Behavior Change POV

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Summary

When companies intentionally surround their employees with care, employees are better enabled and motivated to reciprocate this care —both for themselves and the company.

Caring for oneself may include taking actions to invest in and prioritize one's well-being, engagement and inclusion at work. These individual actions can also include internal efforts, such as actively pursuing healthy well-being mindsets (e.g., optimism, resilience). Likewise, caring for one's company can include an investment in quality work and performance — or, actively fostering a more inclusive workplace for others. This reciprocal and interwoven relationship between company care and employee care is rooted in behavior change literature, which posits that individuals interact with their environment to determine their behavioral intentions and choices.

This paper summarizes the behavior change literature that ultimately informs the Limeade Results Model, which illustrates the power that can come from reciprocal organizational and employee actions rooted in care.

Behavior Change

Behaviors are formed across multiple phases, which require multifaceted support and enablement from organizations, as well as investment and actions on behalf of individuals.

The following sections highlight these influential and interwoven factors of behavior change in more detail through a review of three foundation theories — the Transtheoretical Model of Change, Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Cognitive Theory.

Transtheoretical Model of Change

According to the Transtheoretical Model of change[1], behavioral change occurs across several stages. Specifically, there are six stages of change.

Throughout each stage, individuals experience various attitudes towards and interactions with the planned behavior change.

▼	1. Precontemplation
▼	2. Contemplation
▼	3. Preparation
▼	4. Action
▼	5. Maintenance
✖	6. Termination

[1] Transtheoretical Model of Change, Redding & Evers, 2002

1. Precontemplation

In the first stage, precontemplation, an individual does not intend to take action in the near future and it may take more than six months for change to take place. They avoid reading, talking or thinking about their behaviors and can be resistant, unmotivated or not ready to change their behavior. This may be due to a number of reasons – for example, they may simply be uninformed about the behavior, or they may have attempted to change before, been unsuccessful and subsequently feel demoralized about their ability to change.

2. Contemplation

In the contemplation stage an individual intends to change their behavior within the next six months. In this stage, the individual has become more informed and aware of the benefits of behavior change and is able to weigh the costs and benefits of changing. However, this balance of costs and benefits may produce ambivalence and keep these individuals stuck, rendering them unprepared for traditional action-oriented behavioral change programs.

3. Preparation

In the preparation stage, the individual intends to take action and change their behavior within the next month. They have taken steps in the past year to initiate their change. They have a plan of action at this point and are ready to be recruited for action-oriented programs.

4. Action

In the action stage, the individual has made specific overt behavioral modifications within the past six months. While they have made these changes, it does not necessarily mean their behavior is changed permanently.

5. Maintenance

In the maintenance stage, the individual has committed to their behavior change and is working to prevent themselves from reverting back to their pre-change state. They are confident in maintaining their behavioral change, which will last for six months to five years.

6. Termination

Finally, in the termination stage, the individual has zero temptation to revert to their pre-change state and have full self-efficacy in maintaining their new behavior.

While organizations may have little control over which stage particular employees may find themselves in, they are in a position to help employees transition between stages.

One important thing to consider throughout stage transition is a concept called decisional balance, that is, balancing the pros and cons of change[2]. Individuals are more likely to take part in behavioral change when the benefits of changing outweigh the costs. Because decisional balance plays such a large role, something as simple as organizations providing information around a behavior change could help individuals transition from contemplation stages to preparation and action.

According to the model, self-efficacy also plays a role in behavior modification[3] and reflects how confident an individual is in maintaining their desired behavior change (particularly when they are at risk for reverting to pre-change). Individuals' self-efficacy begins to improve as individuals move from preparation to action, which partially enables behavior change. Because organizations and managers set the stage for behavior at work and behaviors related to well-being, they can influence employee self-efficacy.

[2] Janis & Mann, 1977   [3] Bandura, 1977; 1982

Specifically, they can set norms for and role-model certain behaviors, which increase one's own beliefs on whether they can execute a particular behavior. Organizations can provide verbal encouragement, recognition and opportunities to partake in the positive behavior, which fuel individual self-efficacy[3]. For example, an organization seeking to increase inclusive behaviors may place posters or handouts encouraging inclusivity throughout the workplace or encourage managers to give formal recognition to employees that practice inclusive behaviors. This sets a norm for partaking in inclusive behaviors, which subsequently improves an employee's beliefs about their own ability to be inclusive.

