

by Tim Bryce  
Managing Director  
M. Bryce & Associates (MBA)  
P.O. Box 1637  
Palm Harbor, FL 34682-1637  
United States  
Tel: 727/786-4567  
E-Mail: timb001@phmainstreet.com  
Yahoo! IM: littleleaguerng  
WWW: <http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/>  
Since 1971: "Software for the finest computer - the Mind"

*This is going to be an unusual essay; it may sound a bit avant-garde at first, but it is designed to make a specific point. So please bear with me. And for those of you insulted by the slang used herein I offer my sincere apology right upfront.*

I remember an incident years ago where my father was on his way home late at night after being out of town on a business trip. At the time, he owned a new Cadillac. The interstate was relatively empty that evening making motoring a pleasure, particularly at a late hour. The exit he took emptied on to a main suburban thoroughfare which naturally intersects with several smaller streets, one in particular is an unusual junction where a feeder lane merges with the main road. Cars in the feeder lane must yield to drivers in the main thoroughfare; not only would commonsense dictate such an apparent yield, but it is clearly marked as such with a road sign.

As my father passed through the junction, he noticed out of the corner of his eye an old Ford slamming on its brakes in the other fork, narrowly missing him. Evidently, my father had surprised the other driver who was failing to yield. What ensued was an excellent example of what is today called "Road Rage." In the other driver's eyes, some "Fat Cat in a Cadillac" had just cut him off. Outraged, he began to chase my father down the highway hurling every obscenity he could think of. To try to stop and reason with him was definitely out of the question. To make matters worse, he then tried to drive my father off the road. Only by some clever maneuvering on my father's part was he able to elude the other driver. He felt lucky to have escaped without any material injury to himself or the automobile.

Afterwards he reflected on the incident and why it occurred. From the other driver's perspective, he obviously felt my father had wronged him, even though commonsense and a clearly marked road sign proved otherwise. His perception of the situation had no basis in reality. In his mind, he was right and my father was wrong,

and acted accordingly. It was this little episode that inspired the concept of "Homo Sapien Asshole" and the basis for this essay. As illustrated by the other driver, human beings become assholes when their perception of reality is inconsistent with others and act abnormally. We have all encountered Homo Sapien Assholes at various points of our lives; sometimes we get hurt, sometimes we survive. Or, even more frightening, perhaps we were the ones instigating the problem. So, look upon this work as a "Survival Guide" to understand the nature of the beast and how to deal with it.

## WHAT IS A HOMO SAPIEN ASSHOLE?

The term "ass" is actually an American variation of the old English word "arse" which has always referred to the human posterior, usually in a sexual context. For many years, "ass" was used in relation to a stubborn or stupid person, such as that related to a Jack Ass (donkey), e.g., "He is making an ass of himself." However, it has been theorized the term "asshole" didn't come into our vernacular until the 20th century, probably during World War II. Although "asshole" is simply an extension of the word "ass", it has a much stronger connotation than its predecessor and is now used throughout the world. Some examples:

## ASSHOLE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Danish - røvhul  
Dutch - klootzak  
Faroese - reyvarhol  
Finnish - persereikä  
French - trou du cul  
German - arschloch  
Greek - kolotrepa  
Hungarian - seggfej  
Italian - buco del culo  
Portuguese - cuzão  
Russian - zdhopa  
Spanish - gilipollas  
Swedish - rövhål  
Swiss - foura chül

Although a little something may be lost in the literal translation of the word; make no mistake, it is how it is intended to be used.

So what exactly is a Homo Sapien Asshole? Is it something we intuitively know or does it have identifiable characteristics? Actually is not as abstract of a concept as you might think. Although the word is often used to curse another person, we shouldn't necessarily take offense to it, after all we are all HSAs at different points in our lives, some more so than others though. The trick is to get by

with a minimum number of occurrences.

**DEFINITION** - *a person who acts in a seemingly absurd manner towards others based on their erroneous perception of reality either for personal gain or to react to a situation.*

## **PERCEPTION**

Our perception of reality dictates our actions. For example, we dress according to how we believe the weather will be; if we believe it will be cold, we will wear a warm coat. But if our perception is wrong, that the weather is actually quite hot and humid, wearing a warm coat would be considered a foolish decision. A false perception of reality is one of the underpinnings of HSA and can be caused by such things as attention deficit disorder (easily distracted), or by our own sense of worth (ego).

Having worked in the computer field for a number of years I can tell you authoritatively if the input is wrong, everything else that follows will be wrong. Even if a computer's processing logic is correct, the resulting output will be wrong. The human being is no different. Even if we have competent mental faculties, if we do not perceive a situation correctly, we will act incorrectly.

So, what influences our perceptions? Our human senses (predominantly sight and sound) coupled with our attention to detail. In our "Road Rage" example mentioned earlier, the other driver failed to see the yield sign and only saw a Cadillac pass in front of him. Consequently, he leapt to the wrong conclusion and took the wrong remedy. Sometimes we deliberately block our perception of reality due to ignorance or preconceived assumptions. In other words, we "tune out" and listen to only what we want to listen to. In the first O.J. Simpson trial for example, the prosecution presented some compelling evidence as to his guilt. This went in one ear of the jury, and out the other. Instead, they saw him as an unfair victim of a prejudicial police force and consequently acquitted him.

One exception to this is in the area of foreign translation. If we try to converse in a language we are not proficient in, we may not properly understand what is being said. In this situation, the person is not a HSA, just simply misguided. For example, I once had a visiting Australian ask me in the office for a "rubber"; whereas he was actually asking for an eraser, I knew it as a prophylactic, hence confusion. The same phenomenon is true observing the local customs in a foreign country, e.g., dressing inappropriately or how we conduct ourselves. These are simply innocent mistakes.

