

Edge

THE
POLITICS &
POWER
ISSUE

**PLAYING THE
POLITICS GAME**
HOW TO WIN AT
OFFICE POLITICS

UP CLOSE
KANYA KING,
MOBO AWARDS
FOUNDER

**LEADERSHIP
SUPERPOWERS**
THE SEVEN
SUPERPOWERS
EVERY LEADER
NEEDS

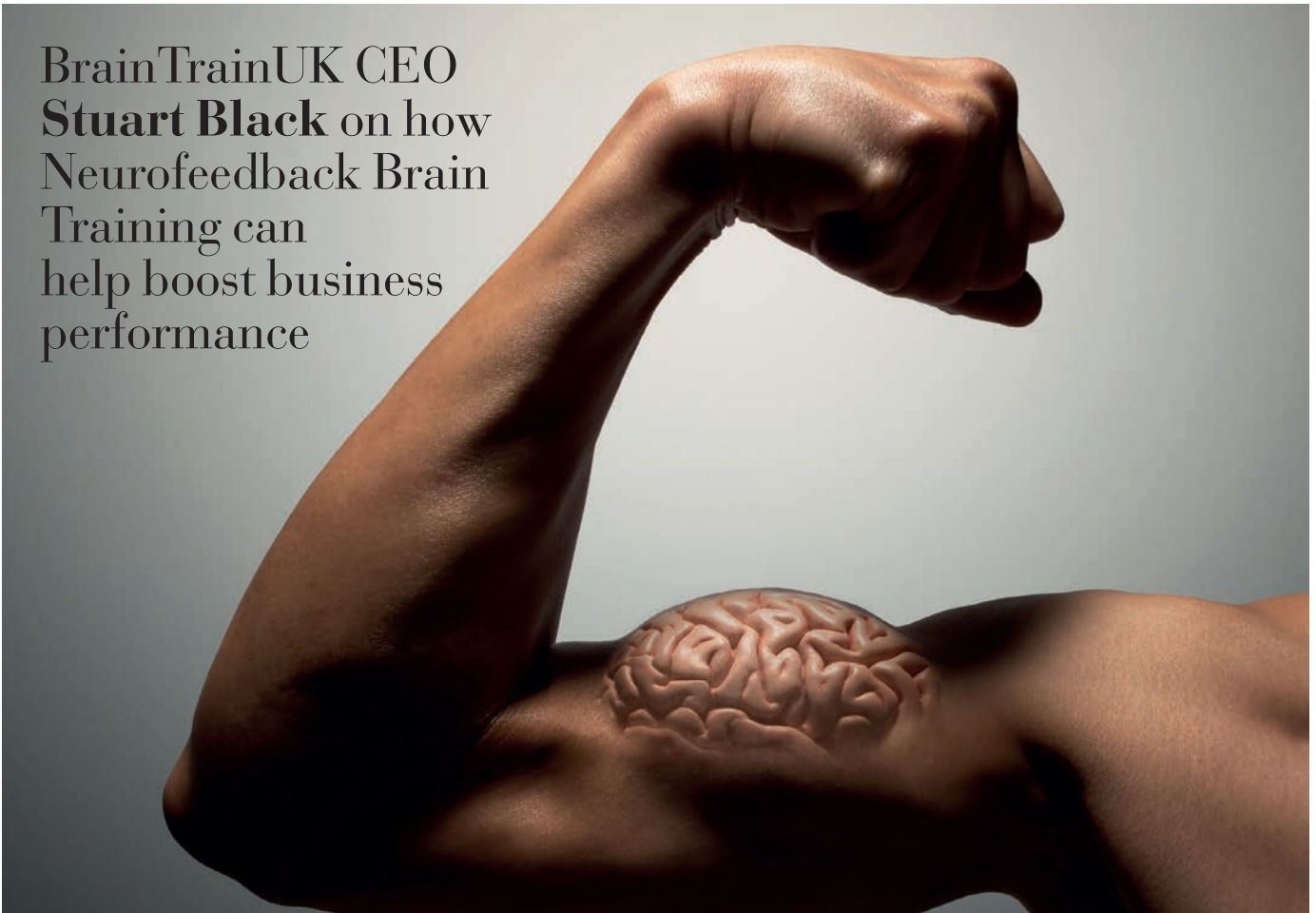


THE EGO EPIDEMIC

THE RISE OF THE NARCISSIST LEADER

BOOST YOUR BRAIN POWER

BrainTrainUK CEO
Stuart Black on how
Neurofeedback Brain
Training can
help boost business
performance



Outside academia, Neurofeedback Brain Training has tended to be the 'secret sauce' used by business leaders and elite athletes to push their 'edge'. Those who have gone public on their use of Neurofeedback are few and far between, but include self-development guru Tony Robbins, 'bullet-proof executive' Dave Aspery, the 2006 Italian World Cup winning

squad, AC Milan and the 2010 Canadian Winter Olympics squad. Stephen Hawking is also a fan.

