The Benefits Of Being Shy

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Abstract

"Shy people notice everything but they do not get noticed" (Author unknown)

Practicing shyness and modesty should be an integral part of the managerial education yet it often gets associated with weakness. Anyone who has ever experienced a shy, modest and kind line manager feels a sense of ease and approachability so alien to nowadays business world and backstabbing mentality. Shy and modest managers see the person behind the employee rather than the employee as a number. Today's business world is lacking a portal for shyness and modesty among line managers who have grown in numbers but not very often human quality in recent years. For this reason, it is important that researchers, educators, managers and businesses become aware of the nature of shyness and modesty and its benefits. Researchers are in a unique position to help businesses and institutions reflect upon and understand that aggressive behavior can potentially harm the progress and image of a company rather than insuring to build a successful team, honest service and lasting product.

Keywords: Shyness, Business, Manager, education, benefits

Shyness which is often described as simply practicing 'low self-esteem' and its impact on nowadays society is not simply another influence that can be overlooked. The interaction between people of all character traits defines society; shyness dismissed by most people (particularly managers and business educators) as a low self-esteem push-over philosophy the education of shyness defines the nature of our society and the need for a space where one can observe before talking, digest before talking and finally act upon reflection rather than hot-tempered impulse. Observation and reflection are key.

In this paper I will argue that an analysis of shyness, understood and practiced as a powerful, rather than the dismissing and judging tradition, shyness can be the starting point of many managerial innovations and can bring us closer to a well-balanced team and society at large. Shyness

established itself as a character trait, which, from the outset, took itself back rather than paying attention to itself. The environment of a shy character often perceives his or her 'body' but not mind. Shy people should be encouraged to interact and be asked for their opinions. Only then can we strive for a better world, where shyness is part of us and gets the potential to contribute to an innovative future. Often shy people have a distorted image of themselves. Businesses and society should guide them and bring out the best in them and their observational talents. Not only shy people are put under this ever-rising pressure of performance via verbal and non-verbal communication but also businesses. This impact can be perceived when businesses get measured only via sales (no matter what was promised and what actually delivered), neglect of environmental factors to put competitors out of business and employees paid for their individual performance rather than team spirit. It is a vicious narcissistic cycle with little concern about generations to come, environmental sustainability or the extension of knowledge to contribute to a better and fairer world. A very unhealthy society driven by greed, money and success measured by income. The financial crisis is the result of such greed and lack of empathy. This cannot be good for society. For nobody. Not even any individual.

If one watched successful entrepreneurs a virtual illusion of aggressive perfection and success, is provided and perceived by the audience. Therefore the paradox of shyness as a benefit to businesses, which offers success through the use of your good judgment via observation rather than your self-celebration becomes obvious. Business practices are often designed to cone, to 'screw somebody over', to betray and contribute to this illusion of dog-eat-dog behavior climaxing into great economical success. Only when the crowds are exploited is the maximum outcome guaranteed. Only when you have successfully pushed the competitors aside (including the ones of your own team) are you promotable. Only then are you a hero of modern day capitalism. Modesty has lost its appeal. Calm observation is being pushed aside and replaced by a cultivated image of confidence (no matter what subject, specialization nor situation). Laws and deals are being challenged in the name of self-interest.

It is important to remember that nowadays managerial education has often personal as well as economic consequences since the students have to equip themselves with certain character traits, ethics or non-ethics, voice coaches, image centered environment, often chauvinism, student loans, study and celebrating of ruthless managers or entrepreneurs 'who made it no matter what price they had to pay' and competitiveness against each other (Abdolmohammadi & Reeves, 1997), (Borkowski & Urgas, 1998), (Carpano, Giacalone & Arpan, 2000). This results in the celebration of egocentric behavior rather than practicing team spirit nor the 'giving room'

to the ones who are quite but have a lot to say. Nevertheless, young employees are most likely expected to learn via copy paste…a character trait that shy people have championed. A company is only as good as its diversity of employees…as a whole rather than as individuals. A good CEO without a good observant team will fail. It is our duty as educators and institutions to set our students up for success rather than failure and celebrate the observant shyness, the modesty, the calm and strategic action to progress. It is us who have to show the benefits of shyness and its exciting potential innovations. Only if we as educators can show off the benefits of a modest character, one that observes before talking and thinks before acting do we cater for a better and more human tomorrow and fair trade. Pressure of quick economic results, unrealistic economic business plan expectations and one-sided benefits are disastrous not only for businesses but the society at large. Attentive observation is the soil of progress. Only if we as educators and managers are demonstrating shyness as an asset rather than downfall can we encourage our students or employees to celebrate it. There is nothing more endearing than if something still means something to somebody. If one can feel shy about something. Nowadays nothing means anything anymore. True progress does not mean to push others aside and be oblivious to other people's ideas. True progress means to observe to innovate. To be shy enough to see potential. To innovate via the extension of the given and not via market aggression. Success should not only be evaluated by shire numbers but how one has achieved these numbers. Opening and maintaining your own ethics and sensitivity should be part of success just as much as successful numbers (Ahmed & Jarkko, 1998), (Dubinskey, Jolson, Kotabe & Lim, 1991). It is the shy things that count; the ability to feel big to make it big based on your sensitivity. We all can make profits via aggression such as market monopoly and lower costs but for what price? Dominant behavior might work at first to intimidate but this intimidation will never inspire employees to speak out and come up with new advancements. I have noticed that managers who listen more than they talk practice more ethical businesses and seem to overachieve and outperform via goodness and innovation rather than destruction. Shy people rarely seem to gain promotions or executive positions (no matter how great their ideas and mentality). It seems as if they are disregarded due to their shyness rather than their qualities. They seem to hope that their qualities will be (one day) appreciated, waiting for a sort of savior out of their shyness and line managers who provide them with the well-needed respect while they innovate from within. This attempt might sound naïve but it is the collaborative patchwork of talents and attitudes, perspectives and advancements that make our life as colorful as it is.

