When looking at leveraging the value of an organization’s workforce, you are effectively considering the value of changing on-the-job behaviors of the employees to drive positive changes in business performance. The important point here is the focus on behavior because it is behavior that has the greatest potential to impact performance and not simply developing capability in the form of training. In fact, the effectiveness of training is frequently not realized due to a failure to transfer knowledge and skills into changed behaviors on the job. Effectively leveraging the full potential of a workforce requires that employees are enabled, empowered, and motivated, which in turn drives changes in their on-the-job behaviors, which ultimately drives improvements in performance. This can be best represented by the following model:

\[ \text{Capability} + \text{Empowerment} \rightarrow \text{Motivation} \rightarrow \text{Performance} \]

In order to properly leverage this model, it is important to first understand the individual components and then design behavioral change solutions that address all three aspects to achieve the desired improvements. Since most organizations are familiar with the capability (e.g., training and development) and empowerment (e.g., authority to act, tools, job aids, work environment, procedures) elements, the key differentiator is often motivation.

**Motivation**

Motivation represents the driving force for an individual to do something. When looking at the performance model, motivation represents the catalyst for converting capability and empowerment into improved performance. Unlike capability and empowerment, motivation cannot be provided to an employee as it represents a more innate belief basis for each individual. However, leaders can tap into that belief system to “motivate” employees by clearly linking the desired improvements in organizational performance to the more personal factors of motivation for the employees. There are two main factors that drive motivation and they can be leveraged by management to catalyze performance improvements—desire (i.e., the employee wants to change) and accountability (i.e., there are positive or negative consequences associated with making or not making the change).

\[ \text{Motivation} = \text{Desire} \times \text{Accountability} \]
Translating Motivation into Performance

Understanding the Motivational Component to Behavior Change

The first factor, i.e., desire, can be enhanced by creating and effectively communicating a compelling reason to change to the employees. This case for change could be improvement over past poor performance or in many cases shoring up the economic viability of the facility or operation. The performance of a particular site or operating system may be a determining factor in securing capital improvements to improve competitive position or regulatory compliance going forward. Issues such as these are foundational to enhancing the employees’ inherent base desire to do a good job and have their work valued.

The second factor, i.e., accountability, requires a clear link between the desired behavior and a measurable outcome, preferably one that is easy to track and report out on. When establishing motivational mechanisms for a specific behavior change, it is important to first assess your employees and supervisors so that a strategy that is both effective and manageable for your organization can be developed.

Creating Desire

Desire represents an individual’s personal wishes or wants. While desire is an innately personal feeling for an individual, the state of having a desire to change or to do something new can be created by the proper messaging. By example, the essence of any marketing campaign is to create desire — desire to buy something, desire to vote for something or someone, or desire to attend an event. When applied to an organization, these same marketing principles can be applied to create a desire to change. To be effective, this change marketing strategy should have the following core elements:

- A clear and compelling reason to change – This message, which must be tailored to the target group of employees’ reasons for changing, becomes the core theme around which the strategy will be developed.

- A transformation marketing plan – Both the activities associated with supporting and driving the change, along with changes in performance indicators targeted by the change, should be continuously communicated to the organization through multiple media sources and through various members/layers of management.

- A change program “brand” – Just like in product marketing, brand image is important in organizational change marketing in that it creates a simple way of linking the targeted changes to the activities, initiatives, and messaging.
Translating Motivation into Performance

Understanding the Motivational Component to Behavior Change

- Workforce engagement – The approach used to drive change should positively engage the workforce in the design and implementation of the various programs and initiatives. The approach taken should also actively look to identify opportunities for employee involvement in the form of team participation, including temporary developmental assignments. As part of this engagement, there should be transparency in communicating the drivers of the change initiative.

How simple or complicated the change marketing strategy will be is entirely dependent upon the nature and scope of the targeted behavioral change. However, even the simplest change strategy should include the core elements above.

Creating Accountability

While there are many leadership books that will tell you organizational motivation and empowerment is enough to transform business performance, in actual practice there are times when reality falls short. For some changes, in some organizations and/or for some parts of the world, employees cannot be motivated simply by tapping into desire. For this reason, the other driving force behind motivation (i.e., accountability) should be leveraged to greater or lesser extents to ensure the proper level of motivation in order to drive the targeted change. Unlike desire, accountability is not centered on what an employee wants to do but rather what an employee is required to do. For this reason, effectively leveraging accountability as a motivating factor to change an existing or adopt a new behavior becomes complicated by the following factors:

- Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities – For any change, the targeted behavior and associated responsibilities must be clearly defined and communicated to employees.

