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# **Misurare e costruire la Leadership**

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# **Measuring and Building the Leadership**



**SESSIONE PLENARIA  
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**PLENARY SESSION  
PUBLIC LECTURES - 9<sup>th</sup> May**



**PUBLIC LECTURES – 9<sup>TH</sup> OF MAY**

# **Performance Management needs Leadership**

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## **ABSTRACT**

All behavior, whether in managing dental practice, a production plant, a hospital, or a construction site, follows the same behavioral laws. Failure of medical staff to follow a doctor's direction, a construction worker to work safely or a hospital employee to follow infection control procedures or a patient to adhere to the doctor's therapeutic regimen is a leadership problem, not a performer problem.

Leadership requires the creation of a work environment where policies, procedures, management systems and behaviors produce the highest value for customers. This can only be done when leadership has not only an understanding of the laws of behavior, but habit patterns that bring out the best in people. Clearly, this is not understood by most of the population. As a result we live with problems for many years at home and work that can be solved in a matter of days when the proper behavioral procedures are known and practiced. The leadership challenge whether at work or at home, is to create a total experience for others that causes them to willingly exhibit behaviors that are consistent with the mission, vision and values of the business, family or individual.

Although the laws are not completely understood, we now know enough about the science of behavior to create a more peaceful, safer and happier world for ourselves, our businesses and our communities. When these laws are not followed outcomes are never maximized. This session will present an introduction to the science of behavior that can be applied immediately to the problems and opportunities of the participants.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Just as the science of physics can be explained in only three terms,  $E = mc^2$ , the science of behavior can be summarized in the three-term contingency, or it is often referred to as the ABC Model of Behavior (Antecedent: Behavior ➔ Consequence). The ABC Model states that there are only two ways to change behavior. One is to do something before the behavior occurs (Antecedent) and the other to do something after the behavior occurs (Consequence). Most organizational problem-solving attempts rely almost exclusively on antecedents or consequences that

are remote to the behavior. Both only produce minimal results and almost none sustain behavior.

There are four behavioral consequences and each produces a predictable effect on behavior. As such each is useful in producing a particular effect. Since in business we are interested in the employee owning the behavior, positive reinforcement is the preferred consequence in accelerating behaviors and maximizing results.

## **TOOLS**

One of the tools that is important in understanding why behaviors, particularly off task or unsafe behaviors, occur is the PIC/NIC Analysis®. The Analysis shows that many off task, unsafe or behavior that “short-cut” a process create positive, immediate, certain consequences for the performer whereas the on task, desirable behaviors often produce negative, future uncertain consequences. This tells us that creating PICs for behavior change is the most efficient and effective course of action.

Another tool that is effective in making sure that implementation is effective is the Five-Step Problem-Solving tool. The five steps are:

1. Pinpoint
2. Measure
3. Feedback
4. Reinforce
5. Evaluate

This is helpful in solving any problem from increasing creativity to increasing productivity, quality and safety.

## **CONCLUSION**

While the PM approach is based on science it is imminently applicable to the widest range of problems at work and at home. Results have been demonstrated in banks, insurance companies, mines, manufacturing, distribution and medical settings. Most have been sustained for decades and one for over 30 years.

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PUBLIC LECTURES – 9<sup>TH</sup> OF MAY

# How a Leader Speaks: Using Commitment-Based Leadership to Deliver Feedback to Employees

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## ABSTRACT

Delivering feedback is an important part of performance management. Leaders are responsible for effectively communicating feedback to employees, but they often are faced with psychological obstacles for following through. Leaders can fail at giving necessary feedback when they are not sufficiently motivated by their personal values, have not been trained to follow an action plan, or are misguided by distracting thoughts and emotions. Commitment-based leadership training utilizes the evidence-based tenets of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to provide values clarification exercises, action planning, and situational awareness training to assist leaders to act in the direction of what is important even in the presence of obstacles.

*Keywords: Acceptance & Commitment Training, Value Clarification, Commitment, Mindfulness, Action Planning, Situational Awareness*

## INTRODUCTION

Leaders in an organization are responsible for many different tasks, and must execute their mission using personal skills and company assets in order to create a measurable difference in their work environment. Whether producing marketable items, serving customers, or developing social programs, leaders capitalize on their resources to accomplish specific goals. A company's strongest resources for production, service, and development are employees, and committed leaders must utilize effective communication skills to orient employees toward organizational goals.