Academic critics, business managers and investors reinforce the sense of competitiveness in business as being the survival of the strongest, meaning nowadays the most strategic and most cash flow healthy but in reality the relationship between business and people has a dynamic of its own. One-dimensional dog-eat-dog business strategies are the breeding ground for bullying, depression resulting in an increase of sick days and health insurance expenses (to see it from a cost and human perspective). Diversity is an integral part of success as it inspires and at the same time caters to the needs of ALL kinds of consumers. Most people don't see themselves as leaders but followers. If we label leaders as the answer to all of our problems and fears society will follow without thinking, creating opportunities for people who should 'shut up' rather than be celebrated. We have arrived in a new era of interaction and democratization rather than tyranny or the careless overuse of our resources. What will we do when mother earth does not provide for us anymore? What do we do when there are no more fish in the sea? What do we do when industrial smock has not only destroyed our surroundings but health? Humans seem to have a talent for self-destruction. Now it is time to stop, to reflect, to promote the good (yes we know what it is) and act upon it. This is a time of change, of perspectives and of becoming one. Humans are not born human…they become human (if they are lucky). We have failed so many times, we have miscalculated success so many times, we have gotten facts wrong even though we used the brightest minds and we have successfully destroyed parts of our society by the click of a button. Shyness is an integral part of our existence; a disbelief in ones own abilities, a tender and self-conscious critical reflection of ourselves and a childlike blushing of ones own mind and shyness is the starting point of any talent. Shyness is the starting point of any first real love. Shyness is the one thing that we should celebrate but that we have neglected over decades due to its fragile state and quite nature. To live is to be shy (that means to live a fulfilled life means to celebrate ones own shyness and build upon it).

During my academic career I had arranged for many self-esteem campaigns. I could observe how academically weak and academically brilliant students could show signs of shyness. It was hard to watch these students present in front of the class. Their shy nature made them feel awkward, out of place, exploited, insecure and we could all watch how their paper trembled in their hands like a hot potato. They felt as if they had nothing to say or to contribute. Their distorted image of themselves was hard to overcome, hard to change. They believed that just because they were shy, they were less capable of becoming leaders, business owners and entrepreneurs…. (something that many managers and businesses believe to be true). Sit up straight, have an authoritative voice that can make dogs and

horses shiver, the survival of the fittest and strongest, the dominance of arrogance and the image of a sort of God. This attitude flows into the personal aspect of who marries the prettiest partner (for men) and the richest partner (for women). As you can see their lives are already predicted, their shyness labeled as a weakness and the following of this trend huge and without doubt. Nevertheless some of the most innovative people of our time were outcasts, extremely shy but helped our world towards greatness and progress; people such as politician Abraham Lincoln, entrepreneur Richard Brandson and actress Andrey Hepburn to name a few. Yet even when I mentioned this fact to my students they were stuck in their own bad perception of themselves and their lack of perceived accomplishments (no matter what grade or voiced support).

Shyness is a very powerful tool. Not everything one is shy about can maintain its shyness, its innocence. It can prevent oneself from taking a risk but it can also be a perfect calculator of risk and what one is willing to invest (and potentially lose). Traditionally, women are more risk conscious than men. Car insurance is more expensive for males than females. The shy and more conscious attitude of female drivers stands in opposition to the more impulsive, riskier and hormone driven (sorry) driving attitude of men. Now these are generalizations but case studies and research have shown that this is a mere fact rather than speculation. Men are more willing to take large risks whereas females are more risk conscious and conservative. Also in meetings men seem to talk fare more than women (which seems extraordinary in light of the normal situation). They seem to observe more and make up their mind. One should ask cleaning staff, concierges and secretaries for their opinion of a person and one might be surprised by their insight and common sense. Shyness means to take oneself back, to observe, to feel not allowed to speak out and share ones point of view. Noble Peace price winner Muhammad Yunus pioneered the idea of third world micro-credit exclusively given to women. When it comes to business women will make sure that they cater to the needs of their families, they calculate their risk, step back, prepare for the worst case scenario (very different to the finical crisis speculations of banks and their arrogance in recent years). Most things are common sense. A five year old could have understood the finical crisis downfalls if calculated with candies and gingerbread houses mortgages.

Inspired by the above, I undertook an experiment via a simple exercise. I asked my students to play a sort of business game. They were divided into two categories. One represented the general public and the other banks. Both sides were asked to make the most of their power and to achieve greatest profits. Anything was allowed. Surprisingly rather than coming up with business models or ideas the first thing most male students admitted to buy was to buy a new and faster car on credit, the ladies admitted to buy

