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THE INFLUENCER MODEL

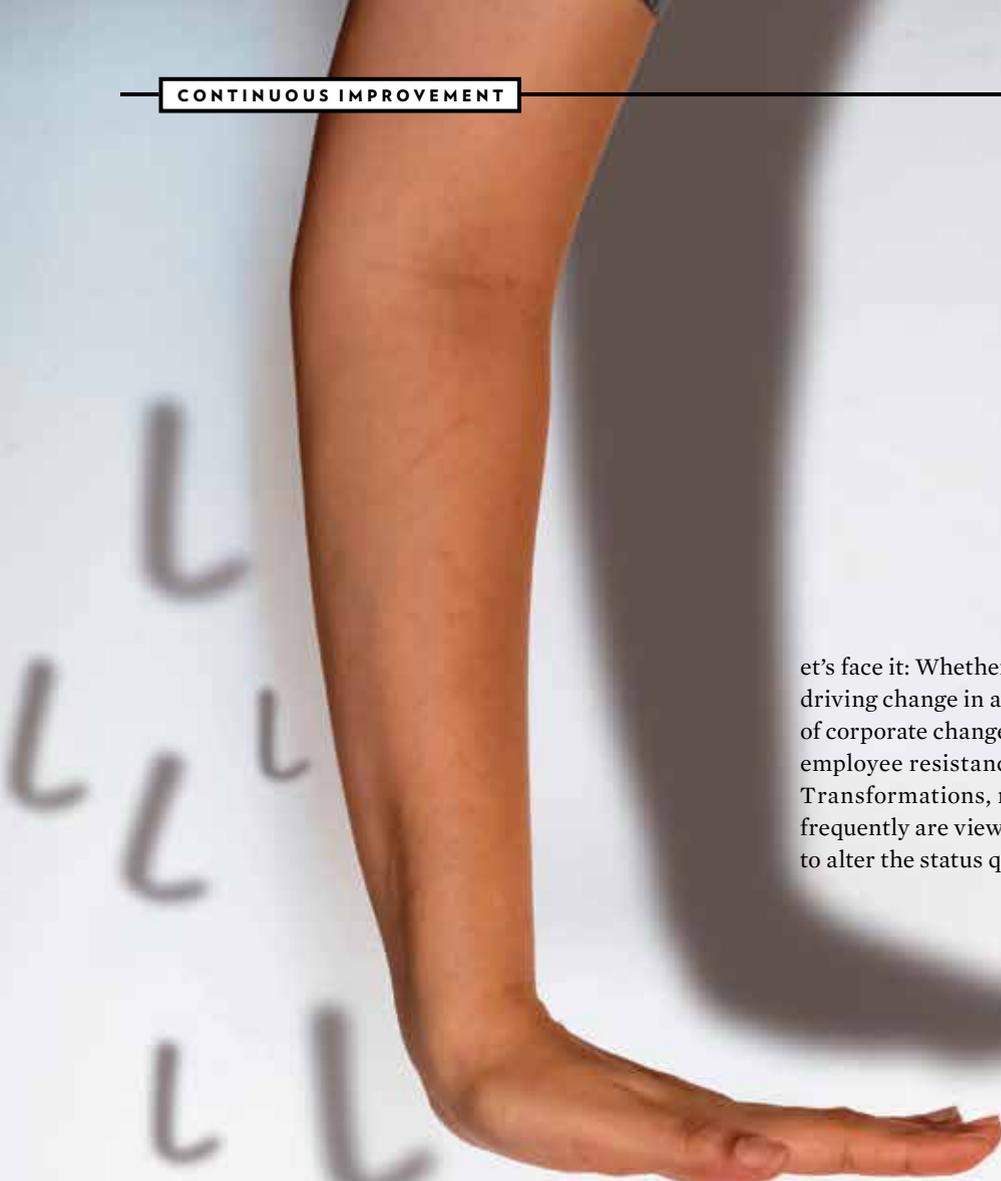
How to create enduring change
by Peter J. Sherman

JUST THE FACTS

Driving change in an organization is difficult, often because of employee resistance and a lack of management support.

