

The Complexities of the Human Element

By Henry S. Givray



I have great passion for and fascination (some may say obsession) with the complexities of the human element and the trillions of thoughts and feelings that inhabit our brains.

I'm referring to hurts, insecurities, disappointments, regrets, beliefs, guilt, remorse, grief, shame, assumptions, unresolved emotions, anxieties, traumas, failures, biases, and much more. They are formed from early childhood through adulthood based on our experiences and memories, and continue to sprout throughout our lives. We all have them. If unchecked, they often do not serve us well.

Here's why. Our brain inhabitants continuously manifest themselves through our behaviors, which is the only thing that others can see and will interpret through their own blinders and selective filters controlled by their brain dwellers. As a result, they can and often will misinterpret or falsely conclude something about us. The reverse is true when we are the ones reacting and construing another person's behaviors based on our gray matter occupants and the frameworks and prisms they've created.

And though more often than not it's unintentional, either scenario can and will often lead to misunderstandings, confusion, inaccurate assumptions, wrong decisions, resentment, unnecessary issues, avoidable conflict, missed opportunities, mistrust, bad outcomes, and failed relationships.

There's only one remedy and it requires two things:

1. We must become increasingly self-aware of what's inside our head. Through self-exploration, self-reflection, and self-examination we strive to gain insight and intimate understanding into what and why we think and feel, and as a result, how we react, how we behave, what choices we make, what we do, and how we do it. Mastering self-awareness is hard, really hard (what an understatement). But the more we do it, the better we will be able to consciously

and in context self-regulate our behaviors to build better relationships, produce desired outcomes, and ultimately get what we want.

2. The second is to never assume or conclude another person's intent based solely on their behaviors; after all, we cannot see into someone's brain or heart. Rather, we must ask questions, listen intently, and seek to understand. We don't have to agree, just understand accurately what the other person is thinking and feeling, and as importantly, without influence from or control by the troublemakers residing in our brains.

Imagine if we and those important to us, professionally and personally, do these two things even somewhat well, some of the time. We both will learn, grow, and change and have a serious chance at achieving the most valuable and treasured life asset – deep, meaningful, enduring relationships.



Henry S. Givray is former Chairman, President & CEO of Smithbucklin Corporation, the world's largest association management and services company. He served as President & CEO from 2002 to 2015 and Chairman of the Board (non-executive) from 2016 to 2020. Henry is a dedicated, ongoing student of leadership, committed to speaking and writing as a way to teach and give back. His insights and ideas on leadership have been prominently featured in business books and national news media, and he has been invited to speak at numerous association conferences, corporate meetings, and educational forums. One of Henry's most enduring achievements has been his creation of comprehensive, high-impact leadership learning programs. The programming has evolved to include two offerings under the brand Leadership's Calling®. The Diverse Cohort Program is for CEOs and other C-suite executives, vice presidents, directors and managers at all levels, business owners, entrepreneurs, individual practitioners, and high-potentials from all types and sizes of organizations representing varied industries and professions. The second offering is an exclusive program for a CEO (or head of an organization) and members of his or her senior management team, participating together.