some more fancy luxury goods such as bags and jewelry…(no matter if divided into public or bank representative). They mentioned the power of image and how this image would guarantee them success in the future. I asked them what if they could not afford these luxury items? They answered that they would take a loan. It was completely natural for them – like buying candies. What if they knew that they could never pay back that money? My students had no doubt that no matter how much money they would borrow they would be able to pay it back (one day). In contrast to my generation, I could observe an inflated financial self-esteem so alien to me. Once gain this is just an attitude and reality of our every-day life…and not an attack on my students. They were honest enough to admit to the essence of the financial crisis. "Well we have to live" was the answer of some of my students. On the other side the students representing the banks came up with ideas how to get back the money that was loaned to their heavy spenders. They did not shy away from legal battles to auctioning off homes of families. To summarize the experiment…everybody wanted more than they could realistically have and often overlooked the human aspect of the situation…and it seemed an every day life reality. A battle between humans and money. A dangerous liaison that climaxed in the financial crisis and left many families without homes and a bright future. Once again this exercise reconfirmed that rather than trying to establish a healthy cash flow it was all about short-lived pleasures such as luxury goods, travel and too big mortgages. A healthy relationship with money and expenses is crucial for a good economy. After discussing the above with my students we got to undertake the actual experiment. Many female students were more conservative with their money spending. The male students often took higher risks and often made more quickly money…yet also debts… women seemed to spend less, take smaller risks and all in all often (at least in the long-run) make a more gradual success of their business. Shy people no matter if female or male were also more conservative and reflective of their choice of investment. Reflectiveness and steady consistency of investments is a big part of success. Yet most businesses want to give the impression that only high risks can result in high rewards. Fact is high risks can also very quickly end up in bankruptcy.

Shyness can be channeled – made more part of the game, offered a platform for interaction rather than pushing it aside. Especially in a world in which arrogance is rising we as educators need to set up our students for not only a real but even better world, to provide them with professional and emotional skills and guide them towards their own as well as others success. In a way educators could be regarded as ambassadors and promoters of shyness. Nevertheless, nowadays generation often strives for quick economical and emotional fixes – pushing others aside is much easier than

nurturing slow growing talent of shyness. Youngsters are in need of economical freedom, payback of student loans and credit card bills, mortgages, marriages, children, divorces, pensions…the list is endless. Nobody wants to come short of their own comfort, their own expectations of life, the media celebrated VIP status, the gangster lifestyle which was in the past condemned is now the goal of any youngster. It does not matter HOW you make money – but that you have it…plenty of it. Education needs to be aware of these changes and developments. Consuming rather than nurturing, celebrating oneself rather than working hard, pushing aside rather than collaborating. It is our job to support our students academically as well as emotionally to live a fulfilled life with their families, friends and colleagues. We need to motivate our students to see potential in shyness, in the first unsure steps of any innovation, in the patient nurturing of great ideas rather than great presenters. This approach is not always easy but our role in society is to observe and act….otherwise we do not deserve the title of an educator.

Nowadays, if you ask students what they want to become in the future…they simply say: "Rich!" When you ask them via what profession they want to become rich they look at you as if you asked them to speak Chinese. The means are non-important and seem to justify any action. Shy people are considered perfect victims and pushovers, dominant people are considered as enemies that one needs to defeat and followers collected like shells on a beach. Ethics are replaced by money, patience replaced by quick profits and fast deals and relationships updated like new models of cars (Ahmed, 1998), (Friedman, 1978). Nevertheless, this extreme capitalism of matters has not created healthy individuals with healthy expectations (Fanfani, 1935). Instead it has created a neurotic bunch of people who try to overthrow each other over and over again like in a video game. 'Game over' only happens when one dies and leaves ones money behind.

It is also important to reflect on the assumption that shyness will produce weak people with little self-esteem and little authority. Real authority does not get measured by the volume of ones voice, latest fashion sense and image, height, gender or aggression. Real authority (as I understand it) is a nurturing of ones potential and the of others. A believe in the world. A silent observation and a fair way of acting. Over ninety percent of all communication is non-verbal. Therefore gender, image and aggression is part of our business and personal world (Gould, 1995). We, who consider ourselves and our evolution above all animals, act and react just as primitive to non-verbal communication as animals do. Soft spoken and fair leaders have become increasingly popular in recent years…from the election of the soft-spoken President Obama back to the glorification of Lincoln. We can see the benefits of fair leaders nevertheless we often get seduced by our instinctive choice of the strongest. Some of the most innovative inventors,

computer engineers, entrepreneurs have shown great social awareness and charity not only for tax purposes but out of self-fulfillment. Nowadays to give back is the greatest luxury. Employees and worker unions have gained dramatic power over the years in order to be part of the election of their leaders. Employees are naturally more drawn to leaders who are fair, straight talking and do not want to create a gap between themselves and others. The dangers of capitalism will only be overcome if we, collectively, separate ourselves from primitive habits and liberate ourselves towards a more sensitive environment. In the old days mentors took on prodigies. These prodigies were not slaves but helpers…most of the time they would be entrusted with the secrets of the trait after the mentor would retire. We need to see our colleagues and bosses more as mentors rather than competition. Then we'll inhabit a more human world full of great opportunities rather than being stuck in the cycle of arrogance, distrust of others and self-promotion over great inventions. Maybe one should see ones own intellect and creativity as a currency rather than spare time activity (rather than waste of time) and this would enable us to live a happier tomorrow. Being able to entertain oneself, being one with the world and follow your own creativity via curiosity rather than greed is what it is all about.

This article explores the complexity of shyness through the analysis of the increasing number of bullying and discrimination in the work environment as well as in personal relationships via many conversations with employees, HR managers, business owners, investors, students. Shyness's and modesty's unique expressive potential may be observed by the greatest achievements of humankind such as the end of slavery, democracy ect (Williams, 1993). I use the terminology of 'shyness' since I believe it to be important to reflect on the child like sincerity. If we think about our own childhood, we were all once shy. Getting introduced to this world, learning things, taking our first steps…shyness seems to originate from an unknown environment, from a trust and belief in others to nature and support us when we are at our most vulnerable. Critics are familiar with the basic principles of shyness but very little analysis has been given to the psychological and factual reality of shyness as a powerful tool rather than one that sets oneself back. Obviously our aggressive and dominance filled behavior raises valid questions about our business ethics, diversity in the workplace and tolerance and excitement towards others and the unknown and unexplored (Barnett, Brown & Hebert, 1998), (Becker & Fritzche, 1987), (Hunt & Vitell, 1986), (Hunt, Wood & Chonko, 1989).

