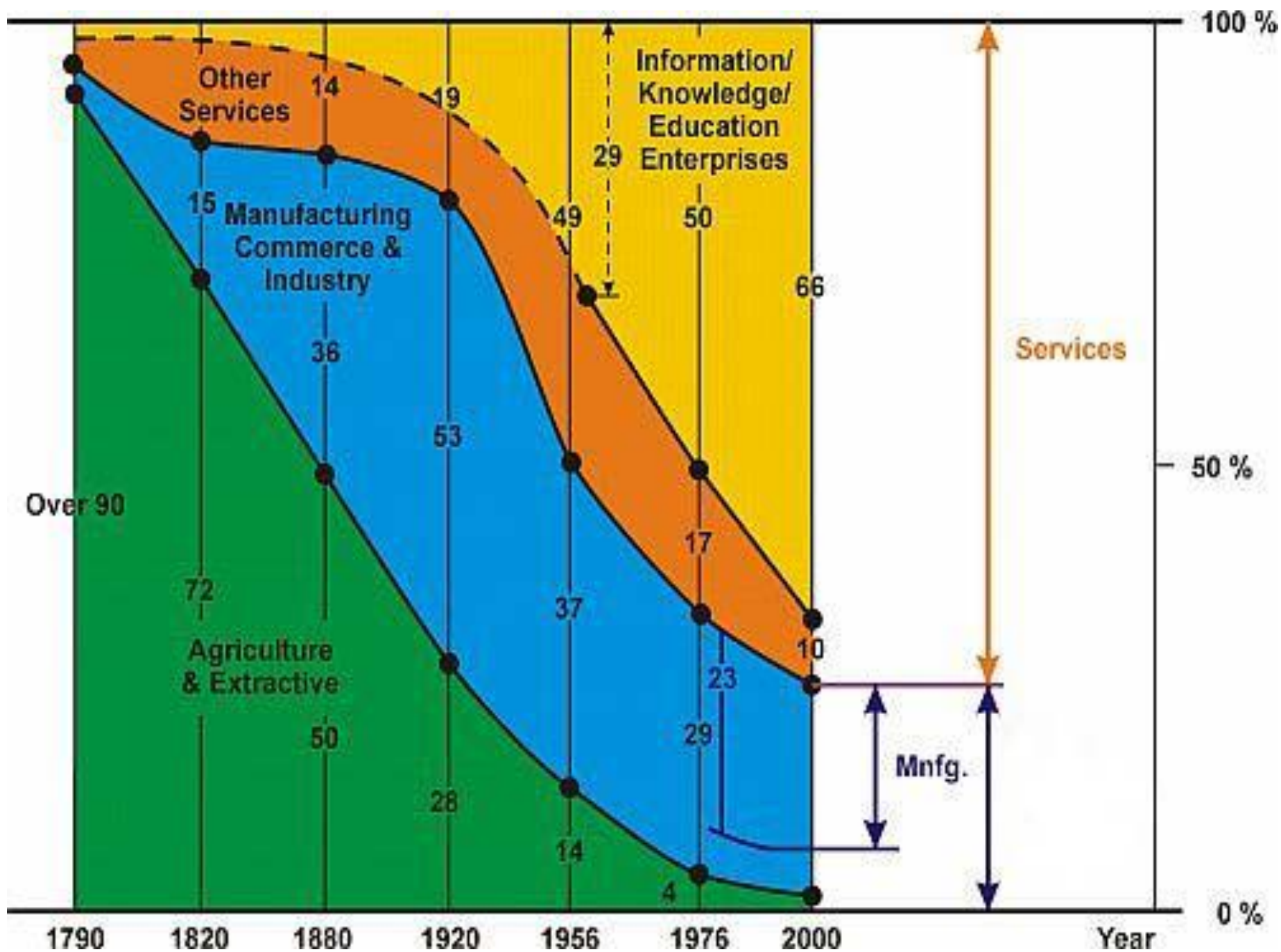
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