The influencer change model focuses on changing behaviors to achieve measurable results. The model leverages the principles of motivation and ability across three dimensions of influence—personal, social and structural—to create six sources of influence.

The author discusses how to apply the influencer change model and presents a case study of how a small manufacturer applied the model to drive continuous improvement.



et's face it: Whether it's a lean initiative or a quality program, driving change in an organization is tough. Seventy percent of corporate change management programs fail, largely from employee resistance and a lack of management support.¹ Transformations, no matter how important or inevitable, frequently are viewed as negative. Because it's uncomfortable to alter the status quo, change can be resisted fiercely.

Organizations that create and sustain real change usually are successful for reasons you would not expect. They don't necessarily have the most resources or the best technology. Many do not hold monopolies in their industry, nor do they rely on top-down mandates. Rather, they accomplish their goals through influence. Influence is about changing hearts, minds and behaviors to produce meaningful and sustainable results.

Such are the findings of Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler, authors of *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change*.²

This article introduces their model for implementing change, describes how it works and provides an example of how a small manufacturer applied the model to drive continuous improvement (CI).

Based on extensive research of successful and unsuccessful change efforts, Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler developed what they call the influencer change model. The model focuses on changing behaviors to achieve measurable results. The authors assert that people do things because they want to (motivation) and because they can (ability).

They leverage these two principles across three dimensions of influence: personal, social and structural. In doing so, they create six sources of influence, not just one. Figure 1 is a schematic of the influencer model. It involves three steps:

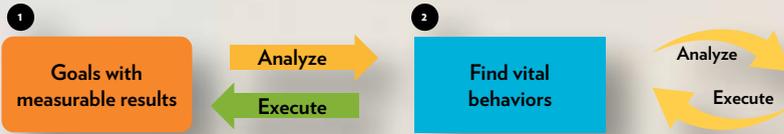
Step one: Focus on goals with measurable results.

Everything begins with identifying and articulating clear goals. Don't waste time on your strategy to create change until you've clarified what you want, why you want it and when you want it. Vague goals lead to confusion and don't inspire us. Infrequent or nonexistent measures lead to wasted efforts. Compelling goals, on the other hand, focus on outcomes, not activities. They are specific, measurable and clearly timebound.

Consider the extraordinary influence of Donald J. Berwick, former president and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI). In 2004, Berwick was frustrated that preventable errors in healthcare (such as medical injuries and hospital-acquired infections) had become the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States.³ Berwick and his team wanted to do something about it. What was needed was a bold, audacious goal that would inspire

FIGURE 1

Three-step influencer model



	Motivation	Ability
Personal	1	2
Social	3	4
Structural	5	6

Six sources of influence

TABLE 1

Examples of vital behaviors and results

Vital behavior	Result
Pull the <i>andon</i> cord when you see a nonconformity. Insist on built-in quality. Don't make a defect. Don't accept a defect. Don't pass a defect.	Achieve 100% first-pass yield by end of Q1 2022.
Never leave a tractor-trailer unsecured. Secure it with chock blocks or a dock-lock.	Create an accident-free zone in the loading dock area in 2022.
Conduct weekly <i>gemba</i> walks in the plant starting at the loading dock and ending at material staging.	Increase productivity output 10% by end of Q2 2022.

Americans while being specific and measurable. Here is what Berwick told the audience at the 16th annual IHI Forum on Dec. 14, 2004:⁴

“I think we should save 100,000 lives. I think we should do that by June 14, 2006—18 months from now—by 9 a.m.”⁴

Step two: Find the vital behaviors. Influencers focus on the few high-leverage behaviors that drive results. Behaviors are actions, not results. Vital behaviors are like DNA—they tell you precisely what to do, how to do it and when to do it. They often start a reaction that leads to positive results. Table 1 describes examples of vital behaviors. How do you identify these vital behaviors? Recommended strategies include:

■ **Insist on vital behaviors.** Recognize behaviors that are obvious but underused. When analyzing problems (such as defects and late orders), for example, focus on the process rather than the people. Pointing fingers makes individuals defensive. When I’m stuck in analysis paralysis, I tend to go back to the end-user—the customer—and how they are affected. The customer’s perspective tends to neutralize internal silo thinking.

