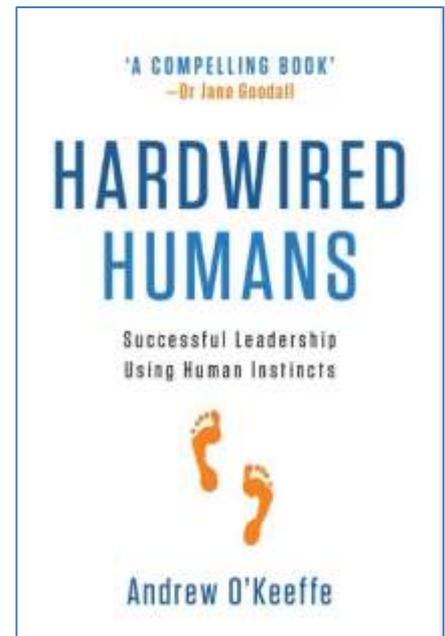


Intuyu Consulting Notes On:
Hardwired Humans – Successful Leadership Using Human Instincts

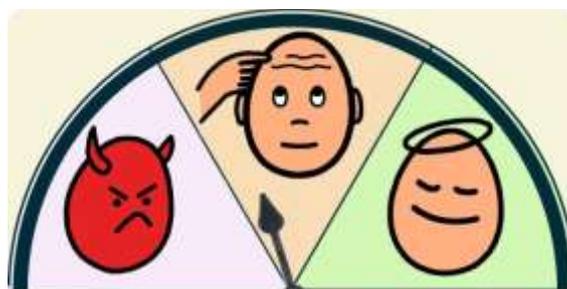
Andrew O’Keeffe

The following are my notes and paraphrasing (not a book summary) from reading Andrew O’Keeffe book and are essentially what I found interesting looking from the perspective of an educator and the possible lessons that educators could learn from the book. The author has a range of examples and stories that he tells to illustrate the key points I have drawn out in these notes. As the blurb on the book states ... it is a compelling book and I always recommend that if the notes interest you please purchase the book – there is a lot more detail and supporting evidence in the book!



Why We Behave The Way We Do

- “The two great benefits of knowing about instincts is that first, we can better make sense of why we humans behave the way we do at work so that second, we can make more informed leadership choices” (Pg 1)
- “Behaviours that frustrate organisational performance are uncannily similar from one organisation to another ... most leaders say .. (Pg 2)
 - There is a lot of silo behaviour and internal competition
 - Change is difficult to manage and often resisted or derailed
 - The informal gossip grapevine is incredibly effective and is generally faster and more reliable than the formal channels
 - Managers find it hard to negative feedback and often procrastinate on managing poor performers”
- “When we are born human there’s a package of behaviours that come with being human and that out of the whole period of human history we have only recently popped up in offices and factories” (Pg 2)
- “it is only 250 years ago with the Industrial Revolution that we left our hunting, gathering and village societies to work in offices and factories ... and thus a mere 250 years is no time at all for our ingrained behavioural instincts to change” (Pg 2)
- The definition of instincts “that part of our behaviour that is not learned” (Pg 3)



Instinct 1: Social Belonging

- This instinct helps explain why (Pg 5):
 - People talk about a great team being like a family
 - Teams have a natural size
 - 80% of people who resign do so because of their manager
 - Conflict in our team drives us crazy
 - Silo behaviour emerges as organisations grow beyond a moderate size
- We are a social animal; we are not loners. As a social animal we gain our sense of identity from our membership of two groups: our family group (around 7 people) and our extended clan (up to around 150) (Pg 6)
- Family (Pg 6-19)
 - “Our strong sense of community and lifetime family bonds comes from our reproductive strategy as a species”
 - Our strategy is to invest everything in the rising of a few offspring ... with this incredible investment in an offspring then it’s not surprising that the bonds between parents and offspring, and between direct family members, are for life
 - “Given the critical role of family for the human condition, it is not surprising that our organisations are, or at least should be, built upon family-sized work groups of around 7 people” (pg 9)
 - “Seven or so people as a group is the size that can best create a sense of intimacy” – this is supported by studies on the interactions on social media platforms such as Facebook (pg 10)
 - There is a paradox in this instinct for leaders and team members (pg 10 – 11)
 - We have an instinctive need to bond closest with around 7 people as if it is family
 - Nothing drives us to distraction faster than if our team is dysfunctional. If it is dysfunctional we hold our leader responsible
 - Our work team CANNOT be our family because our true family is our immediate family – our work team can’t fulfill that role.
 - People want to work in a functional team where they feel secure in their relationships with each other and confident in the support the leader gives them. But there is a line that you can’t cross – talking to people at work with the same candour that they would use with their immediate family (e.g. how do you address someone who has a powerful body odour is different in a family compared to at work)
 - Awareness of this paradox will assist leaders to be grounded in the reality of what’s possible and what is not in groups
 - A new comer to a small group affects the team’s dynamics and team members often size up a newcomer whilst the person works out where they fit in.
 - Implication #1: Team Size (Pg 14-15)
 - Team size determines whether it is set to be functional or dysfunctional – the ideal is around 7 (plus or minus 2) to be functional
 - Teams smaller than five or larger than nine will have some challenges
 - Less than five – too small for sense of belonging and can suffer from a sense of isolation



