



## The Big Leap: Nothing Changes Until Behaviour Changes

*The purpose and processes outlined in this short article highlight how best to improve corporate performance from the inside out. This is also applicable for those committing to and undertaking their own personal transformation. Philip believes firmly that if one can work in partnership with the client or customer, (corporate or individual) and enable them to change personally then they will be more effective winning the hearts and mind of others to the process and lead change by actions and behaviour rather than dictat.*

Lasting change is achieved when people change their behaviour and explore new ways of interacting with self and others. It is critical to build a robust series of change processes for those who are undertaking the change. This is applicable whether as leaders or managers of a large organisation or individually in a 121 development relationship with a personal coach. What is important in both contexts is that those undergoing the change display a

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sufficient level of 'self disclosure' to illustrate to others in the change process that they are serious and will lead the required improvements through examining and practising new behaviours.

Until behaviour changes, nothing changes at all. It is pointless committing to a large scale strategic change programme to then fail to internalise the required change in terms of one's desired style of management. Without a demon-

stration of personal commitment to advancement in organisational and personal leadership style, can you possibly hope that others further down the chain can believe you are serious?

### **Change at both the Personal and the Organisational level of performance should not be cosmetic**

The process is similar in the context of personal or corporate change. Research tells us that change does not happen unless there is change at the individual level of those leading it. Without this important commitment to change behaviours, the changes introduced will not last, the initiative will lose its momentum, few improvements and practises will be implemented and sustained and change will be perceived largely as a cosmetic exercise.

No change takes place at the level of operations without leaders starting to behave in new ways and refraining from those behaviours which constrain improvement or reinforce the idea that we can go on failing to evolve; operating in the same old way with the same old styles, culture and processes and shift to a new state of enhanced value and performance for people and shareholders alike.

### **People resist change because it isn't easy to say 'I could be better' or 'what I am doing may be wrong?'**

This article will focus on personal change being core to the process of corporate improvement and at this point we will focus on the person, rather than the enterprise.

It's easy to say we are committed to change but real change can be witnessed only in people taking actions and behaving in new ways. This

requires appraising old behaviours and being prepared to practise new ones. It requires the ability to be self reflective and then self-disclose in those areas where we need the input of others to improve our interactions with a variety of people.

Personal change is not easy – if it were, we would all live to be 100, the retirement age would be 90, because we would reject all personal damaging habits including absorbing unnecessary tension leading to lifestyle illnesses. No one would be overweight, we'd all be fit and healthy: working out every day, eating the right combination of foods, we'd have rejected all toxic personal habits, drink alcohol moderately, if at all, and would not smoke. We'd never resist unfavourable comments from others on our ability to lead, work with teams, deal with conflict, and improve our performance. We would present with vigour and be high energy motivators and influencers. We'd be right at the top of the learning curve in people management and technological knowledge. We'd be great parents and learners. We would constantly seek feedback on our performance in all arenas and be the first to admit when we were wrong. It sounds great – but how real is all that?

### **The reality of personal Change is resistance**

However, the opposite is often the case. Most of us don't like change. We like imposing it on others, because we know it's the right thing to do from our perspective. But we don't like others imposing change on us because it does not suit us, and requires us to move out of the comfort zone to areas where we feel we are at risk. We don't like change if we cannot control it and if we cannot control it. If that is the case, we either avoid situations which require

operating in the desired manner or demonstrate the 101 ways it will not work and take every step we can to resist change – albeit in a 'passive' rather than an outwardly aggressive, manner.

All resistance to change is passive. Very few actively campaign in a forthright manner unless they can band together with like minded individuals.

Many professionals who drive change focus on technical aspects, the technology or the processes that support change, rather than dealing

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with the heart of the matter. The massive energy that powers the implementation and the momentum to drive change home resides in the energy of individual leadership and team behaviour. It makes sense to promote change from the behavioural perspective but most prefer to work with technical elements.

### **Transferability of learning from the person to the organisation**

If we can master personal change, then the transfer of the process to the corporate setting is easy. Let's look at the nature of personal change and use the application of cognitive behavioural therapy and other techniques to bring about desired improvement. What you think about and say to yourself becomes your own 'dungeon' constraining choice and advancement or the 'laboratory' where you test new ideas.

