

management focus

essential management knowledge for today's leaders

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March/April 2010**

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*Fibbing by e-mail: commentary
with Charles Naquin*

**An interview with:
Anders Aspling**



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Welcome to Management Focus

... and welcome to the March/April issue.

What is it about e-mail? In recent years, researchers who have compared e-mail to other modes of communication have found it to be associated with such unattractive behaviours as lower interpersonal trust, more negative attitudes, and, perhaps most notoriously, a greater penchant for “flaming” – sending messages that are offensive, embarrassing, or rude.

To these unwelcome behaviours, new research adds still another one of equal, if not more, importance – a greater readiness to tell lies. Find out more in “Fibbing by e-mail”, a commentary with Charles Naquin.

Anders Aspling is the son of Sven Aspling, a former famous Swedish political leader who played the role of ombudsman in the transfer of Nordic refugees during World War II. While holding the position of president and dean of IFL – the Swedish Institute of Management – Anders Aspling helped it almost double its revenues, become the leading Northern European Executive/Management Development Institute, and receive accreditation by the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) as one of the first 19 pioneering schools.

In this interview, find out what Anders has to say about his day-to-day role at the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, his transition between academic and corporate leadership experiences and the key challenges involved in developing globally responsible leaders.

Finally, our latest issue of *Management Matters* discusses the subject of business strategy.

Remember, log on to our website at <http://first.emeraldinsight.com> to expand on the topics highlighted in this issue of *Management Focus*.

Best wishes,

Debbie Hepton

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Fibbing by e-mail:

commentary with
Charles Naquin



New research finds that when using e-mail, people feel more justified in lying.

A study presented at the recent annual meeting of the Academy of Management finds people are significantly more willing to lie in e-mails than in communication with pen and paper, even when both are done in relative anonymity. Moreover, people using e-mail feel more justified in lying.

"The results of our study illustrate that traditional pen-and-paper communication is indeed different from e-mail in the way it influences people's behaviours, even though both are text only," concludes the study's lead author, Professor Charles Naquin of DePaul University, along with his co-authors Terri Kurtzberg of Rutgers University, and Liuba Belkin of Lehigh University.

What is it about e-mail? In recent years, researchers who have compared e-mail to other modes of communication have found it to be associated with such unattractive behaviours as lower interpersonal trust, more negative attitudes, and, perhaps most notoriously, a greater penchant for "flaming" – sending messages that are offensive, embarrassing, or rude. To these unwelcome behaviours, new research adds still another one of equal, if not more, importance – a greater readiness to tell lies.

The difference in the propensity to lie, which emerged in a series of experiments, was substantial. The findings come as something of a surprise, since there is a sizable body of media research that views e-mails as exactly equivalent to pen and paper communications, even while considering

both to be quite different from conversing face to face or by phone.

In trying to account for the difference between two communication modes that appear similar, the researchers surmise that people may "feel pen and paper documents carry stronger legal consequences than do e-mails, which feel fleeting in nature, despite the fact that they are actually harder to erase or contain. Thus, deception may be viewed differently in the e-mail vs the pen and paper environments."

And they add: "Overall, the lower degree of social obligation found in the use of e-mail versus paper, coupled with ambiguity for communication norms and lack of formal rules, procedures, and expectations regarding e-mail, may allow individuals to tap into a sense of psychological justification for their deviant behaviours (such as deception) more easily online than in the paper mode."

In one experiment carried out as part of the new research, 48 graduate business students participated in an ultimatum bargaining game nicknamed "Dictator." Participants were given an imaginary \$89 and told that they should divide it as they saw fit with a second party, who would have to accept whatever split was offered. Each subject was told that the second party, who, in fact, didn't exist, knew only that the pot size was between \$5 and \$100; as part of the arrangement, the participant would have to reveal the amount of money being divided as well as what the split would be.

Twenty-six participants were asked to send this information by e-mail to the class instructor (who supposedly would inform the second party), and the remaining 22 were to write it on a piece

of paper, which they were to drop in the instructor's secure mailbox. Although in both instances the instructor would know their response, subjects were assured that the second party in this exercise would never know their identity and vice versa. All subjects were given five days to provide the information.

Among the e-mail group, 24 of 26 participants (92.31 per cent) misrepresented the pot size, compared to 14 of 22 (63.64 per cent) in the pen-and-paper group. In other words, the rate of lying was almost 50 per cent greater among the e-mailers.

In addition, participants in the e-mail group lied more egregiously: on average, they represented the \$89 pot to be \$56.15 compared to an average of \$67.32 for the pen-and-paper group. In both cases, offers were roughly half of the reported pot size, meaning that e-mailers offered the second party significantly less than the pen-and-paper group did.

At the conclusion of the experiment, participants were asked, "How justified would it be if you misrepresented the size of your pot to the recipient?" On a scale of 1 (not at all justified) to 7 (very justified), the e-mail group averaged 4.77 compared to 3.91 for the pen-and-paper group, a difference that was statistically significant.

