

October 2002 - Volume 7

THE CHANGE EQUATION

Feedback
+ Support
= Behaviour Change

Expert Advice

"Be aware of your strengths and limitations. Pick the one behavior that is going to make the biggest positive difference in your life. Talk to the most important people in your life and involve them in helping you change that behavior. Ask them to give you feedback – not about the past, but ideas for the future. Listen to their ideas. Follow-up on a regular basis. If you do this, guess what can happen to you? No matter how successful you are now, you can get better!"

Marshall Goldsmith specializes in coaching highly successful leaders to achieve positive, measurable change in behaviour.

The ABC's of Growing Leaders



AWARENESS – Understanding the Need to Change

The essential first step to behaviour change is to raise awareness of the need to change. People must understand "what's in it for me" before they will be willing to invest their time and effort in learning new skills and different strategies.

Assessment Tools to Raise Awareness

Most coaches use confidential personal assessments to help executives find answers to questions like: "Who am I? How do I relate to others? What are my unique strengths and challenges?" The personal assessment process helps managers discover how they impact others and provides a solid beginning for the on-going coaching relationship.

The next step is to agree on the desired behaviours for a leader in this position. Tools are available to sift out the critical behaviours necessary for success and get the manager's 'buy-in' that these behaviours are the ones that count.

Once trust and openness are established, coaches use customized 360° feedback tools to raise the executive's awareness of how other co-workers, direct reports and higher-level managers rate his or her effectiveness in performing these critical behaviours.

BELIEF – Techniques for Communicating the Value of Behaviour Change

Feedback is not always welcome. In an unsupportive environment, it can be perceived as threatening. When giving feedback, the learner must believe that you genuinely want him to succeed, and will support him while he is working to change.

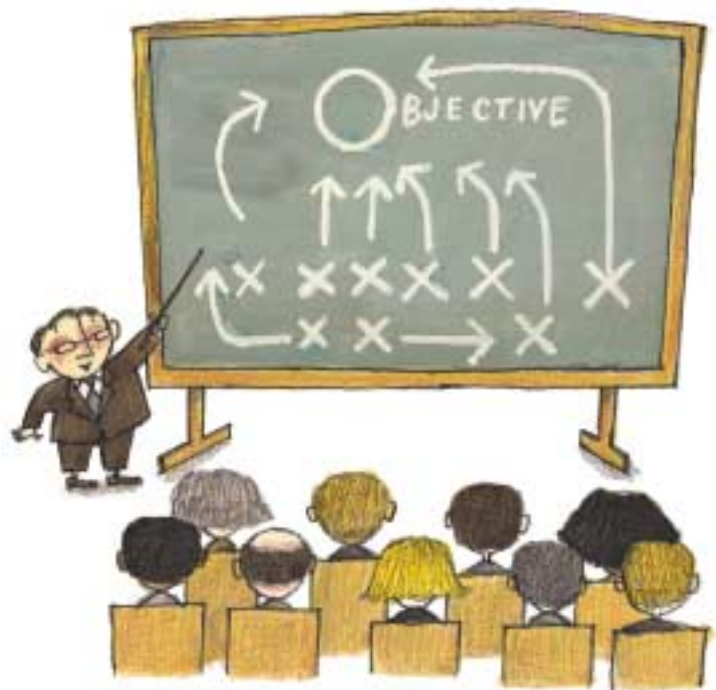
You can't camouflage irritation, disapproval or frustration with the employee. Yet, even in the presence of these feelings, try to focus on a few good reasons for sincerely wanting him to be successful. If you genuinely have the employee's success at heart, he will detect your sincere regard and be more open to hearing your feedback.

Coaching a person to change her behaviour is impossible if she does not believe she needs to change. The more successful the person's career has been, the more resistant she is to changing. After all, why should she change anything? She's done just fine so far.

Even when her direct reports, superiors and colleagues complain about the same flaws or frustrations, none of her co-workers are able to get her to alter that specific behaviour that everyone (but her) agrees is holding her back.

What can you do in this situation?

1. Help her reflect upon the discrepancy between her own self-perception and the feedback she receives from co-workers.
 - What meaning does she make of the communications and requests of others?
 - Is she aware of how others in her team view her strengths and weaknesses?
 - What rationale does she use to disregard their request for change?
2. Help her examine her own underlying assumptions and beliefs.
 - This reflection will reveal flawed thinking and raise her awareness of different perspectives.
 - The questioning process must be done in a genuine spirit of curiosity.
3. Try to understand her – not to push or manipulate.
 - Respecting the right of every individual to make her own choices, you simply want to understand the reasons why she clings to old behaviours.
 - Don't allow yourself to criticize... this might destroy any attempt to reveal her thinking.



COACHING – Need *Lasting* Behaviour Change?

Managers need to learn many things...

- ✍ technical skills such as budgeting and project management
- ✍ subtle idiosyncrasies affecting the culture and politics of the organization
- ✍ soft skills such as self-awareness, self-management, leading and influencing

What we learn is influenced by how we learn*

A classroom-type setting is often the best for teaching technical skills. But trying to teach a manager about the organization's culture, structures, processes and politics is better done informally, via networking conversations. If your goal is to help managers learn more about how to impact others and empower their workforce to greater commitment and effort, a formal classroom setting is not the most effective method.

For this type of learning to be successful, they must receive structured feedback within a supportive and trusting environment. They are then able to use the feedback to change themselves for the better.

FORMAL COURSES

Technical Skills
Financial Fundamentals
Project Management

INFORMAL NETWORKING

Organizational climate
and culture

PERSONAL FEEDBACK & SUPPORT

Self-awareness, self-management
leading and influencing others

*From the Institute for Employment Studies, Report # 345 by Tamkin & Barber

Tamkin & Barber's research helps explain why organizations and managers are often frustrated after investing in classroom training to improve their soft skills. Often the investment doesn't seem to pay off in long-lasting change or improvement. A coaching approach is a better solution to foster this type of learning.

As a leadership tool, coaching creates an ongoing conversation that allows people to listen to performance feedback more openly, seeing it as serving their own aspirations, not just the boss's interests. These conversations encourage the person being coached to establish long-term development goals and conceptualize a plan for reaching those goals.

Are you prepared for the future?

Never underestimate the importance of preparing the next generation of leaders to carry the torch.

At Shorwood Associates, we focus on coaching middle managers for enhanced communication and leadership skills. We'd love to talk to you about how we can help.

Helpful Resources:

- Eric Parsloe and Monica Wray. [Coaching and Mentoring: Practical Methods to Improve Learning, 2000.](#)
ISBN: 0-7494-3118-0

The authors present strong evidence suggesting that traditional methods of learning need to be adjusted and, in some cases, abandoned to accelerate learning. They devote a chapter to the topic of "Helping People Learn How to Learn" and offer insights into effective techniques for questioning, listening and providing constructive feedback. Find out how coaching and mentoring play a key role in creating and maintaining the learning atmosphere.

Would you like to recommend a book or resource?
Please just send a review and why you like it and we'll post your recommendation!