## Mastering Personal Change

Humans tend to be creatures of habit. In many circumstances, once you find a way or doing something that is effective, you tend to use that strategy or technique over and over again. You learn how to deal with a problem, create solutions and then you can access these solutions when similar problems arise in the future.

### Our 'Inner Dialogue' programmes us to succeed or fail

You talk to yourself using your inner dialogue. When your inner dialogue supports you – it's fantastic: you break through to new higher levels of enhanced performance.

When your inner dialogue does not support you – when it tells you negative things that inhibit your performance, it can make you feel less than comfortable and reinforces the fact that you don't have the resources, the will or the faith to rise to the challenge. Your inner dialogue illustrates the mind-body connection brilliantly. Your thoughts and inner dialogue are what creates 'butterflies' in your stomach when you hear you are to give a presentation to your fellow managers or customers at a business conference, or when you have to host a speech at a family or business event.

### Whispering Words that impact your Behaviour

Those few negative words that you silently mutter to yourself can create significant change in how you feel in your body and often the words that trigger feelings and emotions will release chemicals in your brain that create changes in your physiology.



### Cortisol creates the gnawing feeling in the pit of the stomach, the sweaty palms, the confused thoughts associated with fear and trembling that many experience as the feared event draws nearer in the mind.

The cortisone released when you experience fear through actual or anticipated events is exactly the same. Even events that are due to take place in the distant future can still trigger huge negative emotions and swings in mood, impacting personal performance today and as the anticipated event gets closer.

This is probably one of the biggest problems holding back personal achievement. The negative 'inner dialogue' has prompted the well known phrase ..... "The brave man rising to the challenge dies only once, whereas the coward dies a 1000 times!"

### Real or Anticipated events equally create fear

The brain does not recognise the difference between standing up right now and delivering your speech to the public, or anticipating of you doing so some time in the future. The effect is

the same. You experience the 'flight or fight response' which triggers the release of cortisol released by your brain into your body. Your thoughts, what you see, hear and feel in your mind trigger the release of this chemical that creates a rich cocktail of emotions which impacts your ability to perform. What happens in reality is that your thoughts cause the release of cortisol and associated hormones into your brain which in turn causes a multitude of responses within your physiology. This creates the gnawing feeling in the pit of the stomach, the sweaty palms, the confused thoughts associated with fear and trembling that many experience as the feared event draws nearer in the mind.

### The Nature of Fear

Fear is the only emotion you experience for something that has not yet happened to you. Whereas guilt, sadness, anger, pride, passion are all grounded in experiencing an event – fear and worry are emotions of what could happen in the future. Why worry about something that has not happened? Why worry about something that you can control should you choose to do so? If the events and outcomes had already taken place, you would not fear them. Because they have not happened yet you do so and how the suspense and the tension grow!

Negative 'inner dialogue' keeps you fearful and anticipating the worst, whereas positive dialogue takes you to the next level of personal performance and enables you to experiment confident that the outcome can only propel you upward. Feeling positive, to personally improve you only have one choice to make and that is to take charge of your emotions and take action. It means you have to take conscious control of your inner dialogue and this is relatively easy when you know how.

## **Inner dialogue is channelled through our belief system about what we think we are and what we can achieve**

Ultimately, what we believe about ourselves and our capabilities is mirrored in our inner dialogue and can make life a heaven or hell. If you live in this 'hell', this will definitely hold you back from mastering your true potential. Although this choice also protects you from threat and keeps you safe – there is a price to pay.

Maintaining your safety 100% and keeping you safe from harm means you don't progress, advance and conquer your fears.

Take a deep breath and consider: do you want to advance or recede? Don't you now owe yourself the opportunity to conquer these fears and design your life the way you want to live it? And don't you want to be able to sit back at the end of your life not regretting the actions you should have taken and the challenges and quests that remain uncharted. Now, isn't it time to take control back to run your own emotions, run your brain for a change and be all you can be?

## **How your Behaviour works**

Your range of abilities and behaviours is based on what you believe you can achieve. To understand how you do this, you have to examine your strategies creating for solutions that you will utilise to encounter problems in the future. This is how you learn to improve your repertoire.