“Communication in organizations is usually in the form of verbal products that are passed from upper management to the other parts of the organization. The purpose of the communication is often to guide employee behavior to be more efficient and

productive while contributing to the overall efficiency and productivity of the organization” (Houmanfar, Rodrigues, & Smith, 2009, p. 4). When a leader delivers verbal products before an employee engages in a work task, such communication functions as a rule. While *antecedent* rules can be used to efficiently guide employee performance, communication through feedback as a *consequence* to employee behavior is critical to maintain and shape the goal-directed actions of the employee. Feedback is an essential part of the classic five-step performance management paradigm: pinpointing, measurement, feedback, reinforcement, and evaluation (Daniels, 2000). Feedback is “information about behavior or performance that allows a person to change his/ her behavior” (Daniels & Daniels, 2004, p. 303), and proper delivery of feedback is an essential tool for goal-oriented leaders.

Performance feedback is more effective when the leader clearly specifies the behaviors to be improved, delivers the feedback immediately after the performance, and couples the feedback with reinforcement. Such criteria for feedback are met when the leader provides *individualized* feedback, rather than group feedback. When a supervisor is talking to one of her front-line workers, she can focus on that specific worker’s actions, what needs to be changed, what is being done well, and what can happen for him when certain objectives are met. The front-line worker’s particular performance characteristics (i.e., his skills and challenges) might not be the same as his coworkers’, so the leader must speak individually to him about his issues in order to help meet company goals.

While leaders may agree that delivering feedback is important, sometimes they fail at keeping their commitment to do so. Leaders can be trained how to give feedback appropriately (cf. Daniels, 2000; McSween, 2003), yet may still struggle with the execution of their training because of their lack of commitment to that important action.

## **WHAT IS A COMMITMENT?**

Commitment means *acting in the direction of what is important to you even in the presence of obstacles* (Moran, 2013). Committing is an overt response, influenced by direct contingencies and verbally-construed indirect contingencies, maintained in the presence of aversive and distracting stimuli. More colloquially, committing means working toward a goal that is meaningful enough to propel you forward even if problems arise, or emotions and other private events impede action. For leaders, this means engaging in behaviors that lead to personally-relevant, long-term consequences even when aversive stimuli are present.

The purpose of this paper is to illuminate how to help leaders commit to delivering feedback. Such a commitment is demonstrated when leaders have proper training on how to give individualized feedback, are sufficiently motivated by their values to give feedback, and also have the skills to deal with aversive private events and distractions that arise prior to and while giving feedback. From this perspective, leaders fail at

giving worthwhile feedback when training does not lead to solid plans for action, when leaders are not sufficiently motivated by their values, and when they are misguided by distracting thoughts and emotions. Modern behavior analysis interventions can address these three concerns with Commitment-Based Leadership training.

### **WHAT IS COMMITMENT-BASED LEADERSHIP?**

Commitment-Based Leadership (CBL) training has been used in numerous organizations to assist CEOs, supervisors, and managers in maintaining an effective rate of behavior aimed at influencing employees to achieve organizational goals. CBL is based on the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999), an evidence-based, behavior analytic approach to using mindfulness and values clarification to improve behavior change strategies. The original ACT model has been modified to help to leaders be more crisis-resilient and better at managing organizational change (Moran, 2011).

Research suggests that when the ACT approach is used in industrial/ organizational settings, workers have better performance on the job, make less work errors, and have measurably better mental health (Bond & Flaxman, 2006). CBL utilizes ACT-based values clarification exercises, situational awareness training, and action planning to assist leaders in on-going dedication to important organizational behaviors.



### **VALUES CLARIFICATION**

Values are the key principles we use to help us link our actions to a sense of purpose in our lives. In behavioral terms, values “are freely chosen, verbally constructed consequences of ongoing, dynamic, evolving patterns of activity, which establish predominant reinforcers for that activity that are intrinsic in engagement in the valued behavioral pattern itself” (Wilson & Dufrene, 2008, p. 64). From a practical point of view, when a leader can articulate what long-term reinforcing outcomes he or she chooses to work toward, short-term outcomes in that similar direction can also function as reinforcers.

For instance, when a sales manager is clear about how much he values financial productivity as a critical component to his career, then any short-term outcome related to successful selling behavior can serve as a reinforcer (perhaps even making a few cold-calls). If a retail store owner has clarified that she values honesty as value, then when a customer overpays a bill, the owner will return the overpayment even though that requires a relinquishing some of the money in the cash register at the end of the

day. In this case, the owner is foregoing monetary gain (a tangible reinforcer), for the verbally constructed reinforcer of behaving honestly.