If our perceptions are correct, yet we do not have the mental faculties to process them accordingly, as in a mentally challenged individual, that person is not an HSA, just incompetent. Therefore, the HSA is a mentally competent person who either accidentally or deliberately doesn't understand their surrounding reality. From this viewpoint, animals cannot be HSA's. In fact, the designation "Homo Sapien" is a clear indication only people can be assholes. Some may argue their pets are assholes. This cannot be true since they are not graced with the adequate brain power to reach logical conclusions and are easily deceived.

Alcoholism and drug abuse are no excuses for being an asshole. In fact, it heightens your ability to become one. Assholes do some of their best work when under the influence.

One must ask when are we old enough to become a HSA? Do infants qualify? No. An infant is totally dependent on others and excused for any accidents they may cause. Only when a person gains consciousness and begins to think for him/herself can he/she become a HSA. An infant has no preconceived notions and, therefore, cannot act upon them.

Is being an asshole hereditary? As much as we would like to think it is in the genes, it is not. Being a HSA is learned behavior we pick up from our contemporaries.

## **INDICATORS**

So what are the characteristics of a HSA? How do we know when someone is acting like one, even our self? First, a HSA is not restricted to any socioeconomic class. We can find them in all walks of life, in all cultures, all over the world. The following is a list of common characteristics of a HSA and are not in any particular order:

- When we try to talk authoritatively about something we know nothing about, e.g., "bullshit".
- We use abusive language to berate another, particularly when they don't deserve it.
- We make change simply for the sake of change. Even worse, not changing when times dictate you should do otherwise.
- We jump to conclusions without learning all of the facts. The press is notorious for shaping public opinion by carefully controlling the dissemination of information. People act according to what they know; if they do not know the facts, they may make erroneous decisions.

- When you cut someone off to suit your whims, either in traffic or a conversation. There is a general lack of courtesy today which is greatly affecting our interpersonal relations.
- When you have huge egos with little regard for others (aka the "*I am God*" complex). This includes pseudo-experts who think they know everything, and you know nothing. Dictators also fall into this category, be it a government, company, or nonprofit organization. These are people who zealously exert their will over their constituents because they have little regard for them. HSAs do not like to have their authority challenged.
- They viciously slander someone's integrity for personal gain. It has become common in politics and our legal system to vilify or demean a person when the other person takes an opposing viewpoint. The intent is not to just win an argument, but to humiliate and control your opponent.
- When a person has risen above the level of their competency and, instead of seeking guidance or help, pretends to know what they are doing. We, of course, remember the classic adage, "*You don't have to be a brain to be a boss, just an asshole.*"
- Lastly, HSAs tend to rationalize their actions. They are never at fault and blame others for their mistakes. Very few people today are willing to admit they made a mistake and assume responsibility. When was it ever a crime to admit "*I screwed up?*" Again, this is ego related.

#### **WHEN IS IT NECESSARY TO BE A HSA?**

Sometimes it becomes necessary to be an asshole. Two examples come to mind; First, when you are cornered in a situation, you can conveniently become an asshole to cloud an issue. A vintage example of this was President Clinton's infamous deposition in the Paula Jones case; "*It depends on what you mean by 'Is'*" - a classic. Becoming a HSA can be a clever tactic to distract people from the real issue at hand.

The second example, is to use assholeism as a means to motivate people to work harder. When you cannot get your subordinates to do their work properly, it sometimes becomes necessary to rant and rave (aka "browbeating").

You can only justify acting like this when you want to get your way. Regardless, you are still a HSA.

#### **HOW TO DEAL WITH A HSA**

Okay, you have a HSA in front of you. What do you do? Don't panic. Reasoning with a HSA is out of the question since they believe their point of view is the only one that is valid. You have only two alternatives: walk away from them (and let cooler minds prevail) or become a HSA yourself and do battle accordingly. Regrettably, it is this latter alternative which has led to many court cases and wars.

Automobiles and HSA naturally go hand-in-hand. You are either driving badly or the other person is. Everyone has a different viewpoint on the open road and everyone believes theirs is the most important; from the retired spinster who can barely see over the steering wheel, to the kid who weaves through traffic like a kamikaze on his motorcycle, to the soccer mom who pays more attention to her cell phone than the road, to the guy running at breakneck speed to keep an appointment, to the delivery man who waddles through traffic and double-parks, etc. The variety of driving personalities inevitably will cause a HSA incident to occur on a routine basis. You can bet on it. Pity the traffic cops who have to deal with it.

Love also seems to bring out the asshole in us, whether it be during courtship or competing for the attention of another. How many times have we done something stupid to impress another? Too many. Divorce results when our perspectives change and we suddenly wake up next to an asshole. There should be some sort of mandatory test to check compatibility prior to wedlock; e.g., review comparable values, goals, and maturity. It would sure save us a lot of aggravation (and money) later on.

If you have become a full time HSA, it is difficult to become a real person again (ask Rev. Jim Bakker). Arrogance has a lot to do with it; it propels the ego; lose the arrogance and you are on the road to becoming a recovered assaholic.

And for those of you wondering, Yes, I too have been an HSA and, no doubt, I will screw up again in the future for which I apologize in advance. Admitting you have a problem is the first step towards recovery.

**END**

*About the Author*

*Tim Bryce is the Managing Director of M. Bryce & Associates (MBA) of Palm Harbor, Florida and has 30 years of experience in the field of Information Resource Management (IRM). He is available for lecturing, training and consulting on an international basis.*

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