This is how your mind works. For instance, you encounter a problem for resolution. You work through solving the problem and take action and note that the action you take resolves the

problem 100%. What does that do to reinforce your faith in that particular solution?

Once you encounter a solution that works, you tend to rely on it. Sometimes you put too much faith in your solutions and apply them inappropriately, rather than finding new ways of responding. But what are the implications of failing to move beyond your 'comfort zone' and work on new solutions and how does this impact you and your confidence?

If you fail to take the challenge, your databank of solutions and strategies becomes too narrow and sooner or later the applications of a few tested solutions applied to a wide variety and scope of problems will highlight your inflexibility and ineffectiveness. You see, your actions are not fixing the problems at all. You are not adopting a tailored approach. You are using those things you are good at and employing them indiscriminately.

When you do this, others are aware of your drop in performance. This puts you and your ego at serious risk. If you fail to change and improve, you will retreat into your comfort zone – sometimes for ever.

## **Receding into Comfort Zones**

When this happens, you will have a strong tendency to rely on the same safe behaviours and not self disclose your fears and your limitations to others in a bid to improve and advance. If you fail to self-disclose, learn and practise new beliefs and ways of thinking, how can you eradicate your fears and move to the next level of performance?

If you don't take action to remedy the situation, you will in all likelihood develop threat sensitive responses, and behaviours which are highly defensive in

nature and lead to significant personal tension manifested in stress. I am sure you realise that not taking action to eradicate the beliefs and the negative self talk creates a vicious and ever decreasing circle which stunts your growth and your mental health.

The resulting behaviour is that you are not discriminating and are using your solutions as a panacea – one size fits all. That's when there is breakdown in your personal effectiveness and when you recognise you are, in effect, applying unsuitable solutions to complex problems which require more insight. All this happens because we are most comfortable with what seems to work for us and not prepared to seek alternative approaches to development.

However, to go beyond that comfort zone you can learn different things or ways of perceiving, looking at new ways of working to deal with your changing circumstances.

## **Inner Dialogue: Communication with Self**

This has never been more true than when you communicate with self. How often have you caught your inner dialogue giving your negative self talk? "You'll never be able to do that" or "That will not work" or "I tried that before and it didn't work" or "Don't put faith in others, they only let you down".

These words, sentences, phrases that reflect belief systems govern your actions. Those self limiting beliefs tend to exhibit themselves in these examples of 'negative self talk'. So, when you are prompted to think about something where you don't feel able to cope these negative phrases pop into your head and discourage and inhibit you from taking action.

Over time, these phrases become automatic and part of your automatic unconscious response as if you are conditioned to always respond in a given way. Here we have a complex set of 'stimulus-response relationships.

### **Negative Effects**

Consider this: the anticipated negative event or scenario arises and WHAM!....., your negative self – talk bypasses your conscious rational mind and BOOM!....., you experience in full Technicolor a depressed or unresourceful emotional state. You have just learned to respond in the same old tired way. This is the first step in the pessimistic route of learned helplessness, consciously deciding to behave in ways less than helpful for personal development.

### **Taking Charge of your Emotions**

What can you do about it? What you have to do is to over-ride the automatic unconscious response and replace it with a positive conscious trigger and set of positive behaviours which becomes your new automatic response.

You may want to experiment with the process. This is something I have used with self and others and has a really powerful influence on personal effectiveness – especially destroying old negative habits that breed negative limiting behaviours.

### **The Negative Self-Talk Destroyer**

Think of situations that you find personally challenging. They could range from public speaking; initiating or creating rapport with a new client; feeding back bad news to colleagues;



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dealing with difficult people or team members; eradicating a personal damaging habit such as smoking, drinking to excess, over-eating, under exercising; procrastinating, being lethargic and lazy; failing to take action and prevent problems arising for customers; constantly failing to take the leadership challenge and implement change; being automatically negative and resisting personal and organisational change etc.

It's time to appraise, regroup take back lost ground from the enemy, and the enemy is you! It's time to have those adult conversations and starts by examining how you have been conditioned over the years through 'stimulus-response' relationships. It's now time to take back control.