Shyness does not draw attention to itself. It creates a sense of peace (best case scenario) or anxiousness (worst case scenario). The different perspectives and approaches towards shyness is crucial to understand its complexity. True shyness is an uncertainty into ones own environment and

self, something that is very crucial; as Socrates said: "I know that I know nothing". Most businesses seek innovation and thinking outside the box within the limits of its hierarchy and grid. The shy element, the insecurity of ones knowledge, the questioning of ones progress and the innovation by the extension of knowledge is what makes businesses profitable. Nevertheless, this is only possible if society and the law support such an approach rather than unethical behavior or the support of the party with the best lawyers. The amount of time in which people with good reason to believe that they would win a case but eventually lost …is a tragedy of modern day capitalism.

The intimacy between law and lived tolerant ethics is essential and needs to be built on trust in the system (Baumhart, 1961), (Iyer, 2001), (Jones, 1991). This creates an intimate peaceful environment that builds up self-esteem and creates a bright tomorrow. This might sound naïve and utopian…but we all started with a dream (Martin Luther King). Now we should live the dream of unity, creativity, tolerance and innovation. Whereas a lot of economies strive on corruption it robs the country of its greatest assets...the people and their creativity. I would argue that with the utilization of peoples questioning shyness and innovation any country would be more profitable and strive. This is represented by the convention of politics and its set up, which has dominated history over decades. Some attempts have been made to cultivate more open-minded including rather than excluding political systems yet most faded with time; whereas any working or living environment should use tolerance rather than arrogance. The global Americanization and adoption of dog-eat-dog capitalism is a step backwards rather than forward. Sensitivity is not a weakness but life's greatest strengths. We have no real way to proof that sensitivity works in all sectors of life. But we have an instinct that knows when something feels good and when something feels bad. Educators need to remember that true education can only work in a collaborative environment. The focus should not be to create narcissistic, self-observed individuals but teams of great people with foresight and respect for themselves and their environment. Being shy together, is being sensitive with each other, is being sensitive with our environment and creating new and supportive innovations fare away of exploitation. Students who 'stick up for each other' rather than feel 'Schadenfreude' (translated from the German language meaning happy when others fail). Syllabi should allow to be applied to different characters, different types of learning and celebrating shyness and sensitivity. Classrooms should be rooms of exploration and excitement. Shyness is the key towards any progress. It is important to be an ambassador of shyness of questioning oneself, others, to advance existing techniques, to progress without exploiting or destroying. Good leaders don't need to raise their voice

to lead, don't need to scare their team, don't need to manipulate, don't need to betray their team or their competitors. In my opinion if the corporate world was a tool of innovation rather than exploitation shyness would be its greatest asset. Furthermore this passion for improving rather than destroying others would not only influence workers and students but would shape the future.

When discussing the benefits of being shy with some of my colleagues, students as well as executives and empathizing its potential I was laughed at, even made fun out of (in an academic intellectual manner of course). Being shy was showing weakness and weakness needs to be exploited. The pressure and pain that goes with such a life philosophy seems obvious; one never shows weakness, one always pretends to be in control, one always pretends to know it all and be on top of things (Koehn, 1999). Reality of course is very different. Fact is, most of what we know needs to be updated, many facts in science and other disciplines are simply wrong or unexplored (like for example the brain). We need to practice a more modest way of life and attitude towards knowledge. Many of my students see their shyness as a weakness. Many of my colleagues agree with this attitude. Many businesses strive on arrogance. Most of my students fiercely dislike their vulnerable shyness. All of us are shy when we do something for the first time. All of us know what it means to feel shy. Few of us enjoy our shyness. The idea of a shy society is as non-appealing as a society full of murderers (whereas I would argue that most people would prefer the arrogance of murderers to the vulnerability of the shy). My students even argued that often in movies a thief is considered smarter than a push-over. When do we make these assumptions? When have these assumptions become part of popular culture? Shyness is unpredictable, not tangible and when appreciated endearing. The technological advancements of our time have lead us to a dehumanization of all aspects of our lives. Yet it is our shyness, which will make us sustain and extend our lives on earth. This shyness will make us take care of our world, treasure what we have and innovate. Even during academic presentations I could witness a certain arrogance of academics towards business owners who then started their own presentation by the sentence: "Those who can't do each!" which responded in further verbal abuses. Always against each other rather than with each other, always arrogance rather than stepping back, always knowing better than the other. Team spirit skill will be an integral part of my students future jobs and could lead to potential promotions. Naturally all my students wanted to become managers…so here was an opportunity to champion teamwork, to evenly distribute the work and to follow up on the progress (a manager's main duty). To a lot of my students taking responsibly for others seemed to sound good on paper but was a dreaded activity in reality. I was

