



In the final part of his ‘seven deadly enemies of man(agement)’, **Sean Langley** has some breaking news...

Revenues and benefits gets ‘sexy’!



“I scowl with frustration at myself in the mirror.” Hands up all those who recognise that opening line from a top selling novel. 50 points if you guess right. Ooh, too big a clue.

Yes, it is from EL James’ much read **Fifty Shades of Grey**; and, if someone had said to me when I embarked upon my career that, one day, I would be writing an article for **Insight** based upon the subject of **lust**, I would have laughed. But, that is precisely what I am about to do.

This is the final part of a series looking at what I have described as **the seven deadly enemies of management**, based upon the seven deadly sins. Modern religious teachings now talk about these seven sins alongside a corresponding, or opposite, acceptable behavioural trait. So, we have had:

- *pride v humility*
- *greed v charity*
- *gluttony v temperance*
- *sloth v diligence*
- *wrath v patience*
- *envy v kindness.*

I thought I would leave what I expected to be the most interesting to last... lust, and its corresponding trait, **chastity**.

In a staff meeting, I recently referred to **revenues and benefits** as being ‘sexy!’ What lay behind this tongue-in-cheek observation was the fact that there is so much change being introduced to our field right now, that it is very high-profile, not just within our own local authorities, but nationally.

Where you find ‘sexy’ you often find lust. Lust is defined as a passionate or overmastering desire or craving for... well, something (or someone). I won’t venture into the realms of the latter, but that something could well be **power** or **position**. It could, conceivably, manifest itself at an organisational level, where one seeks to take over another.

For the purposes of illustrating lust as a weakness of man(agement), I will dwell on the

craving for position and power.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with having a passion for your profession, and an ambition to fulfil aspirational dreams of the most senior management positions, if that is your aim. In business, there is a belief that you need to be ruthless to reach those senior management positions. However, beware the misdirected ambition!

“Is it not strange that desire should so many years outlive performance?”, **Shakespeare**.

An interpretation of that quote, from Henry IV Part II, is that individuals risk losing the focus on their performance if they allow themselves to be misguided by a desire for power, and they ultimately fail. There is no doubt that an ability to take tough decisions is a strong attribute likely to help in achieving your dreams, but that does not mean it is necessary to walk over people to attain them.

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One of my boyhood heroines was rockstar **Chrissie Hynde**. I know what you’re thinking – there was an element of schoolboy lust in there. Maybe! She was once quoted as saying, *“In my experience lust only ever leads to misery. All that suspicion and jealousy and anguish it unleashes. I don’t want those things in my life.”*

I would argue that you also wouldn’t want them in the workplace. Nurturing creative talent so that it is channelled and productive, rather than diluted and destructive, is a challenge. However, I don’t believe it is asking too much.

What you do want is more of the opposing, or corresponding, behavioural trait to lust... chastity. Defined as the condition or quality of being pure, or chaste, this derives from the Latin for pure – **castus**. So, whilst the term chastity may conjure up a sexual connotation, in the workplace I would suggest that what is required is more **purity**.

As humans, none of us are perfect, and we all have our own strengths and weaknesses, both personal and professional. However, to be effective as a manager or leader, the purity to which I refer is more to do with your behaviour towards your workforce.

In other words, **leading by example**, achieving consistency in the way in which you deal with your team members, and ensuring that you operate to at least the same standards that you expect from others. It is no good asking others to maintain a clear desk if you do not do so yourself, for example. What I am really talking about is simply acting as an effective role model.

I will leave the final word on all of this to **Mahatma Gandhi**. He said that, *“The seven deadly sins are: wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, business without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.”*

Some would argue that business without morality has led us to this financial crisis. The government’s austerity measures and welfare reform agenda is aiming to tackle wealth without work. However, we need **politics with principle**. We need our political, business, spiritual and cultural leaders to do so with principle. I’ll leave you to decide whether we have that!

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