### **Automatic Response**

Remember, you generally respond automatically to a stimulus. Now is the time to break the negative cause-effect

relationships and negative emotions, and replace them with more empowering relationships and emotions which will enable you to take action. The feeling is like taking the handbrake off a fast moving car. You accelerate into the future and leave the baggage behind. You can now rise above the negative experience and move through the situation, experience or event which previously you feared and learn the process that can take you to forward.

The time to act is now. Replace negative old responses with positive new ones. You have to prepare and prevent yourself from going into automatic negative mode. By replacing these old habitual patterns of inner dialogue with new empowering thoughts, your behaviour will instantly generate the results you crave. Replace the old negative feeling and dialogue with positive dialogue.

Previously, when shocked with your inner voice being negative you had been frozen in your response, inactive and stopped in your tracks.

Now you can use this technique referred to as the 'negative self talk destroyer' to enable you to rise above the challenge which limited you in the past. When the experience or the situation you dread (the stimulus) becomes in your conscious awareness, your immediate response is no longer a negative emotion – but a positive one which you welcome and act upon.

### **Destroying negative self talk or dialogue**

You hear or see the event or incident in your mind's eye and your instant response is "wham" a negative emotion.

A friend of mine only had to hear the phrase 'We'd like you to present your findings.....' and..... WHAM, negative thoughts raced through his head. He visualised himself standing speaking to his colleagues, quivering with fright with the inner dialogue racing and looping inside his head stating in a very depressing, whinging voice..... "I cannot do this.....I lack confidence....., people will judge me, and I may have a panic attack and then what will they think of me?"

So it's not surprising that my colleague never volunteered to speak in public, and at every meeting he attended he was so wary of others asking him to stand up at the flip chart and demonstrate his views that he receded into himself and sought a more junior technical role in the company rather than the senior leadership position which he'd enjoyed for a number of years.



### **Facing fear, panic and anxiety**

#### **What works and what doesn't in changing behaviour?**

There is a whole host of techniques, many built on OD practise of corporate change and elements of CBT, that have been modified from personal behavioural interventions and redesigned to meet the needs of modern corporates. Here I highlight an example based on changing personal behaviour. From the example of the fear of public speaking illustrated above, I can introduce a simple methodology that can have a profound effect on how individuals and organisations operate.

#### **Methodology Changing Belief Systems Changes Behaviour**

To work through this methodology requires an assessment of our individual perceptions of situations or contexts under which we feel at threat or are fearful. It's highly unlikely we will respond in our most creative, risk-averse way when we are confronted by situations where we can be exposed personally or organisationally. It's a simple method to get us to reframe our

perceptions of problems and negate our negative self talk. It's impossible to negate a bad habit or way of thinking without replacing it with a desired new behaviour or habit. That's why most diets fail for most people. That's why giving up smoking, drinking alcohol or any other personally damaging habit or past-time is doomed to failure without a corresponding activity which uses the person's resources and time to better effect.

Those who succeed in abstaining from alcohol or who finally give up smoking, lose that extra fifty pounds have all – and I mean ALL replaced a negative habit with a desirable habit which gives so much PLEASURE it counteracts the PAIN of clinging onto and being addicted to the old habit. People 'value what they do and do what they value' – so ensure that what you value adds more pleasure to you than returning to the old ways of behaving.

Here, I will give two examples – you can modify them. One is an individual, the other a corporate, example.

This is what I usually ask when undertaking this exercise. To work through this methodology requires an assessment of our individual perceptions of situations or contexts under which we feel at threat or are fearful.

**Example 1: Public Speaking – Personal Effectiveness**

I would ask the individual to think of three negative words or phrases that would come to mind when thinking about having to give a high level presentation that could impact performance to either senior managers or customers.

On the individual level, I request that the individual consider the immediate feeling and thoughts which race through their head.

The three words are.....

Fear	Panic attack	Anxiety
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Then I ask the individual to think about giving that presentation again without using those three words or phrases and come up with three new words which reflect how they feel.

- Not an expert
- Personal Credibility
- Fear of looking a fool

Now I ask the individual to think through the situation again and tell him that they cannot use this six words at all or even think of the words to describe the personal feeling.

Fear	Panic Attack	Anxiety
Not an expert	Personal Credibility	Fear of looking a fool

This time the three words became more positive.

