

## **EBS: EXAMINE BOTH SIDES**

A debater tries to find the weakness in the opponent's argument. 'EBS' stands for Examine Both Sides, but this examination has an exploratory purpose. What really is the other point of view - not just as it is expressed in argument form but the 'terrain' behind it? The exploration is neutral. In a classroom a pupil may be asked to put forward one point of view and then, at the last moment, switched to putting forward the other point of view. This is not to demonstrate debating facility but to encourage a genuine examination of both sides. Pupils would be encouraged to explore both sides in such a way that from reading the essays you would be unable to tell which point of view was really favoured. Doing an EBS does not preclude the holding of a point of view, a value system or a preference, but this comes **AFTER** the exploration not before it.

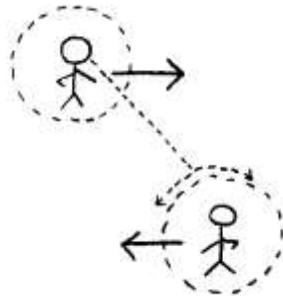
The EBS is one of those attention-directing tools which seems much easier to use than it really is. On the whole a feeble and offhand attempt is made to examine the other side - for fear that too good an examination might dilute the fervour with which one's own view is held.

Doing an EBS is - up to a point - not unlike doing a thorough reconnaissance of the enemy's territory in wartime. The crucial difference is that with the wartime reconnaissance you are looking for places to bomb or sabotage whereas with the EBS you are examining the territory for a constructive purpose. The weakness of the tool is that it is not easy to sustain this difference of attitude. The neutrality and objectivity of the examination are crucial. What is required is the detachment of the committed map-maker.

## **'LOGIC BUBBLES'**

The bubble includes perception of circumstance, structure, context and relationships.

If someone does not agree with you or does not do what you think he ought to do there are several possible attitudes. He is stupid. He is bloody-minded. He is obstinate. There is, however, an alternative attitude: he is highly intelligent and acting intelligently within his own logic-bubble. And his



logic-bubble happens to be different from yours. As suggested in the figure on the next page, a logic-bubble is that bubble of perception within which a person is acting. Too often we put intelligent people into certain situations and then complain when they act intelligently. For instance, let us look at innovation in any type of large bureaucracy. If a person tries something and it is a failure, then that failure hangs around his neck for the rest of his career. He cannot recover from it with a following success as he might in business. If his innovation works then he is condemned for not having thought of it sooner or implemented it earlier. If it works he risks being regarded as an 'ideas man' - which means that although this idea has indeed worked, other ideas may not work. When it comes to appointing the head of a department a 'sound' man is to be preferred over an 'ideas' man. For all these reasons innovation is not intelligent behavior - but survival is. So one can hardly blame a person for acting logically within that particular logic-bubble.

A company has been having a lot of wild-cat strikes. Once the idea is suggested then the workers do not want to let their mates down, so the strike takes place. The company institutes a small payment for every week of work completed without any such strike. The amount is small when compared to the weekly wage. The strikes diminish to one sixth of what they have been. Is this bribery? It is really a change in the logic-bubble at the moment a strike is suggested. Instead of just following along there is now some reason for a worker to ask 'why?'. Although he may be as ready as ever to go on strike, this slight change at the moment of decision alters his intelligent behaviour through altering the logic-bubble.

It is probably quite far from the truth that everyone is acting very logically within his or her logic-bubble. But as a practical way of looking at things the method has the merit of directing attention not to the stupidity of the person (which is difficult to alter) but to the circumstances (which are easier to alter) in which the behavior is quite logical.

The logic-bubble includes both the actual circumstances surrounding a person and also his 'perception' of the situation. For example, there may be an actual reward for certain behaviour but this could be perceived as a bribe.

In a company where I had been called in as a consultant to advise on how to make the executives more opportunity conscious, I suggested the setting up of a risk fund which executives could use to finance opportunities - instead of having to divert their operating budgets. One executive said that he did not want to 'risk' using the risk fund because he knew that he would be judged on how he used it. In other words his logic-bubble took into account the risk-averse culture of the company, so the very purpose of the risk fund was negated. He did admit, however, that the mere existence of this fund had allowed him to look at new areas which he was now pursuing as opportunities - but using his own budget.

In any situation it is useful to map out the logic-bubbles of the other people involved. This is especially important in the area of motivation. Management always regards motivation as vital, but motivation depends on the logic-bubble of those who are to be motivated, not on the logic-bubble of management. The same is true for change. The person suggesting the change is convinced of its value, but the people who are going to have to carry through the change have their own logic-bubbles and change usually means risk and hassle and a change in status.

As an exercise, spell out the logic-bubbles of the people involved in the following situations:

For exercise examine the thinking on both sides of the following arguments:

1. A naval officer who thinks that his superior has given him a wrong command and a collision is possible.
2. A gossip columnist who has come across a good story involving a friend of hers.
3. Smoking should be banned in all public places.
4. National community service should be made compulsory for all young people.
5. Income tax should be raised.
6. There should be a high tax on cats and dogs.
7. The school leaving age should be raised to 18 years.
8. Housewives should be paid for their work.