surprised when my students asked me if I could give individual grades to different team members according to their work…'just to be fair' and to follow 'what others are doing'. My response was that if the project would fail…all students would fail. Obviously such a response was not appreciated but I told my students that our society is built on teamwork and progress only possible if we work together rather than give up on each other. Therefore the students had to support the weakest and strongest link of the team. It is an integral part of the education and society at large to support the weakest link to gain success. While undertaking the exercise some of my students were surprised that who they had considered at first as the 'weakest link' in the team had often come up with the best ideas. These innovative students were often not good at following up on ideas but that could be achieved collaboratively in the group. This method did not only increase the self-esteem of the 'weakest link' but all members of the team felt heard and cared for. Their unique talents were integrated in the project, which resulted in the best results. Every project was better due to its teamwork and collaborations than it would have been when done individually. I observed a sense of pride and collaborative spirit among my students. Something that was totally new to them. Working together felt good and not as if 'dragged down by others'. Opinions were voiced and everybody had a say. Shy students often have great things to say (as they are great observers) but are often not heard due to another dominant team member. The more dominant the team, the more silent they get. This results in frustration and little interest in the task. The 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) is a vicious cycle and rather than speaking out to make things better…shy students often crawl back into their shell and keep on observing rather than participating. Some special needs students were part of the teams and could show off their unique talents such as (in this case) excellent budgeting skills and graphic design skills. It is important for us as a society to work together, to respect each other's talents and to collaborate.

Another important and crucial aspect of the integration of the shy exercise was to give students enough time to complete the task. Rushed jobs, as we all know, are never really successful.

Dominance and arrogance represents one of the most popular and practiced business attitudes of our time and has a proven track record of success stories. Nevertheless its unethical business practice rate is shocking (Tsalikis & Latour, 1995). Excessive arrogance and dominance will poison the working environment. Sensitivity and shyness should be considered as a breath of fresh air rather than the character trait of the weak. The competitive spirit of our world should not overshadow the potential of shyness. In fact shyness can result in great innovative approaches and further business within its competitive world, through innovation rather than dominance.

It is important to reflect on the realistic practices of shyness – most businesses do not want to innovate, they are happy to stick to the same practices (and not to forget machines). People like routine it gives them a sense of security. Nevertheless this approach can be very dangerous as nowadays our rapid business world rises and falls with innovation. Please note that there are many businesses which are extraordinary and who do their best to innovate but this takes time and patience. In my opinion a healthy combination of business with innovation would be ideal for any business no matter if big or small.

The appreciation and embedding of shyness in business is still in its infancy and it is important that we explore it as much as we can and identify its benefits. Nevertheless shyness does not necessarily have to be practiced by only shy people but can be practiced by all. In fact, practicing shyness is like practicing reflective thoughts, modesty and self-evaluation. Shyness can only do so much…it is the environment at large that will make the difference. Support and the right attitude and guidance at the right time can change lives. A good shy person is somebody who listens, reflects, questions, concludes and acts upon ones beliefs. Who does more internally than externally. Who believes more in reflection than aggression.

Shyness raises crucial questions about society and what we expect from it. We must ask ourselves weather nowadays life is the platform for new ideas or a stressful competition. Whereas many attempts have been made to analyze psychology, surprisingly few psychologists, or researchers have paid much attention to the rise of anxiety, bullying and depression among employees. Researchers such as Rayner and Lewis recognized bullying and its toxic domino effect in the world place…but somehow anxiety and depression caused due to this bullying remains less explored. When talking to my colleagues at conferences they mentioned that students had become either withdrawn from the lectures or cocky. They seemed to pay less attention. Point is: should we as educators not be able to explore the different character traits of our students and celebrate them? Isn't that what we get paid for and what ours students' parents have trusted us with? Isn't what happens in the classroom somehow the future attitude of tomorrow? At my institution I can feel the increasing celebration of diversity in spirit of the Canadian attitude. Nevertheless, true diversity rather than forced diversity has still a long way to go.

I believe that this liberation of shyness and its practices can bring us closer to a state of reflection, sincere honesty and true innovation. The introduction of shyness as a respected and proven attitude for a healthy business environment and happy employees who feel heard and appreciated is crucial. The fact that shyness was temporary motivated by low self esteem should not overshadow its great character and potential usefulness. As long

as we reflect and re-reflect (something shy people are extraordinary at) and come to conclusions we have reason to believe in shyness.

I undertook another exercise with some of my students. I asked my students to imagine that they were a CEO of a company. They were asked to assign their classmates to different roles (including managers, workers, clerks, secretaries ect.). The result was astounding and at the same time terrifying. The more dominant the higher the position, the more shy the lower the position. Furthermore female students were granted secretarial roles whereas male students were assigned the higher executive roles. Then I asked the students to defend their decision via facts such as intellectual and academic ranking, experience ect (Vitell & Barnes, 1993). It turned out that most decisions were solely based on image rather than facts. The higher positions were assigned to students who had a huge network and social skills whereas shy students were asked to be happy with what they were given as 'they don't care anyway and simply have no leadership potential'. Women were considered by some students as supporting staff and would get pregnant anyway. It would be up to the men to be the breadwinner. Now I was very happy that my students trusted me with their honest opinions. It is not them who should be condemned, it should be our society who teaches our youngsters these approaches. Yes we have come a long way…but we still have to fine-tune our world. My research seeks to explore the relationship between businesses and shyness (Walton, 1990). I will argue that we must acknowledge that shyness and the attention we pay to it has its unique expressive form and that effective use of shyness will lead us to a state of innovation rather than 'managing from above'. Surprisingly, after the exercise and its discussion all students became more aware of their own assumptions and even became more active in the collection of facts rather than image. The success and reflection of the students depend on their questioning abilities and their ability to see potential where nobody else sees it. This can make a dramatic difference. I also observed that many educators and business owners only greet and smile at their top management. It is crucial to greet, smile, interact and even ask for all of the opinions of the team. Most of the time common sense and an in depths knowledge will provide all the answers. As Voltaire said: "Common sense is not so common". Top management often try to hide certain facts from their line manager while trying to keep the employees they are supervising down. Only if we are open can we get to the core of anything and sustain within a competitive world. Errors will happen…the question is how the team will resolve them together. For that to work challenges should be considered as the glue of a team, one that holds one together rather than the destruction of a business or position. Only then can we truly be shy together, can we innovate and can we survive the future. Together and not apart.