Additional cognitive and affective process that aid in transitions include consciousness raising (i.e., learning more and getting the facts), environmental reevaluation (i.e., recognizing one's effect on others) and self-reevaluation (i.e., developing a new self-concept).

Consciousness raising helps individuals transition from the precontemplation to contemplation stage by increasing awareness of the benefits of behavior change, while self-reevaluation helps individuals transition from the action to maintenance stage, as it helps individuals internalize and commit to the behavior change. There are also several behavioral processes that bolster positive change, including self-liberation (i.e., making a commitment) and helping relationships (i.e., getting support).

Organizations can help employee form and adopt positive behaviors by increasing awareness and providing resources on the benefits of changing.

They may also foster a workplace culture where supportive relationships are engrained into one's work experience.

[3] Bandura, 1977; 1982

Theory of Planned Behavior

In contrast to the TTM, the Theory of Planned Behavior[4] focuses on the conditions, attitudes and perceptions that influence one's intent and decision to make a behavioral change.

It argues that the most important determinant of behavior is behavioral intention, which is directly fueled by:

(1) attitudes towards the behavior,
(2) subjective norms associated with the behavior and
(3) perceived control over the behavior.

Specifically, attitudes towards the behavior are determined by behavioral beliefs, that is beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behavior. An individual who holds strong beliefs that positive outcomes will result from the behavior will have a positive attitude towards the behavior. Subjective norms associated with a behavior are determined by whether referent others approve or disapprove of the behavior, as well as the individual's motivation to comply with those referents. An individual who believes certain people think they should perform a certain behavior and who is motivated to meet the expectation of those people, holds a positive subjective norm.

Finally, one's perceived control of their behavior accounts for factors outside of individual control that may influence behavioral intention and behavior enactment. Perceptions of control are determined by an individual's beliefs on what facilitators and barriers to the behavior are present and/or absent.

As employees move towards behavior change, their likelihood of adopting the behavior is influenced by their attitudes towards the behavior, norms surrounding the behavior and their perceived control over the behavior. Each of these factors can be altered by organizations.

Specifically, organizations can influence attitudes by providing information and improving awareness around the pros and cons of certain behaviors.

They are responsible for establishing culture and norms around certain behaviors — the organizational environment plays a large role in changing employee behavior. If an employee perceives that partaking in a certain behavior is the norm, they are more likely to perform that behavior themselves. Finally, perceived control can be enhanced through organizational resources, manager support and role modeling.

[4] Theory of Planned Behavior; Ajzen, 1985, 1991

Social Cognitive Theory

Lastly, Social Cognitive Theory[5] addresses behavior maintenance. It seeks to explain how people regulate their behavior through control and reinforcement and focuses on the dynamic interaction of the person, environment and behavior (i.e., reciprocal determinism). It focuses very heavily on the impact one's environment and surroundings have on how they learn a behavior, how the behavior is reinforced and their self-efficacy. Specifically, SCT argues that individuals partially learn behaviors through observing others who are modeling the behavior – they observe someone else performing a behavior, the consequences of that behavior and recall the sequence of events to guide their own subsequent behaviors. Further, reinforcements can be present in the external environment (e.g., recognition, gratitude), along with other factors that can facilitate an individual's self-efficacy concerning the behavior. To summarize, Bandura[5] argues that reproduction of an observed behavior is influenced by the interaction of one's own self-efficacy, behavioral role modeling of others and how conducive one's environment is to performing the behavior. Once again, the influential role of the organization is highlighted.

Organizations are responsible for the environment in which employee behavior takes place and also have an influence on employee self-efficacy. Specifically, to adopt a new behavior, an individual has to understand the outcomes of that behavior. These expectancies are dependent on one's environment. For example, the likelihood of an employee taking advantage of their vacation days is heavily dependent on whether the organization supports and expects their employees to do this or tends to view this behavior as 'slacking.' Further, self-efficacy can be developed through social modeling and verbal encouragement. Social modeling provides the employee with a model of processes or steps taken to perform a behavior. Organizations and managers play a role in social modeling by establishing cultures in which performing the behavior is the norm and by partaking in the behavior themselves. They also enable the behavior change through words of encouragement (which also normalize the behavior) and recognition of the behavior. In addition, SCT states that one is more likely to partake in behaviors that they see modeled in someone they identify with.

For these reasons, it is important for organizations to surround their employees with care that enforces positive behavior change.