- Greater than nine – too large for an intimate sense of connection and too large to lead because leader cannot spend the necessary time with each person. Team members can become frustrated when a leader doesn't respond to their requests fast enough. Factions and cliques can emerge
- Implication #2: Role of Leader (Pg 15 – 17)
 - The natural condition for human family group is to have a leader and this is both empowering and carries with it obligations
 - The team wants and needs them to be a leader but you cannot continue to be acting as a peer because that leaves a leadership vacuum and can lead to a dysfunctional team.
 - The leader must
 - Set the vision and direction for the team so people have a context for their role
 - Connect the group to the rest of the organisation so they can see the value they provide
 - Be an advocate for the team
 - Provide appropriate resources so people can succeed
 - Defend the team against unreasonable demands of others
 - Set goals so people have clarity in their role
 - Give feedback to help people learn and grow
 - Value peoples contributions
 - Provide and environment where people can progress to enhance their social standing
 - Take care in bringing new members into the team
 - Set the standards of behaviour and performance
 - Hold to account those people who don't work to set standards
 - Minimize rivalries, address any conflict and ensure harmony
- Implication #3: Gaining Loyalty (pg 17 – 18)
 - If a person works for a good boss / leader then they are not likely to change jobs
 - Leaders should maintain a focus on serving their team.
 - If the team was asked they would elect the leader to lead the team
- Implication #4: Protection of the family unit (pg 18)
 - We expect leaders not to compromise the interests of the group in favour of their own
 - We expect a leader to protect us from criticism, to protect our resources, and keep us from being over-loaded and under-appreciated
- Implication #5: Integrating new members (pg 18-19)
 - The leader plays a key role in effectively integrating new members to the team. The challenge is to quickly move new members from stranger status to in-group status.
 - Have equipment and space ready for the person
 - Informal introductions to break the ice
 - Providing clarity of group's purpose and values
 - Facilitating the new person becoming an immediate contributor to the group's purpose
- Implication #6: Freeloaders and social rejection (pg 19)
 - Human societies have needed to respond when someone is flouting group culture or harming group success
 - In human groups there are four levels of increasing sanction applied to discipline a difficult member

1. Person is ignored
2. Person is shunned (not cooperated with)
3. Person is expelled from the group
4. Person's employment is terminated

- Clan (Pg 20 – 25)

- This is the second group that gives us our sense of identity and which is critical to humans as social animals.
- Anthropologically our method of survival was social living – families gathered in groups
- Group size is related to the size of the human brain which allows us to associate with groups of up to around 150 people. Living in complex social groups demands a significant amount of intellect (pg 20)
- The significance of 150 is that silos will occur naturally in large organisations and people will naturally associate with these smaller “clans”. When an organisation grows towards and then beyond 150, people start to say “it’s not as friendly as it used to be”, “we don’t know everyone like we used to”. (pg 21)
- Colleagues outside *our* clan are like strangers and a ‘them’ and ‘us’ behaviour begins to occur based on functional unit lines.
 - We become protective of our in-group, battle for resources, and conflict can arise
- Implications for leaders
 1. Decision makers in organisations should take into account natural clan formation in organisational structures (to harness natural instinctual energy) – e.g. Gore-Tex manufacturer and Flight Centre
 2. Senior Executives, knowing the 150 bonding boundary, can guard against behaviour that undermine the cohesion of larger groups. Be watchful of intra-organisational rivalries
 3. Role of department leaders (village sized groups) is critical to providing a sense of belonging within their work community. They need to:
 - Know the names of all of their people
 - Know the important things that define them as individuals
 - Know their role and they must know the leader values their role
 - Establish direction, goals and purpose of the clan
 - Create an environment where the managers pull together
 - Convene social functions so people have a sense of community
 - Coach their first-level managers to address any community freeloaders who diminish the community’s efforts and interests
 4. For hierarchical animals like humans, team leaders should be conscious of the distribution of power in their team. They should avoid having one person in a team who carries extra power differentiating them from the rest
 5. First level leaders of family-sized groups need to connect their team to other family groups in their clan.
 - Team leaders need to manage the tension between providing for their family whilst delivering the outputs other family groups require.
 - They need to ensure their people are seen and valued by higher-level leaders as part of an individual’s social progression and connect the team to the higher-level leaders so they feel connected and well regarded.