To test whether this greater sense of self-justification among e-mailers simply reflected the fact that more of them had already lied – and had lied more egregiously – the researchers carried out a second experiment with a different cohort of 56 graduate business students. The exercise was similar to the prior one except in this case participants were asked to assess their sense of justification before they informed the second party about the size of the pot and the way it would be split. Once again e-mailers reported feeling significantly more justified to lie. This time 25 of 28 e-mailers (89.29 per cent) misrepresented the size of the pot, compared to 19 of 28 (67.85 per cent) among writers, and once again e-mailers lied more egregiously about the pot size.

While conceding that the experiments revealed a considerable amount of deception, Prof. Naquin credited the participants with forthrightness in their answers. "Since no real money was at stake, they would have lost nothing by simply giving truthful information to the supposed second party; that they didn't choose that path suggests that they took the exercises seriously." Then he adds: "I expect, though, that if the experiments had involved real money, we would have seen even more dramatic effects."

The full research summary of the study, entitled "Being honest online: the finer points of lying in online ultimatum bargaining," will appear later in 2010 in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

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who played the role of ombudsman in the transfer of Nordic refugees during World War II.

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As a member of the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) Board, he has worked on a variety of assignments spanning more than ten years. This engagement is still growing and the assignments are expanding.

Alistair Craven: Can you tell us about your day-to-day role at the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI)?

Anders Aspling: It is on the one hand keeping the coordination from our management centre going, and increasing the efficiency with which we can connect and work together throughout the global community that we are, and on the other hand to spend time focusing on our external relations, communication, advocacy and strategic partnerships and development.

From January 1 this year we have a new Chief Executive in place. Mark Drewell is an experienced business executive and has been engaged in sustainability work throughout his career. He has spent the last 15 years as an executive in South Africa, and he played an important part in the process of transition in the early 1990s. With Mark joining us, a new and next phase of development for the centre and for the whole partnership and the GRLI as such will take off. I will remain Secretary-General, and will in that role, on a part-time basis, support Mark on strategic issues and attend to specific issues where my experience is of value.

AC: You have significant academic and corporate leadership experience. How difficult, or otherwise, did you find making the leadership transition between these two different spheres?

Anders Aspling: There are similarities and there are differences, the most challenging difference being that in both cases you basically work with independent minded people, but in the academic context those people are assumed to also act independently and very much with their own drive and objectives guiding them. In that sense,

Globally responsible leadership: an interview with

Anders Aspling

Interview by Alistair Craven

the business world is easier as you ultimately have a common and measurable purpose or objective to obtain. This is not as clear for an academic institution as a whole.

My philosophy has always been to try and create as much and as rewarding teamwork as possible. The challenges for doing this by developing common objectives are much greater in the academic context. In most businesses there is also some kind of command culture to fall back upon if needed for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness.

My conclusion would be that it is easier to make the transition from academia to business than the other way around, and if you have a leadership philosophy based on teamwork and the value of everyone's contribution you may find it easier to move between corporate and academic roles.

I see myself as a team-player – with strong personal convictions and standards – and with a true belief that individuals can make a difference, whilst also being most satisfied when collective efforts pay off. I find it most rewarding when individuals are allowed to come forward and contribute with their unique skills, competencies, personality, energy and personal commitment to the fulfilment of a shared purpose.

AC: What do you think the idea of responsibility means in a corporate and global context?

Anders Aspling: I touched upon it in responding to the previous question, and would just like to add that I also believe it builds on the insight that long-term prosperity and business progress success always are based on and have to take on a holistic and multi-stakeholder approach. If you serve with all your possibilities and responsibilities in view you sustain, if not, you simply don't. This

is proven all through the history of mankind. It relates to corporations and all organized communities of people.

The core of business should, again, become the creation of economic, technological and social progress – based on entrepreneurship and innovation.

AC: Leading on from this, what are the key challenges involved in developing globally responsible leaders?

Anders Aspling: There are at least three domains of competencies to be addressed:

- (1) The knowledge and intellectual/analytical capacity, and the ability to act based upon the knowledge, insights and experience gained.
- (2) The sensitivity for rationality as a holistic concept taking into account emotions, feelings, beliefs, passion and dreams!
- (3) The ability to relate to the rich diversity of the world, and to do so in a focused, curious, positive and constructive and action-oriented way.

The training of people embracing these dimensions is way from what traditional business and management education have been and in most cases are aimed at. So, we are living in very exciting times; where experimentation, creativity and innovation – i.e. change – is key and need to be applied on all aspects of the business school – its role, its curricula, its research, its faculty composition, its learning methodology, its disciplinary integration and outreach, and its identity.

This is a shortened version of “Globally responsible leadership: an interview with Anders Aspling.” To read a longer version visit <http://first.emeraldinsight.com>

Management Matters

Incisive commentary on topical business issues



Michael Porter

strategic thought and by the undisciplined, even reckless, use of the term." So where does that leave us as managers? What exactly does strategy mean? Who should be responsible for it? What does a strategy look like? How often do we revise it? These are just some of the challenging questions facing us.