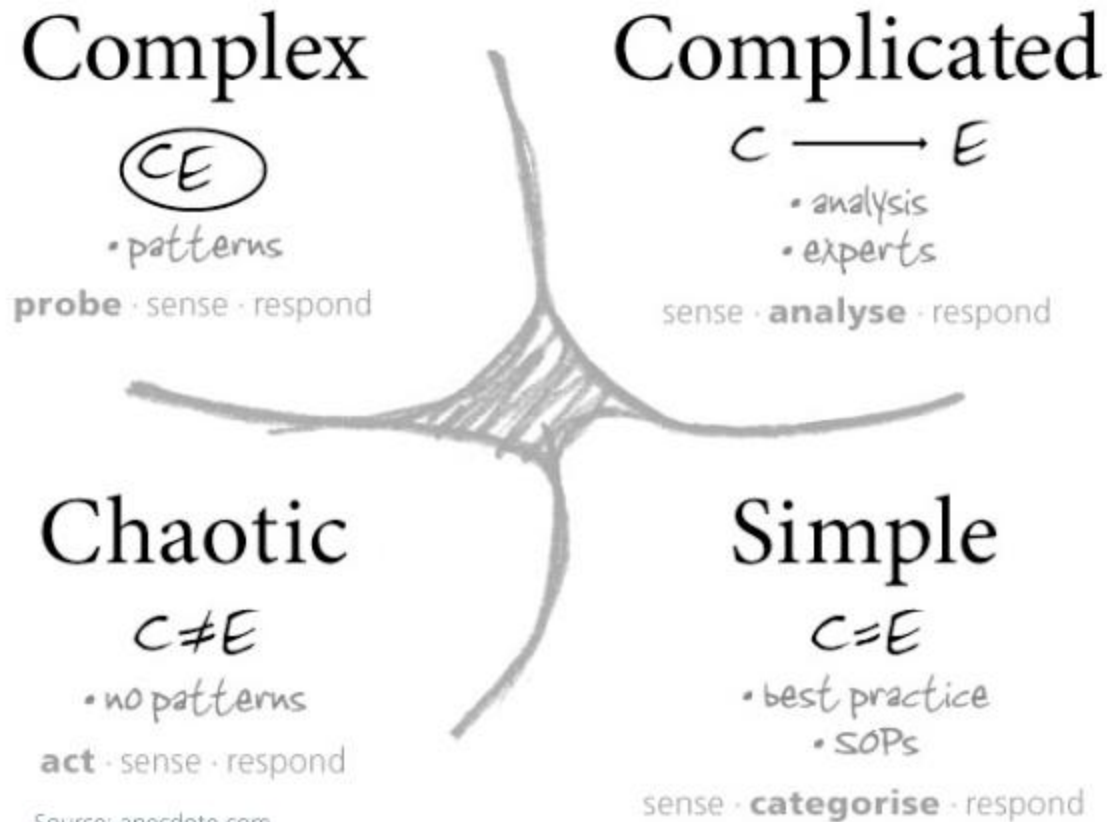