Companies can demonstrate and achieve perceptions of care by providing "organizational support" that embodies this care. Organizational support — a multifaceted and culturally pervasive effort that operates at many levels in a company. This includes local support — from managers, teams, peers, networks and one's physical environment, and organization-wide support — from leaders, strategic alignment, tools and resources and culture. When companies intentionally surround their employees with care through each of these components, employees are better enabled and motivated to reciprocate this care — both for themselves and the company.

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[5] Social Cognitive Theory; Bandura, 1991, 2001

Limeade Results Model

We consolidate the information presented above in our Limeade Results model (depicted below), which posits that employee behavior change takes place in stages and is heavily influenced by organizational care. When employees are surrounded by this organizational care, positive behavior change can not only be encouraged, but reinforced. Within the employee, this journey of change starts with increased *awareness* of the benefits of certain behaviors and drawbacks of others. Once individuals have this awareness, they'll need the right *mindset* in place to enact behavior change (e.g., self-efficacy, resilience, optimism). In addition to feeling and thinking that they can change their behavior, they must want to change their behavior — this comes in the form of *motivation and intention* to change. Ultimately, this energy from inside will influence their actions, the trial-and-error process of adopting a new *behavior* will begin. During this process, employees may look outward towards *social connections* or available *resources and support* within their organization. As mentioned earlier these factors are all influenced by organizational care — in the form of managers, teams, peers, networks, one's physical environment, leaders, strategic alignment, tools and resources and culture.

Our research has found that when this care is present within companies, employees are indeed more likely to be personally engaged in their work, have well-being in their lives and feel a sense of inclusion.

Moreover, they are more likely to stay at the company longer and recommend the company to others as a great place to work. These results are not only good for employees, but are also good for the business. Simply put, the best places to work demonstrate to their employees that they genuinely care about them as people.

When companies **care** for employees − in every part of the **employee experience** − employees can better care for themselves, their teams and their company, leading to better **people** and **business** results.

• Managers • Teams and Peers • Networks • Environment • Tools & Programs • Leaders • Strategic Alignment • Culture	• Awareness • Mindset • Motivation & Intention • Behavior • Social Connection • Resource/Support Utilization	• Turnover • Engagement • Well-Being • Inclusion • Other People Results • Profit • Customer Sat • Innovation • Other Financial Results

What About Habits?

Habits are automatic behavioral tendencies that are elicited by various contextual cues[6].

They are behavioral reactions that have been fully adopted and integrated into one's life that they become routine and powerful to the point of overriding cognitions that support avoiding a behavior (e.g., "Do I really have to do this?") and justifications (e.g., "I'll have time to do this later."[7]). Once these types of behaviors have been fully adopted and habituated, they take little to no control to regulate. Typically, these behaviors are relatively small in nature (e.g., drinking more water or asking what others think, vs running an effective meeting).

Therefore, while some behaviors may lend themselves to ultimately become habits, not all employee actions need to become automatic tendencies to positively influence the employee experience. Sometimes, core behaviors need to be continually reinforced to elicit positive change. It is therefore important to focus on influencing employee action and behavior change as a whole, while encouraging healthy habits where you can.

[6] Ouellette & Wood, 1998
[7] Galla & Duckworth, 2015

Recommendations: For Individuals

1. Educate Yourself

In determining whether one is ready for behavior change to take place, an individual can assess what they know about the behavior change, how they feel towards it and whether they think the benefits of the change outweigh its cons. If one does not belief the benefits are worth the behavior change, it will be important for that individual to seek out further education. He or she can use the resources they have available (education/resources provided by work, close others who partake in the behavior, online resources) to educate themselves on benefits of changing.

2. Seek Social Support

In adopting a new behavior, it is important that individuals make a commitment to seek out support. Specifically, individuals should focus on surrounding themselves with a social and environmental context that supports that behavior. They should tell their friends, family and coworkers about the change if they feel comfortable to, so that the people around them can help support and shape that behavior. For example, if managers want to provide more regular feedback to their employees, they should inform their employees of this change. They might also inform mentors or other leaders of this change, as these individuals may be able to provide support or recommendations in this behavior change. Seeking this support will increase the individual's self-efficacy and control around the change, pushing them towards habit formation.

Recommendations: For Managers

1. Provide Resources

Managers play a role in directly influencing attitudes and beliefs around behavior change. Because managers are in a position of power, they can provide resources and support to employees who aim to adopt a new behavior. Further, they are in a place to role model behaviors. When managers provide the resources, support and example to subordinates, employees are much more likely to believe they can adopt that behavior (i.e., self-efficacy) and will experience higher perceived control around the behavior.