■ **Look for crucial moments.** Identify times when behavior puts success at risk. Crucial moments tell you when it’s time to act. A crucial time in a warehouse operation, for example, is when the tractor-trailer backs up to the loading dock. If the truck wheels are not chocked, the trailer could move or overturn while workers load, unload, hitch, unhitch or service the vehicle. This can lead to accidents.

■ **Spot culture busters.** Watch for crucial moments that call for behaviors that are taboo or punished, or that challenge cultural norms. Organizations that punish poor decisions or bad results, for example, create a toxic culture. Speak honestly and you pay for it. The result is that problems tend to remain underground. Ford Motor Co. presents a good case study:

“When Alan Mulally arrived as president and CEO of Ford Motor Co. in 2006, Ford was facing a crisis. ...

“[During] his first leadership team meetings at Ford, everyone came prepared with their updates and reported an overwhelming number of ‘green light,’ or on-track, initiatives. However, it was clear these updates did not align with reality. Even though Ford was on pace to lose \$17 billion in 2006, Mulally’s key executives were signaling that everything was going according to plan. ...

“Mulally set a clear expectation for his team that he valued transparency first and foremost. He wanted managers to highlight potential problems—red and yellow lights, rather than green—so that Ford could tackle issues and blind spots openly.

“Slowly, but surely, Mulally’s team came to meetings with less-than-stellar reports, and leadership began to have a more accurate picture of the company’s problems. Getting this clarity was crucial to Mulally’s larger plan to resurrect the company based on clear vision and goals.”⁵

Step three: Engage all six sources of influence. Rather than look at just one source for influence, the model allows you to apply six sources. See Figure 2 (p. 66).

Motivation encourages people to do things, while ability enables people to achieve those things. Personal refers to the individual employee, social refers to the business unit and structural refers to the corporate or enterprise level. Think of

FIGURE 2

Six sources of influence

	Motivation: Is it worth it?	Ability: Can I do it?
Personal	1. Help them love what they hate.	2. Help them do what they can't.
Social	3. Provide encouragement.	4. Provide assistance.
Structural	5. Change their economy.	6. Change their space.

these sources as levers you can apply when trying to drive change.

The first four influencers in Figure 2 are intuitive. Influencer five, “Change their economy,” applies structural incentives or disincentives to drive behaviors. These include recognition (formal or informal), monetary awards (bonus and profit sharing), career paths and performance improvement plans. Influencer six, “Change their space,” leverages physical surroundings to enable people to do things. This includes designating space on the shop floor for continuous improvement efforts, visual boards and metric dashboards.

Application in industry

During the past year, I've worked with a small manufacturer to implement a CI program. The owner and I went to great lengths to understand the current state, identify goals and objectives, and plan the program, including selecting participants, designating the owner as the champion, identifying suitable projects, conducting training and managing the program using clear metrics.

Despite our efforts, the CI program floundered. Most projects were not getting implemented. The few that did were back-sliding in terms of progress. Employees had returned to a business-as-usual mode. I suggested to the owner that we meet with the entire team and address the issue candidly using the influencer model to evaluate the program for gaps.

Five minutes into the meeting, it was obvious that we had only partially addressed the needs at the personal level. The training certainly equipped the team with the ability (skills and tools) to improve processes. But training is one thing. Application of training is another. Our belief that giving everyone an opportunity to learn new problem-solving skills was a sufficient motivating factor turned out to be somewhat misguided.