- Challenge
- Tense
- Convince

You can see where this is going. It took us 6 episodes to arrive at a situation where the individual became very positive about the opportunity to present. Of course, this was the start we needed to help them improve their

personal performance and notice any trends. We stopped the negative 'internal dialogue' and replaced it with the more positive words and feelings.

We also used other methodologies to support the person in this personal change.

Here is the final table for one of those managers.

Fear: I cannot do it	What happens if I have a panic attack?	Anxiety – will they see how nervous I am?
I am not an expert	Personal Credibility!	Fear of looking a fool
Can I meet the challenge?	I am too Tense	Can I influence others?
Can I negotiate my role with my sponsor?	I want balance but I am stressed?	Listen to past successes - do I have it in me?
Can I build a change partnership?	It's a matter of perspective	
Rapport Building	Prepare and Rehearse	Sell the Benefits

**Example 2: Procrastinating: Failing to Introduce Corporate Change**

A similar example is given below that relates top a manager who did not feel he had the skill, ability or aptitude to want to introduce, and personally commit to, culture change.

It's a waste of time	It's not my responsibility	My role is purely Technical
When am I going to do my day job – don't have the time	First they can change – then I will	What's in it for me?
I did not join the business to be doing this change	I could make some enemies	I have to develop skills first - can I learn them
Could I work myself out of a job?	What are the risks to me personally?	Being rewarded for a job done well
I add value	I am a Change Champion	I have Progression and Status

By working with this manager I enabled him to think differently about his perceptions of his role and his behaviour leading change. This took only five rounds of the exercise. We also used other techniques to ensure that these new behaviours were anchored within him and now when we talked of him as leading change, he rightly considered himself the change master and can do much to make it the constant that it has become in every organisation.

People love success and others witnessing his behaviour and commitment are giving change 'the benefit of the doubt' and changing their own attitudes and beliefs.

Change operates in the mind first. Focus on that and you can change the person from the inside out. It works every time.

We also used other reinforcing techniques and provided some hands off coaching, but this worked far more successfully for the manager and avoided all the waste associated with the usual major corporate change initiatives which are too often all pomp, ceremony resulting in little but workshops, handbooks with a record of poor implementation and little sustainability.

### **Perspective, Tipping Point is Behavioural Change**

It's clear that for change to last it has to become absorbed in the mindset. In a corporate setting it must not be cosmetic – it must have deep meaning and deliver the desired results. So often people have committed to a programme for change because their competitors had blindly committed to a similar change strategy without starting with a firm 'end in mind'.

It's the same as buying a leading 'self help' book and not reading it and using it as a plan for personal change. You can have shelves of the best books – but if you don't read, internalise and make their ideas live on a personal and corporate basis, then this will not make any difference to personal or organisational performance.

I remember when I first started in consultancy. As a young academic who had written extensively in Management journals had researched and worked with some leading companies such as Corning Glass, BT and Dow Chemicals etc., I focused on using behavioural approaches to instigate a culture of Quality. This was in the 90's when Industry, especially manufacturing in the West, was being crushed by good quality competition coming in from the East (namely Japan). I worked with companies to introduce quality structures, cultures and processes into the workplace. We were probably the first to push for Matrix Management to introduce the JIT Toyota production method central to Lean manufacturing. Witnessing the huge expenditure that companies invested in Quality conferences, training, consulting, ISO accreditation, books, tapes, trade and best practise visits to Japan and America were impressive indeed – but mostly they were a waste of time.

They did not work because few internalised that the required changes that would be undertaken had to be absorbed at the

personal level. By working on this and 'what it means for me', is central to building a quality culture in a wider and diverse enterprise, BUT it all starts at the individual level.

I have outlined in this paper the key issues that hold people in place and helps reinforce the belief that change is difficult. We looked at one technique to examine the belief systems that hold back the ability to change. This is very powerful.

Changing the leadership behaviour of a business will have a huge impact on the performance of the business. Usually in corporate setting it's as few as two or three things that need to change in order to bring significant change.

To create a tipping point of impacting performance by 97%, we may only have to change 3% of behaviours. This is a simple example of the techniques which can release the abilities and potential, not just of people, but also organisations. The ego's of those who are in charge of change often are too fragile to commit to real change which starts from the inside out. Those who are committed to lead the process will create a legacy for themselves and their organisations.



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