Source: Strategies for service innovation – Babson 2012

Our challenges have moved back to the left side



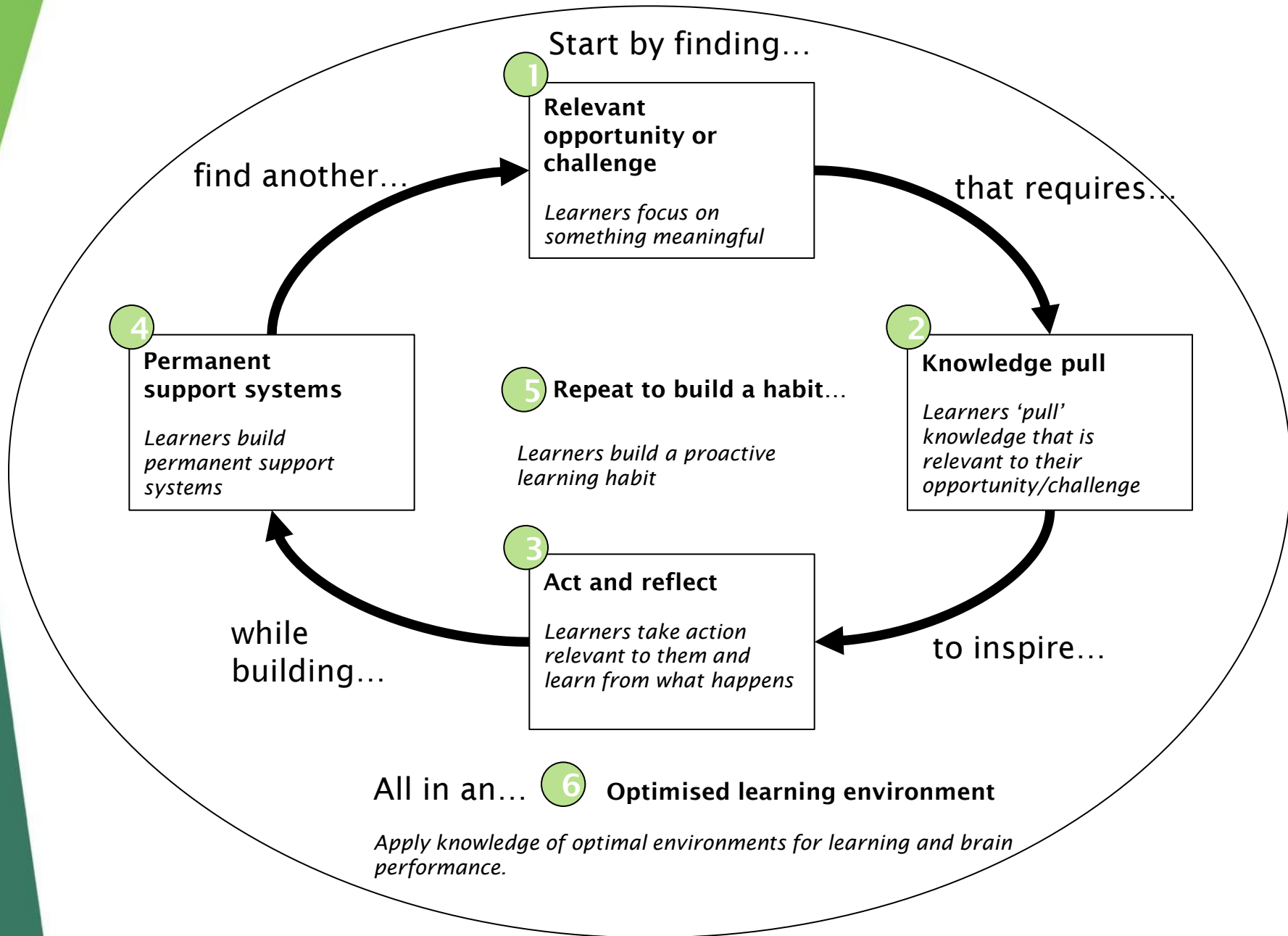
Source: anecdote.com
Adapted from Snowden et. al. (2007)

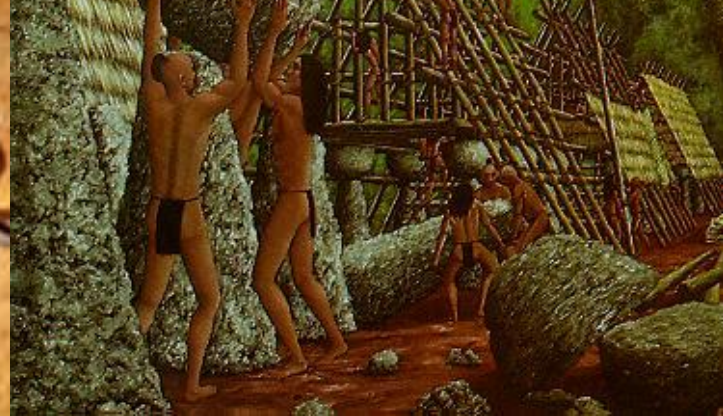
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Josh Bersin, Bersin by Deloitte

**The demand for easy-to-use professional
development is red hot**

**The “learning experience platform” is primed to
become an important disruptive force
throughout corporate learning**

BUT there is a catch...