First, we addressed the goal. The original goal was to “improve the ‘perfect’ order rate from 92% to 95% or higher during year one.” Perfect was defined as producing the right order in the right quantities without defects and delivering it on time. While specific and measurable, it never resonated with employees. It was driven by the owner.

We reframed the goal as: “Take waste out of the business. Specifically, remove at least 15 minutes of waste per day for each associate during the first year to free up folks for higher-value activities.” Higher-value activities were defined as handling

FIGURE 3

Six sources of influence for manufacturers

	Motivation	Ability
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean Six Sigma should make it easier to perform my job and meet my targets. Let me work on micro-projects I can control directly and see the results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize the principles of value-add vs. nonvalue-add (the eight wastes). Go back to the fundamentals of how to observe and measure work activities.
Social	Managers will allocate one hour per week for each team member to work on their projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trainer will be available one day per week on site to provide coaching. Maintenance will support team members in building jigs, moving equipment, building new work stations, installing visual boards and with 5S tools, for example.
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct weekly readouts of accomplishments by team members. Implement a formal recognition program for achieving milestones. 	Build a dedicated continuous improvement center on the shop floor where team members can work on projects, show project status, hold just-in-time training and conduct meetings.



more orders, increasing the average dollar purchase, increasing repeat orders and developing new products. The new goal resonated with everyone because it connected them more closely to their work.

We concluded that removing waste is more of a leading indicator that would, in turn, improve the perfect order rate. The new goal also had a positive tone. It was not about reducing headcount. Freeing up 15 minutes per day per associate was the equivalent of two new hires.

Next, we identified two vital behaviors:

1. **For frontline operators:** When in doubt, always engage in direct observation and measurement. Don't guess. We took lots of videos of processes to help baseline performance.

2. **For managers:** Stop fixing and start coaching. This entails asking good coaching questions. Coaching questions help others improve their problem-solving skills. We focused on three types of coaching questions: open-ended, non-leading and nonjudgmental.⁶

With our goals and vital behaviors clearly in mind, we addressed the gaps in the CI program using the influencer model (see Figure 3). To help employees achieve the goal of removing 15 minutes of waste per day, we focused on their daily work activities. I created an easy-to-use three-step pain point selection template (see Online Figure 1, which can be found on this article's webpage at qualityprogress.com).

Step one is to baseline how people spend their typical workday in terms of activities and amount of time, and to determine what is value-add vs. nonvalue-add. We emphasized the eight wastes and how to conduct observation. This allowed everyone to see how much waste occurs during a typical day.

Step two is to rank the waste in each step using a severity-frequency scale. Step three is to answer the degree of control you have over the activity (high, medium or low). Next, the pain points can be narrowed by filtering those activities that have a high severity and high frequency. These are the most pressing. Next, select those that you have a high degree of control over. These represent the easiest pain points in terms of your ability to influence the outcome.

Improve your chances

I like the influencer model because it is intuitive and simple to use. The beauty is that it scales up and down from personal lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, to organizational changes, such as implementing a new CI program.

What surprised us was how easy it was to create a workable roadmap for what seemed to be such a complex initiative. Getting folks to improve their own work activities turned out to be a big breakthrough. Although this is a work in progress, early results show promise. Each person has saved at least five minutes out of their day.

So, the next time you're tasked with leading an initiative, large or small, improve your chances of success with the influencer change model. **QP**

EDITOR'S NOTE

References listed in this article can be found on the article's webpage at qualityprogress.com.



Peter J. Sherman is the managing partner of Riverwood Associates LLC in Atlanta. He earned a master's degree in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge and an MBA from Georgia State University in Atlanta. From 2008 to 2011, Sherman was the lead instructor of Emory University's Six Sigma certificate program in Atlanta. A senior member of ASQ, Sherman is an ASQ-certified quality engineer, a Smarter Solution-certified Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt and an APICS-certified supply chain professional. Sherman has served as chair of ASQ Atlanta Section 1502.