Instinct 2: Hierarchy and Status

- This instinct helps explain why (Pg 27):
 - My boss keeps me waiting but never keeps their own boss waiting
 - Status symbols keep popping up
 - Technical professionals with little interest in the 'people stuff' still accept a promotion to manager
 - Powerful people can do strange things
- Power is central to the functioning of human groups – they function because of hierarchy. The challenge for leaders is to use power effectively – using just the right amount of power that is appropriate to your position. (pg 30)
- Hierarchy and status explains:
 - Who keeps who waiting
 - Why people who have their own office often fight and scream against any move into open-plan design
 - Why in organisational life we naturally tend to have grades and job titles
- Hierarchy provides a vital function for complex social animals
 - Humans can coordinate their efforts because of hierarchy – it formalizes the pecking order
 - It also means that if each leader does not deliver what they need to at their level then the organisation will rapidly become dysfunctional
 - Key aspect is the dimension of power difference in groups and how powerful and less powerful individuals perceive and act within a social environment (pg 32-33)



| Positive Implications of Power | Negative Implications of Power |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate ideas and be more direct in their expression of ideas • Engage in group activity • Express approval and affection • Show more gestures and less facial construction • Display smiles of pleasure • Feel and display positive emotions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take what they want for themselves and be quicker at detecting material rewards • Treat any situation or person as a means of satisfying their own needs • Talk more, speak out of turn and interrupt more • Ignore what other people say and want • Ignore how less powerful people react to their behaviour • Act rudely and be more aggressive • Enter the social space of others • Stereotype others |

- Organisations with good cultures implement systems to constrain inappropriate use of power by managers (e.g. IBM – open door reviews, anonymous 'speak-ups', regular employee surveys) (pg 35)
 - Human instinct (shown by Milgram research) is to have a deep sense of duty to those in authority and a reluctance not to defy the wishes of the boss¹

¹ <http://www.simplypsychology.org/milgram.html>

- Potential tension with status drive occurs when people accept leadership roles who have no interest in people. It satisfies their desire to be elevated socially up the pecking order in their group but they will struggle with this key dimension of their job.
- Implication #1: Licence to Lead
 - In human groups the leader has a licence to lead. This is of particular importance for new leaders who are often uncertain about their role. However, if the leader doesn't lead then someone else will assert themselves to fill the role
- Implication #2: Motivation to Lead
 - There are people-leadership tasks that come with being the leader of a family-sized team (page 4 above). If the leader doesn't deliver on these responsibilities or is not in action to skill themselves up then the group will become dysfunctional.
- Implication #3: Use of Power
 - Power can be underused and overused
 - Overuse drives compliance and dismissing contrary views – and more people begin to avoid debate. As a consequence the leader creates distance between themselves and their followers and denies themselves useful information
 - Underuse can drive confusion, ill-discipline and disharmony because people are uncertain of the expectations and standards of the group.
 - Friendliness is a useful leadership strategy
- Implication #4: Allocation of Resources
 - Leaders should be comfortable and thoughtful in exercising the power to allocate resources – as they are valued by the giver and receiver.
- Implication #5: Maintaining acceptable standards of behaviour
 - Leaders need to use a progressive scale of discipline for individuals who display 'anti-social' behaviour
 - Presence
 - Verbal warning
 - Written warning
 - Termination
- Implication #6: Social Standing
 - The team leader has a significant impact on the regard in which their people are held in the eyes of others – within the team and in the wider organisation
 - 80% of people resign because of an unsatisfactory relationship with their immediate leader
 - Leader needs to provide people with opportunities to grow and impress, protect and enhance their reputations, and acknowledge their achievements so confidence is enhanced
- Implication #7: Regular Review Meetings
 - Leaders should schedule regular individual reviews with their direct reports (less than an hour once every 2 weeks)
- Implication #8: Making Sense of the matrix
 - Dual reporting (to two bosses) is unnatural for humans and unrealistic. Leaders need to be aware of their natural tendencies to focus on their line of reporting rather than the whole picture.