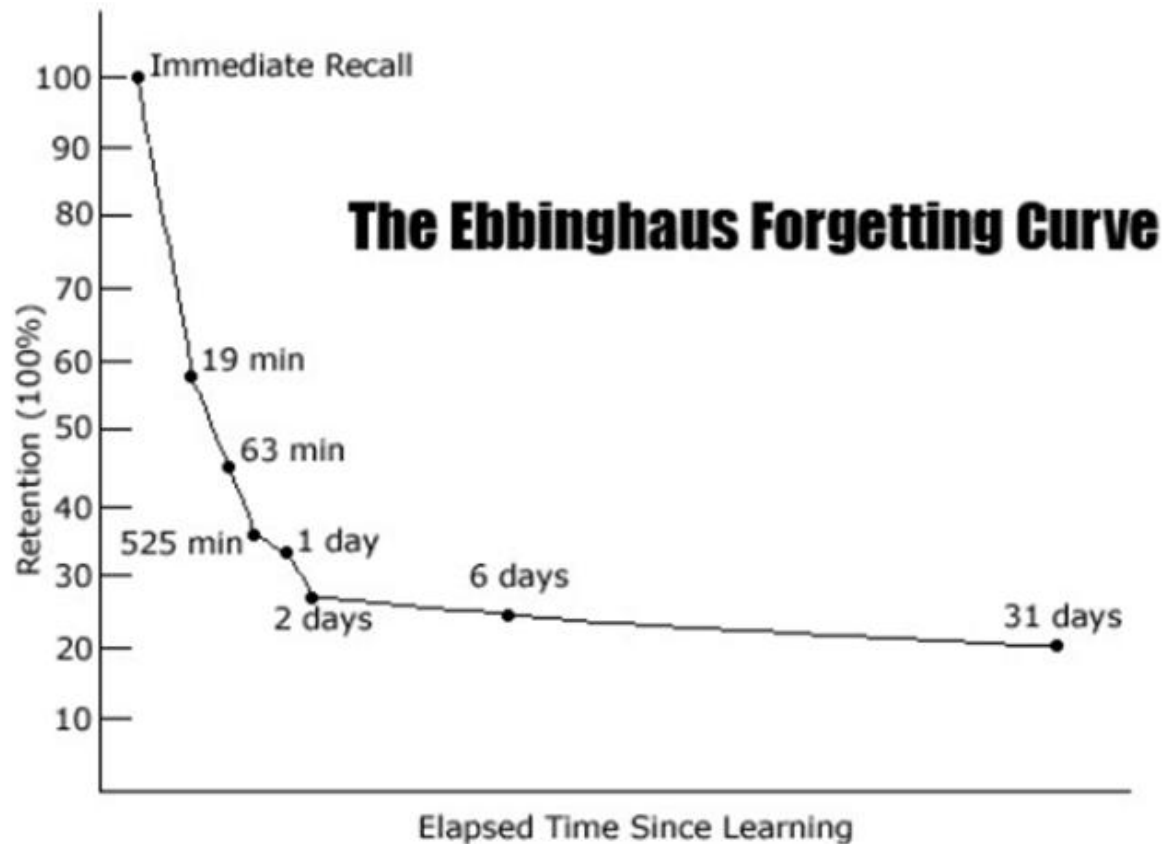
RESERVE SLIDES

Potential to support discussion

Three questions to get us thinking

1. Think of a person you have seen really develop.... What caused / most helped the development
2. Why is this important to you – what benefit could more development bring?
3. Why is development hard – why are our efforts not as effective as they could be?

Latest thinking – 1885!