- Clear Consequences – The nature of accountability is that there must be clear consequences (positive and negative) for performing to an established standard, including changing a specific behavior. While consequences can take many forms—from verbal feedback to peer pressure to financial incentives to disciplinary action—there must be a consequence in order to have accountability.

- Consistent Reinforcement – For employees to take accountability seriously and be truly motivated by it, there must be consistent reinforcement of the behaviors and consistent application of the defined consequences. For expectations to be effectively enforced, unilateral buy-in from frontline supervision must be present, and those responsible for monitoring and coaching performance must either possess or obtain the skills required to coach and ultimately correct performance on a consistent basis.
Translating Motivation into Performance

Understanding the Motivational Component to Behavior Change

- Objective Measure(s) – There is a commonly accepted management adage that states “you get what you measure.” However, most KPIs used to track business performance are terminal or end-result focused in nature; as a result, these KPIs do not effectively allow for the proactive management of day-to-day performance. Therefore, to be effective, KPIs must be developed in layers (i.e., a KPI tree) to reflect the performance measures important to the various levels of the organization. The key behind this is that there is a clear linkage between the targeted behaviors and measurable, trackable performance metrics. This linkage allows managers to more easily monitor and reinforce the targeted behavior(s), and utilizing visible tracking/reporting mechanisms in conjunction with these metrics provides employees with immediate feedback on their success or failure in executing the targeted behavior(s).

- Alignment – Facility leadership should be able to demonstrate alignment between the targeted behaviors and KPIs as they relate to or support the strategic goals of the facility. This will demonstrate both competence and commitment to a set of business goals on the part of leadership and will further re-enforce the value of the targeted changes being implemented.

Balancing the Motivation Equation

As described above, there are a number of factors that dictate an organization’s ability to effectively utilize desire and accountability to motivate employees. However, for each of these two elements there is a key factor around which that element is built. For desire, that element is the definition of a clear, compelling reason for employees to change. For accountability, that element is a KPI tree that cascades high level business performance indicators down to the indicators that are directly influenced by the desired employee behaviors. In order to determine how best to motivate an organization’s employee base, it is important to balance the desire/accountability factors based on the culture and management capabilities and style of the organization.

For organizations with a highly capable, engaged workforce, the balance will lean heavily on the desire element. On the other extreme, for organizations with a newer or less capable workforce combined with highly hierarchal management cultures, the balance will lean heavily on accountability. However, most organizations will require a true balance of desire and accountability factors with the weighting being dictated by the nature and pace of the change and the current capabilities of the organization. The linking factor between desire and accountability is the ability to demonstrate the impact of the new behaviors in real time during the change process. Therefore, regardless of the balance, any effective approach to motivation will center on some form of a KPI tree, whether used to motivate performance or as a basis for accountability.
Translating Motivation into Performance

Understanding the Motivational Component to Behavior Change

Translating Employee Performance into Business Results

The key to leveraging these change principles to impact business performance is their application on a broader scale to change the behaviors of an entire targeted segment of the workforce. For the leadership of many organizations, one of the main challenges to motivating employees to change their behavior is the initial engagement of the workforce and the establishment of trust. Once achieved, this engagement provides the initial momentum for change, that when nurtured, drives the level of ownership needed to institutionalize the new behaviors for sustainable performance.

While managers can initiate change, real change is driven by the informal leaders (i.e., change agents) in the organization who are followed not because of title or position but because of the respect of the workforce. Therefore, as shown above, the key to building momentum is the early engagement of these informal leaders in the change process. These informal leaders can then help engage the rest of the workforce in the change effort. This approach allows for a more focused effort at the early stages of the change effort that broadens out as more change leaders are engaged in the process.

The true value of an organization lies in the people who work in that organization, and it is those people that dictate whether or not the organization is a successful business. By effectively motivating employees, targeted behaviors can be changed to drive sustainable improvements in business performance.

About the Author

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Kevin is the founder and President of KES Global Advisors, LLC. He has spent the last 20 years driving business transformations for both his clients and with his own teams. As an executive, Kevin has board level experience driving remarkable growth (~1800% over 10 years) of an acquired business line, as well as leading the turnaround of a global business culminating in the sale of the company at a 13x EBITDA sale price in a depressed market. As a consultant, he specializes in sustainable business transformation in the hydrocarbon sector through a combination of organizational effectiveness and operational optimization, with an emphasis on the engagement, empowerment, and enablement of the workforce. His industry experience spans the globe, with direct work experience in North America, South America, India, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, South Africa, Asia, and Australia. Kevin can be reached at ksmith@kesglobaladvisors.com.