- Implication #9: Managing Up and Down

- What a leader tends to do if they are good at :

| Managing up (this erodes loyalty of their team) | Managing down (can lead to being seen as difficult by hierarchy) |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus most on the needs of their superior • Spend a disproportionate amount of time grooming their boss (and above) • Probably sit closer to their boss's office • Demand outputs from their people with insufficient resources • Be prepared to compromise the team's interests to protect their own • Avoid challenging the system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus most on the needs of their people • Spend a fair amount of time with the team • Sits close to them • Give them resources • Protect them from unreasonable demands • Challenge the system where necessary • Decline to turn a blind-eye |

- To be a good at managing both up and down will be driven by the culture of those in higher power positions.

Instinct 3: Emotions Before Reason

- This instinct helps explain why (Pg 43):
 - We jump to conclusions
 - The meaning we attach to other people, they to us, is based on emotion
 - People are predictably irrational
 - We produce more on days of positive emotions
- Due to the way that our brains are wired and from our instinctive behaviour we
 - Jump to conclusions because we process information based on emotion – we are emotional beings not rational beings and thus race ahead and anticipate
 - The conclusions we jump to will be overwhelmingly be negative. Because of our survival instinct (pain before pleasure) we will assume the worst
- Whilst we like to think we are rational beings in the workplace we aren't. The basis on which we make sense of our world and the way we make decisions is overwhelmingly emotional. Without emotion there is no meaning attached to words, people, places and our experiences. (pg 44)
 - The process by which we create meaning is termed imprinting. It begins with the first occasion we experience the word, person, activity or place and the meaning is reinforced if any subsequent experiences are similar to the first. (pg 46)
 - Recent discoveries of the functions of the brain support the role of emotions and how we make sense of the world and make decisions²
 - The parts of the brain involved in emotion and decision making are generally involved in social cognition and behaviour (pg 47)
 - There is a collection of systems (e.g. ventromedial prefrontal cortices, the amygdala, and the complex of somatosensory cortices in the right hemisphere) that are consistently dedicated to the goal-oriented thinking process we call reasoning and the response selection we call decision making – with a special emphasis on the personal and social domain. This same collection of systems is also involved in emotion and feeling (pg 49)
 - Our humanness involves an automatic interweaving of reasoning, decision making, emotions and feelings
 - In the uncertain world in which we live a key function of the complex brain systems connecting reasoning, decision making, emotions and feelings appears to serve us well by helping us develop hunches, to avoid loss and pain, and to keep out of harm's way (pg 52)
 - Research on what goes on in people's heads in a daily work experience found a predictable pattern or cycle of four steps of how people process these daily events³.
 - An event happens and we first try to perceive it or classify it to make sense of it
 - This is tied inexorably to emotion because we try to make sense (classify it) by how it makes us feel
 - The emotional reaction affects motivation – if positive emotion then motivation is lifted if negative then motivation is reduced



² Damasion A, *Descartes' Error – Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, Penguin, USA, 1994

³ Amabile T and Kramer S, *Inner Work Life*, Harvard Business Review, May 2007

- Motivation affects performance outcomes such as productivity, creativity, collegiality and commitment to work
 - Our motivation and output are affected constantly by what is happening around us. A leader above an individual has a major impact on this perception-emotion-motivation-output cycle. By enabling your team members to move forward in their work makes the cycle positive. (pg 53)
 - Enabling leadership behaviours include (pg 54):
 - Set clear goals – what is expected and why it matters
 - Provide adequate resources and time for people to do their job
 - Remove barriers that hinder people
 - Provide feedback from a learning perspective (not blame)
 - Give sincere appreciation for the work people do well
- Implications
 - #1: Your Emotional Meaning - The meaning that people attach to the leader is emotional. What have you done to cause their current reaction and what will you do from this point? (pg 55)
 - #2: Proactively using positive emotion –thoughtfully use emotions and imprints to create constructive connections with your team members (pg 55)
 - #3: The ‘five word’ test - decide the five words you would want people to use in describing you and then live by them (pg 56)
 - #4: Enabling Management – enable people to move forward in their daily work – set clear goals and a clear purpose for the person’s work (pg 57)
 - #5: Agreement and Disagreement is emotional – whilst our debates are rational there is an unarticulated undercurrent of emotion – need to find the key to shifting how people feel about the proposition (pg 57)
 - #6: The Power of Laughter – use laughter as a measure of a team’s spirit as they will produce more when they feel good (pg 58)