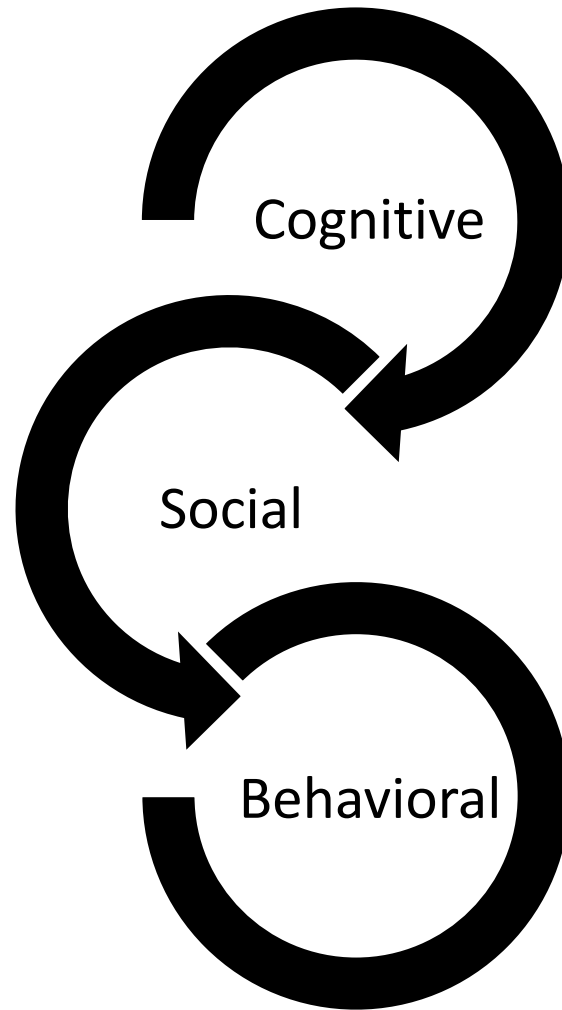


Hermann Ebbinghaus



But what about ‘boosting’ with technology?

Nice BUT what does it take to change behaviour?



- <10% Cognitive – *“Remind me what we learnt”*
- >30% Social – *“Show me what my peers are doing”*
- >60% Behavioural – *“Prompt me to take action and reflect on results”*

Other People's Answers

Think of a person you have seen really develop as a leader. What most helped/caused that development?



Why do many leadership development efforts fail to deliver on their potential?



The hunt for good evidence

Helena Cooper-Thomas

Professor of Organizational Behaviour

What I'll cover

1

Why the panic
over evidence? -
Questionable
Research
Practices (QRPs)

2

Deductive
versus
inductive
approaches

3

A focus on
evidence

4

Where to find
good evidence



1. Why the panic over evidence?

Questionable research practices (QRPs)


Why the panic over evidence?

Organisational psychology is meant to be about rigorous research processes that provide good evidence

- Our value is undermined if our evidence base cannot be trusted

So what is the problem

- Some researchers writing about questionable research practices (QRPs) that result in poor quality evidence
 1. Evidence of poor practices in surveys of researchers
 2. Actions taken against researchers who have been found to be using QRPs (mostly fabricating data & self-plagiarism)



2. Deductive versus inductive approaches



Deductive versus inductive approaches

Deductive approach

- Develop a hypothesis based on theory
- Assess whether the evidence does or does not support the hypothesis

Inductive approach

- Observing data and looking for patterns
- NB used for big data and some qualitative approaches (e.g. content analysis)

