

Governing Energy

Repetita Placent

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Anyone that follows US politics is familiar with the Sunday morning political television shows whereby the so-called “talking heads” interview various public figures on issues of the day. So common are the use of “talking points” that the term has become part of the lexicon and even the butt of jokes.

According to behaviorists, humans are comfortable with repetition.ⁱ In other words repetition pleases. In his seminal book on economics, *The Economics of Freedom*ⁱⁱ, Frédéric Bastiat identified this principle over 150 years ago.ⁱⁱⁱ

Bis repetita placent is Latin for “the things that please are those repeated.”^{iv} We see this human trait everyday as we develop our playlist; engage in pleasing behaviors, etc. Over time, pleasurable behaviors can become habits (good or bad).

The upstream oil and gas industry is in the process of transforming the industry culture to one of a Culture of Safety. Engraining desired behaviors is a function of management staying on message and repeating its talking points in a coherent manner. Over time the acculturation process evolves to a new culture.

As a student in physics, I learned that if one applies appropriate energy to an electron it becomes energized and moves to a higher atomic orbit. However, with light often a byproduct, the atom quickly returns to its previous stable state.^v

Consistently applied managerial energy is the only power source that can excite the organization and move it to the next level. Moreover unlike the atom, organizations can be transformed and remain at the higher enlightened (pleasurable) level.

Bastiat also noted; *Repetita docent*—repetition teaches. Politicians understand this and seek to teach the electorate. Elections are often won or lost based on their success or failure to continually instruct potential voters. Similarly, staying on a consistent, understandable and believable message is a Critical Success Factor (CSF) as the oil and gas industry transforms itself.

Are your oft repeated talking points teaching your intended audience?

About the Author

Dr. [Scott M. Shemwell](#) has over 30 years technical and executive management experience primarily in the energy sector. He is the author of two books and has written extensively about the field of operations management. Shemwell is also the CEO of Knowledge Ops, Inc.; a firm that focuses on providing its customers with solutions enabling operations excellence and regulatory compliance management.

End Notes

ⁱ <http://changingminds.org/principles/repetition.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://studentsforliberty.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/The-Economics-of-Freedom-PDF.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fr%C3%A9d%C3%A9ric_Bastiat

^{iv} <http://latin-phrases.co.uk/dictionary/b/>

^v <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/ahp/SDPS/SD.PS.electrons.html>