Instinct 4: First Impressions to Classify

- This instinct helps explain why (Pg 59):
 - We're guided by gut feelings
 - People are quick to judge
 - Anxiety increases if we can't make sense of something
 - One team might not get along with another
 - We can win or lose people in our first few words
- Not surprisingly humans make quick judgements about people and situations. This is a function of the brain (classifying our experiences) to minimize energy usage. It is binary in nature – either/or.
- Classifying is part of our survival machinery – to screen information into binary categories quickly so we can react instantly to dangerous situations. We still act this way all day, every day and the classifying is based on our first, emotional reaction (pg 60).
 - Partly, the purpose of classifying is to make sense of the world and to do so in a way that allows us to cope with the amount of data and stimuli we are required to handle. (pg 60)
 - When we interact with someone, that person is seeking to make sense of what we are saying or doing. The clue to sense-making is that each person is seeking to classify the information shared. Any time we are unable to classify just delays sense-making (pg 61).
 - One way to use the knowledge that people are trying to make sense through classifying is to be explicit in the way we position things. E.g. "I'd like to update you on a good thing that happened just now", "There is one item on the project that we need to fix". Communicate like headlines do (they allow easy classification for readers) (pg 61).
- The process of classification is done primarily on the emotion we feel at that screening moment (the first impression) and this classification can be reinforced subsequently. Once we make up our minds we are much less likely to change our opinion (or re-classify) (pg 62).⁴
 - Research by Ambady and Rosenthal published in 1992 showed we make up our minds (thin slice assessments) in as little as 6 seconds (pgs 63-64).
 - Research by Dana Carney (2007) showed that 5 seconds was all that was needed to make quick and accurate judgements for negative/threat dimensions but thin slice exposure of 60 seconds yielded more accurate judgements for all dimensions studied (pg 65)
 - Could imply that people need only seconds to make up their minds and anything beyond these first seconds is superfluous, or
 - Once we make up our mind any further information is used to confirm the assessment we made
 - This hypothesis was confirmed by studies performed at MIT where students were primed by a statement about an incoming teacher (very warm person vs rather cold person). This priming information influenced the way students rated the teacher and also how they interacted with them (pg 67).
 - This is the power of classification – we go on very little information, rely on hunches and intuition and once we classify, subsequent experiences are interpreted or aligned with our first impression (pg 67)



⁴ This links to the psychological concept of [confirmation bias](#)



- Research by Miller (1956) indicated that our capacity to make judgements without mistakes was limited to around seven elements plus or minus two. Recent neuroscience findings showed that our working memory of the brain only has the capacity to handle about seven items of data (or around 2 seconds of data) (pg 68)
 - Implication is that you have 2 seconds or around seven words to influence the classification of an idea (pg 69)
- The First 7 Words technique (pg 70)
 - The following principles guide the choice of the first seven words. Their aim is to subconsciously trigger the desired classification from your listener.
 - **Specific** – your first few words are not generic and are specific to the situation
 - **Plain Language** – so your point is easily processed by the listener(s)
 - **Truthful** – so that you are ethical, your words are congruent with your feelings, you are believable, and considered trustworthy
 - **Single Concept** – more than one concept will confuse your listener
 - **Emotional** – you trigger the appropriate emotion for the moment
 - **No Jargon** – the listener might attach a different meaning to any terminology
 - **The Narrative** – provides a theme for your ongoing discussion or proposition
 - Gut feelings – human beings have an ability to infer things and intuit conclusions from the available information. We use gut feelings as a rule of thumb to accommodate the most important information and to ignore the rest. This feeling stems from our sense making, pattern finding orientation of the brain. A gut feeling refers to a judgement (pg 72)
 - That appears quickly in consciousness
 - Whose underlying reasons we are not fully aware of, and
 - Is strong enough to act upon
 - If we can't classify then we become anxious and tend to infer the worst. If we aren't cued into someone's intent & thus cannot classify their communication we tend to err on the side of bad (pg 73)
 - One of the forms of classifying is them and us. This is where silos arise in organisations and can be further emphasized when we add the dimension of territory and border protection (e.g. US and Mexico, Australia and refugees, UK and the "continent"). It explains the lengths people go to fit in – e.g. clothing (what people wear)
- Implications
 - **#1 Communication and your first 7 words:** Use the first 7 words of our communication to help the listener or reader to classify our meaning. This can be done in emails, letters, reports as well as verbal communication. Examples of good classifying "7 words" to start interactions (pg 77-78)
 - I'd like to ask a clarifying example
 - Please help me understand
 - I'd like to understand more
 - Please explain this one point
 - I don't quite understand yet
 - I'm not clear on
 - You are the expert, so please explain
 - You know this so well
 - I'm curious about something
 - I was wondering why
 - You're the right person to help me understand
 - The reason why I am asking
 - This is what I am thinking
 - My frame of reference is
 - I suggest we look at
 - I notice that
 - This is excellent