Why does this matter

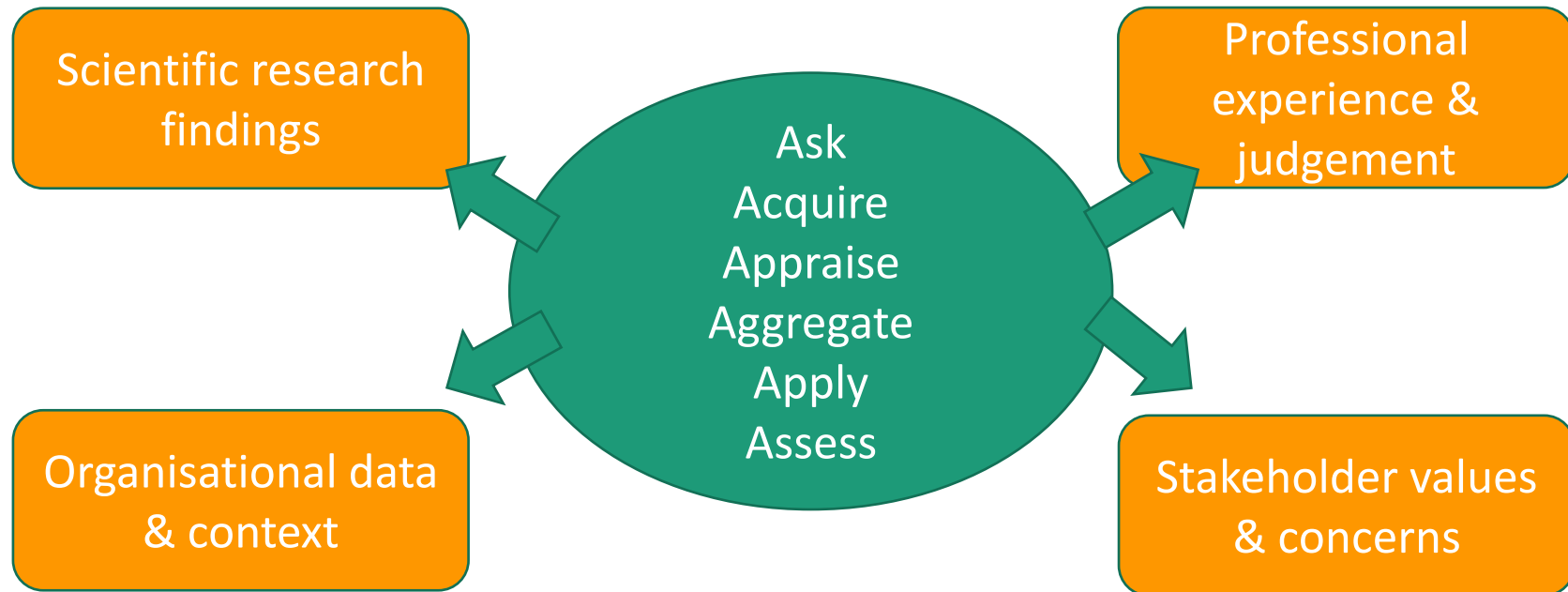
- Hypothetico-deductive testing seen as the gold standard
 - Problems of researchers trying to force their research to fit
 - E.g., forcing hypotheses onto inductive research post-hoc; p-hacking and HARKing about trying to look like good hypothetico-deductive research
 - Much of this would be unnecessary if we allowed inductive methods – and journals are moving to be friendlier to inductive research
 - Part of allowing a plurality of methods for doing research

A decorative background on the left side of the slide, composed of numerous blue triangles of various shades (dark blue, medium blue, light blue) arranged in a complex, overlapping pattern that tapers off towards the right.

3. A focus on evidence

A focus on evidence

- Evidence-based management/ medicine/ science/ practice etc. approaches





4. Where to find good evidence

Where to find good evidence

Academic research findings

Academic journals – alumni access, SIOP, BPS, ResearchGate
Learned society white papers – SHRM/ SIOP, GAOP
Practitioner/ consultant white papers – quality control?
Products you purchase – ask the question!

Organisational data & context

Data collected in early project scoping

Professional experience & judgement

Yourself – reflection
Peers – sounding board
Professional coach - expertise

Stakeholder values & concerns

Data collected as part of the project

Evidence from Academia

Academic research findings

- SIOP – Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology – www.siop.org
- BPS – British Psychological Society
- University libraries – associate member status for a fee
- NB some journals specifically for practitioners
 - Organizational Dynamics
 - Academy of Management Perspectives

Learned Societies

Learned society
white papers

- SIOP/ SHRM: <http://www.siop.org/SIOP-SHRM%5Cdefault.aspx>
 - [Understanding Nonstandard Work Arrangements: Using Research to Inform Practice](#)
 - [Optimizing Perceived Organizational Support to Enhance Employee Engagement](#)
 - [Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Mature Workers](#)
- GAOP – forthcoming <http://www.allianceorgpsych.org/> but have SIOP's International Affairs Committee White Paper Subcommittee have publications here
 - [Achieving Well-being in Retirement: Recommendations from 20 Years' Research](#)
 - [What We Know About Youth Employment: Research Summary and Best Practices](#)

Where to find good evidence IV

Plus some academics
excellent at
dissemination

- Adam Grant...
- Daniel Cable...
- Dan Ariely
- Bob Kegan
- Others...?