FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR
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It will soon be time for you to follow up the results of the employee survey. The aim is to produce a concrete plan of action for change/improvement. Below can you read about what is required to achieve change, namely behavior. For it is only when we do something differently that change takes place, it is therefore valuable to focus your discussion on concrete behavior.

WHAT IS BEHAVIOR?

A basic rule to start out from is that behavior can be observed and measured. We often talk about acting proactively, being flexible and committed. These are typical qualities. The question is what they involve in the form of concrete behavior for your work group. What do you do when you act proactively in your work group? What do you do when you are flexible in your work group? What does it entail in concrete terms?

If, for example, you feel that a colleague creates either a good or a bad atmosphere, it is based on behavior that you have observed in this person. Try to work out what the person is doing to create a good or a bad atmosphere. For most people, saying that a person creates a good atmosphere is OK, but how do you say that a person is creating a bad atmosphere? It is considerably easier to talk about observable behavior and perhaps draw attention to the fact that the individual has a deeply furrowed brow and doesn’t greet people in the morning means that others perceive her/him as creating a bad atmosphere.
Let’s say that you feel that the work group is being poorly led due to the fact that the manager is not present. What does present mean for you? Perhaps that the door to the office is open, or that she/he is in attendance at the joint meetings on Fridays? When talking about concrete behavior, you can’t interpret things in different ways. Perhaps the manager feels that she/he is “present”, while the staff don’t.

The closer to concrete behavior you can get when deciding on your plan of action, the greater the chance of real change.

**WHAT GOVERNS OUR BEHAVIOR?**

Our behavior is governed primarily by what comes after the behavior. Within OBM, Organisational Behavior Management, the ABC model is used to describe what governs our behavior.

![ABC model](images/ABC_model.png)

Let’s say that your manager asks you to put together a report (A), and you quickly write (B) and submit it. You don’t subsequently receive any feedback (C) and you fear that the report is lying untouched. The next time the manager asks you about a new report, just when you have a lot to do, you decide to put off writing the report because nothing happened last time. In this instance your behavior is governed by the consequence of the previous episode despite the fact that your manager has asked you (A) to write another report. This time you wait to see whether there is any demand for the report or not.
The example shows that antecedents have a limited effect on our behavior. There are several different types of consequences, but the most important thing to remember is that positive consequences have a greater effect on our behavior, that is to say, if what I do leads to something positive for me, I am more willing to carry out the specific behavior.

Punishments are sometimes needed, but they are not as powerful as positive consequences. In other cases you do something in order to avoid negative consequences. If the situation ever arises where you feel that people have not done what they have been asked to do, think about what the consequences would be if they didn’t do it.

The more immediate the consequence is, the greater the likelihood is that the desired behavior will take place. For example, the purpose of using seat belts is to reduce injury if an accident occurs. The likelihood of an accident occurring might seem remote and definitely not certain to happen. A lot of car manufacturers have incorporated a sound that continues until you put on your seat belt. This gets everyone in the car to put on their seat belt before driving away.

Antecedents initiate desirable behavior, while consequences maintain behavior. For example, simply issuing new instructions is rarely sufficient, the system of consequences also needs to be changed. If you decide on concrete behavior in your plan of action, you will receive assistance via the system to remind you about this behavior.

Good luck!

**WOULD YOU LIKE FURTHER READING?**

Below are some suggestions:

*Bringing out the best in people, Aubrey C. Daniels*
*Unlock Behavior, Leslie W. Braksick*