- **#2 Meeting the first time:** Classifying is based on the emotion experienced at the first interaction. You can use this knowledge positively when you meet people for the first time by creating an opportunity for positive emotion (get to understand them and their needs) (pg 78)
- **#3 First action is a winner:** When in charge of a project or an assignment try to ensure that the first update is positive. Once classified as good then you will be given a greater degree of latitude if things do start slipping. (pg 78 – 79)
- **#4 First with the news:** the person who speaks first about an issue is believed. By getting to a person first gives you the best chance to have the person classify the situation as you want. The classification by the person will be based on the emotion they feel when they first hear the information. Make sure you express the situation in reassuring way carefully choosing your first seven words. (pg 79)
 - This is not about being untruthful or unethical but, knowing the human condition of classifying, communicating in a way that ensures sensible leadership choices.
- **#5 Giving the bad news:** Knowing that people intuit bad news quickly allows us to communicate bad news effectively. The best approach in dealing with this type of interaction is to say something right at the beginning that allows the other person to classify immediately the bad news. (pg 80)
 - E.g. I have some news that might disappoint you (said sensitively with empathy) you can then explain in detail.
- **#6 Giving negative feedback:** It is challenging to give negative feedback or manage a poor performer. The popular method of giving a “feedback sandwich” – positive/negative/positive feedback – this approach human nature. (pg 81)
 - Better approach is to be truthful in the first 7 words (e.g. identify the subject you want to cover) as this reduces the tension for both people in the interaction because the person can classify immediately. Then can get into the details. (pg 83)
 - If you are interacting with someone in a group then it is best to keep a neutral tone until you have a one on one situation. Approach the conversation from a developmental context rather than as a “bad” context. (pg 82)
- **#7 Licence to give feedback:** you can minimize difficult to give feedback if you gain licence early on to give feedback and position the classifying of such an event. Negative feedback is only a problem if it is assessed by BOTH the giver and receiver as negative. If you see the feedback as helpful or developmental then it will instantly shift the orientation of the communication. (pg 84-85)
- **#8 Recruiting:** knowing the impact of gut feelings it is important to park any first impressions so you can get an informed assessment from an entire interaction. You could test the validity of your gut feelings over a whole interaction rather be blinded by them (pg 86)
- **#9 New role for you:** you can set up the first meetings to make a positive impression with new team members (pg 86)
- **#10 New team member:** make sure you explore how you can make a positive first impression. How can you set up their work space, IT, etc and use it as an opportunity to be a primary connection to the person on their first day (pg 87)
- **#11 Decision making:** once you are aware of the power of first impressions to classify you can ensure that proposals are well-researched and presented when first submitted. This will create a positive first impression for decision making (pg 88)
- **#12 Suspend judgement:** you can choose to avoid being too judgmental about other people or situations based merely on thin slices of information (pg 88)

Instinct 5: Loss Aversion

- This instinct helps explain why (Pg 89):
 - People seem to resist change
 - When our boss wants to see us we assume the worst
 - Performance appraisal systems rarely seem to work
 - People dwell on the negatives
 - Staff get annoyed at losing their free fruit



Intuyu Consulting has worked with over 300 Government, Catholic and Independent schools around Victoria, Queensland, NSW, Western Australia, and New Zealand. For more information about what we do contact us via our website www.intuyuconsulting.com.au or at office@intuyuconsulting.com.au