While communicating feedback is an essential part of performance management, and has been shown to be an effective component of changing behavior (Balcazar, Hopkins, & Suarez, 1985), if the leader has not clarified his or her occupational values, he or she might not be personally motivated to follow such best practices. For instance, in the construction industry, leaders should give feedback to workers even when they are acting safely, and even when there have been no recordable incidents in months. The feedback will help maintain these gains; however, there are plenty of construction managers who find giving positive safety feedback a waste of time, or only do it after an injury. These managers are spending their time on other reinforcing pursuits (e.g., productivity, socializing) while putting the company and fellow workers at risk. When managers take time to clarify their personal values (e.g., respect for life, friendship, safety, kindness), then these values can motivate engaging in the low probability behavior (delivering feedback), and can change the rate of responding. CBL training uses experiential exercises to help people clarify personally meaningful consequences of behavior that can help guide choices and maintain commitment to important work actions, such as giving feedback.

### **ACTION PLANNING**

Commitments are simpler to execute when there is a pinpointed list of actions to follow. Imagine someone declaring that they are committing to losing weight, but they do not know about dieting or exercising. Sticking to a commitment is more likely when individuals have a codified set of instructions guiding their behavior. When the instructive action plan is based on behavioral principles or empirically-supported recommendations, it is more likely the leader will achieve the objectives.

Proper feedback delivery requires an action plan. McSween (2003) states “as a general rule, you should plan a process in which observers routinely provide immediate feedback as part of their observations,” and that it should be done “almost every time they complete an observation” of an employee’s work, and “feedback should be given as soon as practical” (p. 88-89). McSween’s *Values-Based Safety* approach suggests a three-step feedback process works equally well for both positive and corrective feedback:

1. Describe the behavior that was observed
2. Discuss the potential impact on the employee and co-workers.
3. Listen to what the employee has to say, and then, for corrective feedback, make a specific suggestion that pinpoints what he or she should be doing differently.

When leaders are not well-practiced at giving feedback, following a specific action plan for feedback delivery is better than improvising. D’Aunno (2013) suggests when approaching a worker, start by setting an agenda and letting the person know what you want to talk about. Be direct and comment about behavior rather than your opinion of

the worker's "attitude." He also suggests that you make your feedback timely, and to be careful that if the feedback is negative, that you use caution that your own emotions do not create an interpersonal concern. Problematically, leaders often avoid giving timely feedback because they are fearful of angering the worker, or conversely, leaders rush into giving vituperative feedback because of their own anger. Neither approach is optimal, and can be ameliorated with situational awareness training.

### **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

In recent years, professionals have seen how important it is to reduce distractions at work, and have also shown interest in "situational awareness" as an important characteristic of behavior on the job. Situational awareness has been defined a number of different ways (Smith & Hancock, 1995; Adams, 1993), but to simplify the definition for the purposes of our discussion, situational awareness is about staying alert to relevant stimulus events, even when distracting events are present. Commitment-Based Leadership combines aspects of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy into training leaders how to deal with the distractions: mindfulness and acceptance. Mindfulness training helps leaders contact the present moment more regularly, instead of being caught up in thoughts of the future and the past. A present-focused, mindful leader will have a greater awareness of the current situation, and is more likely to perceive signals from the environment that it is a good opportunity to engage in values actions. Acceptance training is about teaching leaders to actively contact psychological events, such as emotions and sensations, without trying to avoid them. Many dysfunctional behaviors come from trying to avoid private events (Hayes et al. 1996), but leaders can strengthen their skills in willingness to feel their own emotions, and not resist or avoid them, which can lead to better interpersonal effectiveness.

When leaders are faced with a challenging opportunity to give feedback to a worker, they might become nervous, and that anxiety might act as an obstacle to optimal leadership performance. A leader who has practiced mindfulness will be able to stay focused in the present moment, and rather than getting distracted by all the imagined events that could occur in the future, he or she can focus on the problem in the here-and-now. A leader who is well-versed in accepting his or her own emotions will be able to simply notice the nervousness as it is – a temporary feeling – and understands that he or she can behave effectively even in the presence of that private event. Combining those repertoires can support executing a value-directed, well-established action plan for feedback delivery.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Values clarification, action planning, and situational awareness can help leaders build up their resolve for delivering solid feedback to employees. While it can be difficult to tell people how to improve their work actions, leaders can utilize the three steps from Commitment-Based Leadership training to strengthen their dedication to this

difficult task: 1) Leaders can clarify what is personally vital and important in their life and in their career and link those values to the action of giving feedback. 2) Leaders can hone an action plan based on best practices, and follow that plan rather than improvise their feedback. 3) Leaders can become more situationally aware of the distractions that impede giving solid feedback, and through mindfulness and acceptance training, they can become more focused on the task at hand, and more willing to notice their emotions rather than let their emotions govern their actions in a negative way.

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