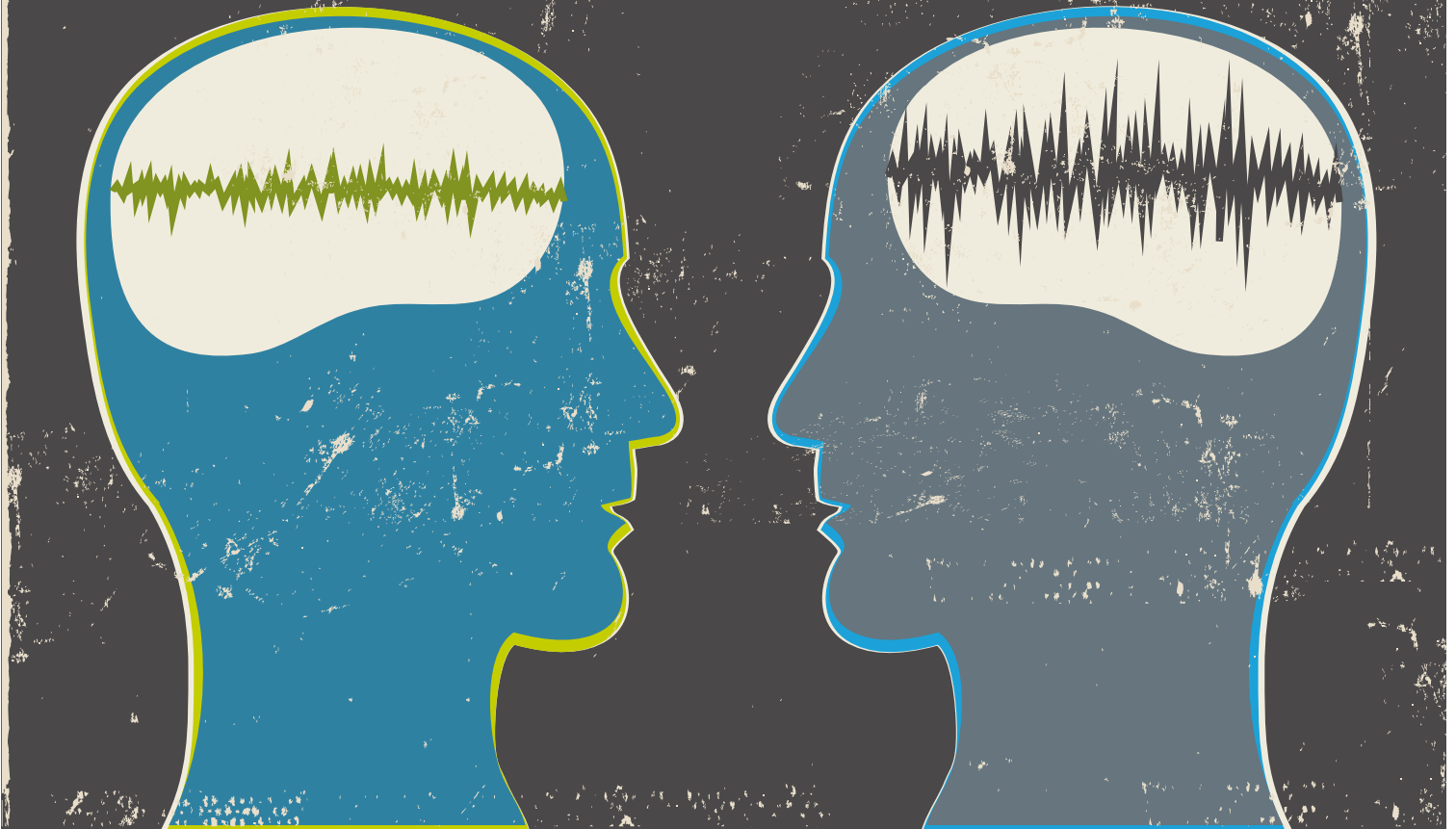


BUSINESS CONTINUITY PSYCHOLOGY – FROM STRATEGY TO BENEFITS



If business continuity planning is so important, asks Nick Gardener, then why doesn't everyone share our enthusiasm?

We tend to think that other people think as we think, value what we value, and have the same priorities as us. This is a dangerous and wrong assumption. In the case of a business continuity plan, some people may be thinking or saying things like: you can't plan for the unexpected; our team would cope; our business is constantly changing, a plan will be out of date as soon as it is written; we shouldn't be planning for failure – we should put our efforts into preventing a crisis happening. Some may even say it's a good idea, but we are too busy right now for another initiative.

To achieve their business continuity strategy many will seek to comply with guidance and standards such as BS 25999. Board members and senior management should not, however, be lulled into a false sense of security. How people view a BCP, and what they do about it, is crucial in determining whether the business continuity strategy sticks at compliance – satisfying auditors and other interested parties – or actually helps the business in the absence of a crisis.

A simple example would be contact details. Improving the company telephone directory to make it quick to use by a variety of search criteria in a crisis

would save creating (and maintaining) a separate one for the BCP and could save time in normal working. Users would also be familiar with the format, which could be critical when under pressure in a crisis.

Different people respond in different ways

When we hire a salesman or an operations manager or a research chemist we look for different types of people. Why do we then expect them all to respond in a similar way when we want to implement or improve a BCP?

The Myers Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI)¹ assessment is widely used in recruitment. It identifies alternatives for how people perceive things and ideas. For some it is a practical view based on experience and reality (S-types); others have a preference for using their imagination and intuition based on possibilities for the future (N-types).

This difference can have a major impact on how a BCP will be viewed by others. S-types will want to be convinced that it is useful before they accept it as something to be involved with. In such circumstance, without motivation, the best that can be hoped is that such people will work diligently to ensure compliance with senior management strategy. N-types may see the possibilities, but they may still do little unless the environment is right to take action.

How do we motivate people?

The psychology of motivation is widely taught in management courses. Many will be familiar with the respected work of Frederick Herzberg and W Edwards Deming.