Michael Porter is generally recognized as the father of the modern strategy field, and his ideas are taught in virtually every business school in the world. His ubiquitous "Five Forces" model provides a tested framework for contextualizing business strategy. The Five Forces comprise of the threat of substitute products, the threat of established rivals, the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of suppliers and the bargaining power of customers. When combined with other Porter strategic models, the Five Forces analysis is widely recognized as a powerful tool for helping to define and shape corporate strategy.

Even rudimentary examination of the Five Forces reveals a strong focus on your competition's actions. Another world-renowned expert in the field of strategic management – Professor Arnaldo Hax – believes this to be potentially dangerous, leading us to treat strategy as "rivalry." Hax adds "I have the utmost respect for Michael

A question of strategy

Countless articles, books and journals have been dedicated to the subject of business strategy. Despite this, according to strategic guru Michael Porter, "almost no consensus exists about what corporate strategy is, much less about how a company should formulate it."

According to strategic consultant Warnock Davies, "understanding what strategy is has been complicated by the proliferation in the number of schools of

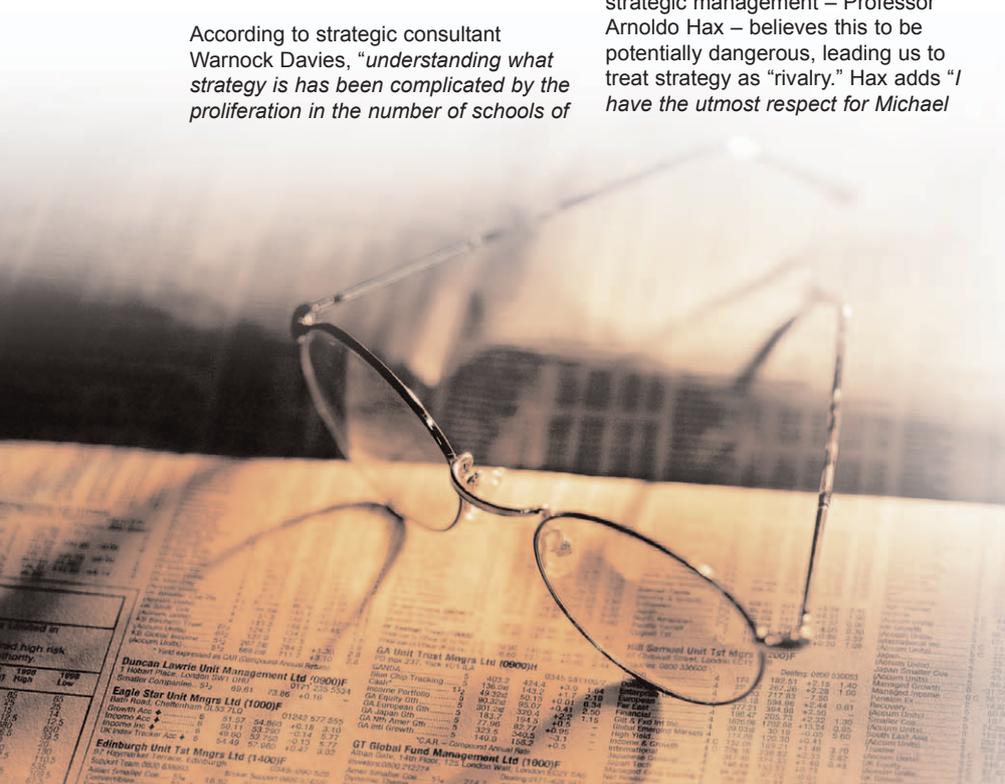
Porter, who is undeniably the most influential academic in the field of strategy. However, I reject the notion of defining strategy as a way of achieving sustainable competitive advantage."

If Hax is correct, too much focus on who's ahead or behind you can detract from what he deems to be a much more pertinent issue: customer bonding. He comments "... the driving force of both strategy and management is the customer. Every institution owes itself to the customer and it is fundamental for us to get to know the customer deeply and to provide a unique and differentiated value proposition that will allow us to claim a form of leadership in our industry."

A balanced approach to strategy takes account of Porter and Hax, and recognizes the multitude of variables to consider depending on your particular situation. Warnock Davies explains the complexity of strategy as a "plurality of inputs, options, and outcomes." He interjects "because strategy is characterized by multiple options, multiple paths, and multiple outcomes, it is more complex to design and more difficult to implement than linear solutions."

Therein lay two watchwords of strategy: design and implementation. Hax explains that the design/strategic planning process is fundamentally a dialogue for key managers which should lead toward a consensus in defining the purpose and objectives of the organization. How strong are you in this field? Clarity is essential, as is a well communicated implementation plan. Good luck in your strategic endeavours!

If you would like to know more about what Professor Arnaldo Hax has to say please visit <http://first.emeraldinsight.com/interviews/hax.htm>





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Final thought ...

“

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but rather the one most adaptable to change.

”

Clarence Darrow

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