A lot of my students are suffering low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is often a reaction towards the media that tells us that perfection is everything. Only if you look a certain way and act a certain way are you somebody and loveable. This image and illusion of perfection often leads to a crucifixion of ones own defaults and nature. Illusions and misrepresentation of beauty so perfectly portrait by the Dove self-esteem ad that films the journey of an average looking woman to gain model looks via make-up, hair and retouching is poison for the healthy development of young and vulnerable teenagers and even adults. Too often one sees an enemy in the mirror rather than a friend.

Other students suffer from an inflated arrogance and become more and more certain that they deserve only the best…no matter what. Through their 'ueber-confidence' (over-confidence) they feel little remorse, little empathy and little emotions towards anybody but themselves. This self-centered attitude nurtured by the media as well as the environment often results into a mid life crisis and divorce. A mix of a healthy self-esteem combined with true empathy would be ideal but is rarely found. This results in two extreme opposites of teenage attitudes that want little to do with each other. Our job is it to bring these two extremes together rather than widening the gab. Fact is that a combination of self-assured students with students suffering under self-esteem issues might be the perfect team for a presentation project. Whereas the student suffering under self-esteem often is very good in creating and following up and the overconfident student is a natural presenter. Opposites should attract and it is up to us to highlight this fact of successful teamwork. Teams of overconfident students often fail as well as teams of students consumed by low self-esteem… it is about celebrating differences rather than neglecting them. The adult world is just similar but businesses need to establish why a project is success and see the different employees as a combined bundle of strengths. Who did what is not the point, who presents should not be considered the leader but the commentary, who gets promoted should be a team effort and not a individual stunt. Only if teams get promoted rather than individuals can we ensure a more human way of working and living. Our nowadays managerial spirit of hierarchy is in my opinion outdated (Weber, 1967). The individual only counts in the togetherness and successful collaboration with others. Often the shy people are the ones who are getting overlooked, their potential leadership skills doubted and their achievements taken credit for by their more dominant teammates. They often fall through the grid of promotion and end up neglected and frustrated. One is only as good as ones image should not rule our business world…but unfortunately it often does. Considered 'champions' are often those who cheat, take credit for other people's work and who have only one objective: to rule over others rather than work with

others. Their only potential is the of the ruthless dictator. But what is a dictator without his or her people? Nothing!

It comes as no surprise that the practice of shyness within an extremely competitive world results in fierce critical confrontation. Nevertheless it is up to us to see it as a serious answer to the ever-rising serious issue of frustration, depression and unethical business practices. Here I would like to say that I'm talking about a true sincere kind shyness, not a non-participation out of the belief that one is better than everybody else. Shyness that knows empathy, that is based on fair play and fair idea sharing.

It seems impossible to write about shyness without mentioning its great power on social media sites. I do not condemn media as the sole reason for the either 'ueber-confidence' of people or low self esteem on the other hand. The media has shown to highlight and celebrate some shy youngsters who would have never been heard otherwise. There is a great power in social media coverage and exchange which can lead to exciting new discoveries - but there is even more great power in the media and especially advertising when stepping back from the dehumanization of illusive imagery as role models. It seems as if nowadays generation becomes slowly more and more aware of these challenges and it is us as communication specialties who can help them with this journey. The practice and celebration of diversity has become essential to our world and to ensure world peace based on values and empathy.

The challenge is to see shyness as what it is. In fact we do not exactly know what it is…but we can feel its uncomfortable presence within ourselves and others. We have a sort of shy radar and we ourselves can decide if it is endearing or to be dismissed. Most of our most important decisions depend on ourselves and our attitude towards the matter (Ferrell, Gresham & Fraedrich, 1989), (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985), (Forsyth, 1980). If I as a person feel appreciated I will perform better, I will feel comfortable to exchange and I will be open to collaborations. In all matters of life, understanding and respect towards the other persons' strengths and weaknesses should be regarded as the core and peak of our existence. Whereas animals dominate or even kill the weaker competitor we should embrace the potential of each person. Yes it takes time to discover each person's potential, yes it will be a journey but the rewards are spectacular. For us to explore shyness and its reasons for being shy would be a waste of time, we should unfold it and celebrate its potential. How about we recognize it as a sensitive approach towards matters, a 'in-tune' perspective and God knows we need more of that. Shyness results will astonish anybody, it will convince any CEO and it will inspire the team. The saying that 'actions speak louder than words' has often been neglected for 'talkers speak louder than their actions but win at the end'. We can shape business and education,

we can channel shyness, we can practice team spirit and we can glow with innovation. Only if we truly care about people and their unique talents should we be allowed to call ourselves humans.

Conclusion

Shyness has often been dismissed as nothing more than 'weak and unsure character traits' and this attitude somehow gained popularity in the 90s dog-eat-dog mentality. It is accused by business people, investors and often even educators as being a sign of weakness. Very little supporting evidence has been condemned without a fair trial to the footnotes of any business or academic study of the impact and benefits of shyness in the workplace. It is true that when shyness is linked to indecisiveness it is guilty of delaying deals and innovation. Nevertheless, shyness has been gradually liberating itself from this indecisiveness towards an observing and reflecting force. Divorced from semi-researched assumptions the celebration of shyness celebrates the psychological effect, support and true interest in the individual person that one can have and has outgrown its bad reputation. It must be remembered that shyness is a reflective force, yet determined. If we all sat back and reflected more than we talk and push aside I m sure this world would be a better place. Shyness is still a new perspective on business. It is only in its early years of recognition and implementation into the business world. The industrialization of our every-day lives, work and even personal lives highlights many of the arguments and concerns expressed at business conferences and this new development will provide new insights previously held absolutes concerning what business is, how it is practiced, perceived and how it is distributed and its effects it might have on nowadays generation and the generation to come.