2. Create Group Norms: Practice Role Modeling

Managers help create norms within work-groups. They can create norms around certain behaviors by role modeling behaviors, recognizing successful behavior change or habits and encouraging employees to partake in the behavior. When managers partake in a behavior themselves, they normalize that behavior and employees learn to expect it from them. When they encourage and recognize behavior change, they create a norm and environment where the behavior is accepted, recognized and endorsed.

Recommendations: For Organizations

1. Assess Need for Change

Prior to implementing an action-oriented intervention, it is important that organizations take an interest in whether employees are in the proper stage for change so that they can help them make transitions if needed. They can do so by finding ways to collect attitudes on desired behaviors and by subsequently providing education, training, communication and feedback regarding the behavior. This raises awareness around the desired behavior so that when interventions are implemented, employees are more likely to adopt the new behavior.

2. Create the Right Environment

Organizations are responsible for setting norms around certain actions, which influence whether new behaviors are adopted. If an organization is interested in having employees change their behavior, they must adopt policies, procedures and practices that support, endorse and encourage that behavior to create norms that are accepting of that behavior. They should also shape the organizational context and environment in a way that makes behavior change possible. For example, if organizations want to increase the amount of teamwork within their organization, they must provide opportunities for shared taskwork and develop systems that reward teamwork as opposed to individual rewards. Further, they must provide shared spaces where teams can meet and discuss their goals.
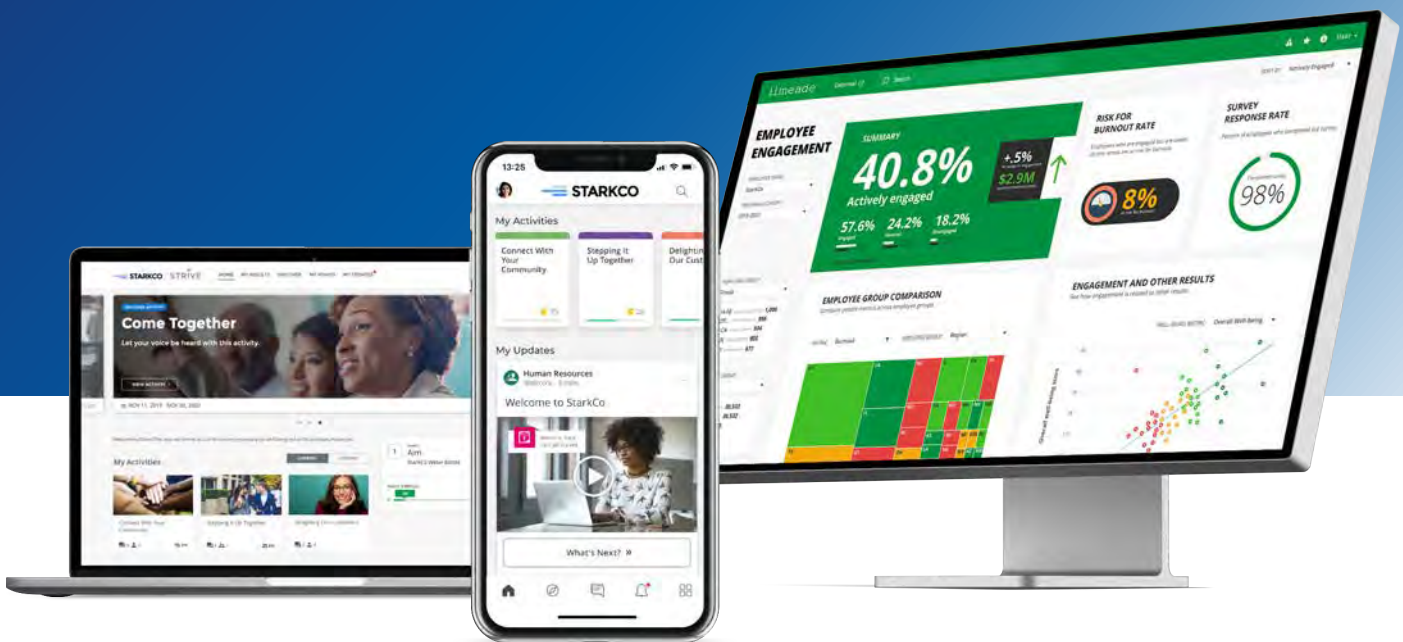
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