

Embedding behaviour change



Over the past twenty years or so years, change has happened at a rapid pace, thanks to the advent of technology and a turbulent global economy prone to shocks and knocks. But people, at their core, don't like change and just because we've seen so much of it in a relatively short period does not mean that we're any more receptive to it.

Follow the adoption curve of any behavioural change programme, and you will see that one of the first hurdles you will have to overcome are *people*, and their inherent resistance to change. To achieve sustainable change, organisations must successfully embed new mindsets and behaviours. *But how?*

If a behavioural change consultant comes to you and tells you that upon completing their programme, the very fabric of your organisation will be fundamentally and permanently changed and you won't need to lift another finger...well, *they're lying*.

I am in this very business - my company, OIM Consulting, specialises in supervisory capability development within the mining sector - and our job is to create frameworks that facilitate behaviour change. We offer classroom learning combined with on-the-ground coaching that works to equip our supervisors with the skillsets and toolsets that drive an uptick in productivity. We put everything in place so that when we exit a mine, the effects of our programme are sustainable.

But can we guarantee sustained change? *Definitely not.*

The only people who can guarantee sustained change are an organisation's leadership team. If leaders don't keep reinforcing the foundations of a programme and ensure accountability, then these new

behaviours and mindsets won't become embedded.

We've not only seen this anecdotally, it's evident in all the literature. The Global Journal of Management and Business Research's paper, 'How Effective Leadership can Facilitate Change in Organizations through Improvement and Innovation', says *"A leader with strong leadership skills can easily motivate and influence the employees of the organization and apply effective changes to the organization... if there is no effective leadership in an organization no changes will be made, because there are no leaders that motivate and lead the organization's employees as well as provide a clear direction..."*

Essentially, there needs to be a partnership between the consultant and leadership.

The consultant is responsible for setting up organisations for sustained success. As the consultant, I must ensure that our programme is executed effectively and that those who embark on it are left with the necessary skillsets and toolsets. To this end, we spend weeks on the floor with supervisors to coach them on behavioural and operational change, and empower their direct managers to take over this coaching role once the OIM intervention has been completed. In addition, we equip leaders with scorecards to encourage ongoing assessment. We host sustainability workshops, which detail the commitment that is required from the senior leadership team. We show how to be both an effective leader and a coach so that leaders can keep reinforcing the principles of the programme once we leave. We work with Human Resources to make this coaching one of the metrics in our leaders' performance appraisals. We do spot checks. In some companies, we even leave a couple of our consultants behind for 2 - 3 months to embed these principles.

We can do all of this; we can lead the horse to water, but we cannot force him to drink. We need our leaders to be accountable too, because this is where the ownership of the programme ultimately lies. We need them to be role models, leading by example.

Remember, just as you're not the expert in their world, a consultant is not the expert in yours. They will never know your business as you do; all of its problems and glory. They need your insight to better understand and dig deeper into your business, to make it better. To genuinely and sustainably impart change, a consultant must work alongside and partner with you to integrate these new behaviours into your organisation. It's then up to you, as a leader, to embed this change.