The industrial era was characterized by an overwhelming wealth and luxury goods supply and pressure of basic character traits such as charisma, dominance and an aggressive business sense (no matter if ethical or not). Aggression and the strive for a monopoly in ones sector justified all actions. Reflective shyness were to some extend part of it but not main concerns. It was about taking and not giving. Consumerism was holding up shyness as a sort of disability of modern day life, an anti-capitalism approach, a character trait that would bring you only misery rather than success. With shyness being pushed into the background in most Western societies, we as educators observed how diversity, empathy and kindness were rarely practiced. Personally, I always know when a business student is standing in a kiosk queue. It is extraordinary how they try to wiggle their way to the front…as if they have the right to push others aside. This is a very concerning fact of our time.

Shyness continues to impress on higher-level executives, so does modesty. Fact is shyness needs an appreciative audience to blossom. Shyness will continue to challenge the business world from within and reveal its great and unique within nowadays often inhuman capitalism. It is shyness that will be the seed of creativity and sustainability; because shyness cares. Shyness cares because it knows how it feels to not be cared for and therefore is the perfect reflection of our abused environment, resources and business world; careful observation, reflection and action that will build a new and safe tomorrow with flourishing businesses and fulfilled lives. Businesses and a society that one can rely on, trust in, work for and which cultivate a healthy life-work balance embracing rather than excluding diversity (Koehn, 2001).

Aggression and often even betrayal remain the most dominant practices of business. Is this because the businesses replicate what they have been taught by their mentors and educators? Is this because the business world strives on aggression? Is this because gradual success has become boring a quick buck is all that counts?

Whereas many critics argue that business is a one sided aggressive activity, I argue that it is an exchange of ideas and ideals, a play- ground of new innovations and a hub for potential new businesses including diversity. If we as educators and businesses saw ourselves more as innovators rather than collectors of money we would see shyness and its innovations as great potentials (La Forge, 1997), (Lam, 2002), (McCleland, 1961). I have had discussions with many entrepreneurs regarding this subject. Most of them got very successful by 'copycat' implementation of businesses into different markets. Now there is nothing wrong with that but to build a legacy I believe one has to come up with something new rather than do the same old again. For me an entrepreneur is an innovator and not a copycat benefiter. If we as a society could recognize and patent more new ideas under the umbrella of innovation we would experience a much fuller and more colorful business world. Many investors shy away from new adventures, a proven track record of success and quick profitability is all that counts. Universities have adopted this approach and are educating a new generation of aggressors. Some great new businesses such as Toms (www.toms.com) offer products of consume while being charitable. For example buy one pair of Toms shoes and you will donate another pair of shoes to a child in need. Luxury can give back. It is not impossible.

The narrowing down of profitable but at the same time ethical methods in contrast to a repetition of business models is crucial to the success and innovation of our world. Feeling overwhelmed by businesses and aggression does not make sense anymore. It is demotivating and it is as if one cannot 'add anything else anymore as everything has already been done'.

Uninspiring businesses and consume of their products is a one-sided experience whereas ethical innovative businesses and consume of their products is a good feel factor experience. Business's original motivation is to make life better, enjoy and bring happiness rather than grief.

Undoubtedly shyness's representation is uniquely portrait in businesses and politics, and in my belief has never enjoyed the portrait benefits of unorthodox but effective reflection. Only if you understand why people are shy (taking oneself not too seriously, reflecting more than talking, questioning oneself and others) will you be open to it and celebrate it (Rayner & Lewis, 2011). My research has shown that shy students can be an extraordinary force in terms of reflection and self-assessment. I have noticed that most shy students just need some given room to interact, include their opinions and be part of a team. Only if we as the team allow shy people to become one with us can we benefit from them. There is an old saying that quiet waters are deep. We need to pay special attention to shyness and its potential benefits. The aggressor is nothing without his or her competitors, the talker nothing without his or her audience, the shy person nothing without his or her team. The attention paid to shy people might just be the attention nowadays business world and personal life needs. Surprisingly, this shy and reflective approach was new to my students.

Furthermore, it was extraordinary to talk to students and businesses to find a solution how to incorporate shy people and their ideas into the decision making process. In my research on campus the students took pride in their embracing of diverse characters and interests, became more and more conscious of their presumptions and made sure to overcome them. There is no 'I' in 'TEAM' but there are many 'I's in 'TEAM SPIRIT'. Diversity is an integral part of our society (Rossauw, 1994), (Singhapakdi, Kraft, Vitell & Rallapalli, 1995 & 1996). In fact, most of the most successful people have achieved their success by their team diversity rather than individually.

Nevertheless, some of the shy students are hard to integrate because they are not used to being integrated. It is as if you try to force an elephant into ballerina shoes. It takes time to integrate and most projects have tight deadlines. I argue that one needs to gradually build up the confidence of shy students to achieve the biggest and more rewarding results. There is no such thing as a weak link…just weak teams. Shy people need time to find themselves and have confidence in their own ideas: but this will only happen if support comes from the outside and inside. Otherwise all talent is lost.