WHAT IS NEUROFEEDBACK?

Like Viagra and Penicillin before it, the NASA research discovery that training your brainwaves could improve performance was an accident. They discovered that

parts of the brain associated with movement could be strengthened, reducing the frequency of seizures in epileptics, and reducing hyperactivity in ADHD.

Since then the range of medical applications of Neurofeedback has expanded, with 100s of scientific journal articles pointing to the impact it can have on a range of conditions including anxiety and depression. But for the purposes of this article

“WE OFTEN USE TOO MUCH OF OUR BRAIN TO BE FULLY PRODUCTIVE”

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THOUGHT LEADERS
NEUROFEEDBACK

it is the impact it has been shown to have on mental performance that is of most interest.

HOW IT WORKS

Neurofeedback comes from the concept of operant conditioning – by giving feedback on behaviour, behaviour can be changed.

It works like this: We monitor your brain waves from your scalp by using small electrode connectors; the brainwaves are amplified and fed into a computer, they are processed, analysed and feedback is generated in real-time. While this is happening you sit in front of a screen either watching your favourite DVD, playing a video game or hearing pleasant ‘gong’ sounds when your brain enters the desired state.

The feedback you receive isn’t through the electrodes on your scalp, but through what you see, hear and feel. In this way we are giving feedback directly to the brain on how it is functioning, helping it learn, develop and grow.

HOW IT CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS

When it comes to bottom-line business benefits, productivity is key.

There is a commonly quoted myth that we only use a small percentage of our brain. The reality is the opposite – we often use too much of our brain to be fully productive. The most productive state we can be in actually involves very little thinking – this is called the ‘Flow’ state. The concept has been researched extensively by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and by McKinsey in a 10-year study that concluded by spending 20% more time in ‘flow’, productivity would almost double. When in ‘flow’ our pre-frontal cortex, our conscious ‘thinking brain’ is largely ‘switched-off’.

We see this with executives whose mind is over-active, whose thinking brain gets in the way with self-doubt, or whose emotional brain is out of

control and triggers angry outbursts, or who get emotionally frustrated to the point that their perfectly capable logical brain cannot function.

Using Neurofeedback to teach the brain how to control itself better enables us to use the right parts of the brain at the right time, increasing the productivity of ourselves and our business.

Siegfried Othmer, Chief Scientist at the EEG Institute in Los Angeles, recalls: “A highly successful business man came for ‘the squirrels in his brain’ that were making it difficult for him to organise his activities. After one particular session, he walked out of the office, stopped for a moment to consult his brain, and declared the squirrels were no longer there”.

At BrainTrainUK, it must be said, we mainly work with individuals suffering from anxiety, stress, learning difficulties and migraines. However, our practitioners have also worked with a broad range of individuals and senior executives looking to enhance their mental performance. Over the years we’ve helped people increase their resilience, creativity and we’ve even helped a \$1m winning poker player improve his ‘edge’.

MY OWN STORY

When I first heard about Neurofeedback I was a senior executive working for a large corporation over seeing multimillion pound projects. Like many people in business I had a “busy mind” and I was first attracted by the claim that an intensive course of Neurofeedback could be like “20 years of meditation in a week”. At the time I was in my 40s, had never meditated and thought it could provide me with a “fast track to Nirvana”. I decided to give it a go and booked my place on a course in California with a staggeringly expensive price tag – \$15,000. Putting the price to one side (our courses cost nothing like that by the way) it was a transformative

experience. I didn’t find Nirvana, but I felt very relaxed. It was as if someone had turned a switch and my mind was extremely quiet, focused and I was able to see things very clearly for the first time. And yes, it changed my life. In my career I realised I felt frustrated professionally and wanted more. I found my ‘dream job’ with a management consultancy and six months later got a 200% bonus. Within a few years I was on a £175k package working as a senior consultant for a BUPA hospital.

During this time I became more and more interested in applied Neuroscience. I’d personally experienced the power of Neurofeedback and I was fascinated by the impact it was being shown to have on other people’s lives – not just in the business world it has to be said, but on cases of ADHD, autism, depression, anxiety and even migraines.

In 2012 I attended an event with the most senior people in Bupa to create the vision for ‘2020’. I realised I had my own vision for 2020 and that was to bring Neurofeedback to the mainstream. Over the next few years I grew my network of psychologists, doctors and Neurofeedback practitioners and together we created BrainTrainUK. ■

If you would like to know more about how Neurofeedback could help your business performance, call BrainTrainUK on 0207 978 0186