Students and businesses should learn how to integrate, support and innovate – it is making space for all thoughts no matter how unorthodox and allowing oneself and others to be part of the journey of innovation. Teams with a healthy respect among each other will practice ethical business relationships and innovations. They will try to support each other and others.

It will become part of their character rather than superficial arrogance. In reality most businesses experience a vast amount of ups and downs. It is important that the team supports each other, picks each other up and come up with solutions rather than creating more problems from within when all is needed is a strong base. The most well known businesses and leaders have strong teams behind them…no matter how eccentric they were. It is our job to make our students believe not only in themselves and only their ideas but in their teams and the execution of ideas. Filmmaker Woody Allen once said in an interview that: "Ideas are cheap. It is the execution that is the problem" (Allen, 2016). A successful execution is only possible within a successful team. From the outside aggressors may seem to control a team but the question is who controls ideas? My bet is on the kind and perceptive leader rather than the aggressor. Aggression kills all ideas of fear of failing or being ridiculed. We need to take care of ourselves and others without destroying ourselves or others. There have been wonderful attempts to predict a kinder business world…my advice is to look at employees and students as hidden treasures full of ideas that one needs to tease out. We are only as significant as our executed ideas.

I wonder what the future will bring to shyness. I wonder if the Americanization will get rid of shyness. A world in which everybody always says that they are fine even though they are not, drive big cars even if one cannot afford them and maxed out credit cards and an education system that concentrates and awards the physical strong rather than the sensitive shy.

Educators and businesses seem to ignore that reflection and a kind nature is more than a charismatic appearance paired with unquestionable self-esteem. Never before in history were we as exposed to financial crises and natural catastrophes caused by this arrogance. After World War II women had to take over jobs that had been executed for years by men. This new found self-esteem of women then caused further feminist movements (some of them successful others not so much). The same applies to shyness. Shyness deserves a chance. It deserves to be given a platform. Shyness is often an internal dialogue between the person and the world. It is high time that we questioned our methods and ourselves if we want to survive and offer generations to come a brighter future. If shyness is a unique language then I would argue that every individual has his or her own inner language and thoughts and we need to find a way to allow ourselves to communicate with oneself and others. Shyness reaches its greatest sophistication in the communication between inner voice, conscious and alert observation of the world at large. Maybe key is to be shy about everything, to question everything, to wake up each morning and question why one is alive and what one can do with that life, to support without questioning ones rewards, to be kind cause one wants to be kind rather than one only wants to be treated

kindly too, to be part of a team without losing sight of what really matters, to be happily humbled by others, to be humbled by oneself. Most kids learn how to estrange, to become shy and to withdraw from strangers. It is a sort of protection often reinforced by parents who tell their kids to be aware of strangers. Fact is shyness can embrace new ideas because it has questioned them over and over again.

Mainstream media tells us that being shy is not very fashionable. One needs to represent oneself on all social media channels, one needs to show off, one needs to be tough. In my belief shyness is an integral part of our society and our attitude. All of us are shy at some point in our lives. Nobody is always confident …that is an illusion. And even though all we have is illusions to survive on this earth (Nietzsche) ones ideas have to remain indefinable, unpredictable and shy so that we can experience true life. We can only kid ourselves so much. Fact is, if we practice and celebrate shyness we practice our souls rather than our image.

In contrast to many theorists I would strongly argue that shyness is valid to be considered as a historical, psychological and sociological backbone of society. If we lose everything (from worldly goods to relationships) we won't remain confident. We will be shy and down. Shyness is the end of the spectrum, the last step before death and the first step towards life. I believe that we have to embrace shyness and allow it to gestate within an evolving, sophisticated and innovative environment. It is this sensitive innovative approach that allows it the means to continue to develop and move towards a notion of inspiration. Shyness is not a character trait, shyness is a pure and sincere reality. It is a subtle reality independent of gender, character or social status. Yet it does not limit itself. It is unpredictable, at least during the beginning and middle of your life as for the end of your life all will be shy of the approaching death and little confidence about transcending into another form of existence or nonexistence (dependent on your beliefs). Shyness is around us, in us and beyond us. Perceived image charisma has gained mainstream popularity yet I see beauty in shyness, I see sincerity in shyness, I see the future in shyness. Without shyness something is missing, something important is missing. Many students report anxiety, depression, sleeping and eating disorders. Maybe the illusions are catching up with us. Maybe in our heart we know that what we are doing is not what we wish to do. Maybe image is not everything. Maybe to find ones own way is crucial to free oneself of anxiety and depression. The interaction with others is still the most important aspect of human life. No man is an island. We are all dependent on our community and its approach towards us. This being said, the attitude of 'one size fits all' in teasing out and celebrating shyness is not really efficient. We need to

remember that everyone is different and that when a platform and stage is given…we can only hope, watch and wonder.

Shyness's very nature is in a constant state of questioning in response to its environment. The facets of shyness is just as vast as the of art itself. In fact, shyness is an art as like art it questions oneself and ones environment. It is in a constant tumult of emotions, being torn between different approaches but results in a beautiful or abstract, telling and inspiring art piece. No art is perfect or imperfect, no shyness perfect or imperfect. It is that elusive existence that makes it so exciting, so endearing and so special to nowadays society which is so certain of its own existence and dominance over all matters; to then be put in its place by nature and makes oneself feel small and insignificant. Fact is: We are never in charge…even though we might pretend very convincingly to others that we are. I believe in shyness as an extension and reflection of our own insignificance, I believe in shyness as the essence of life itself, I believe in the celebration of an emotion that can still make us blush and laugh hysterically at the same time, I believe that only if we celebrate our vulnerability can we be good human beings with a chance of survival (both physically and spiritually).

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