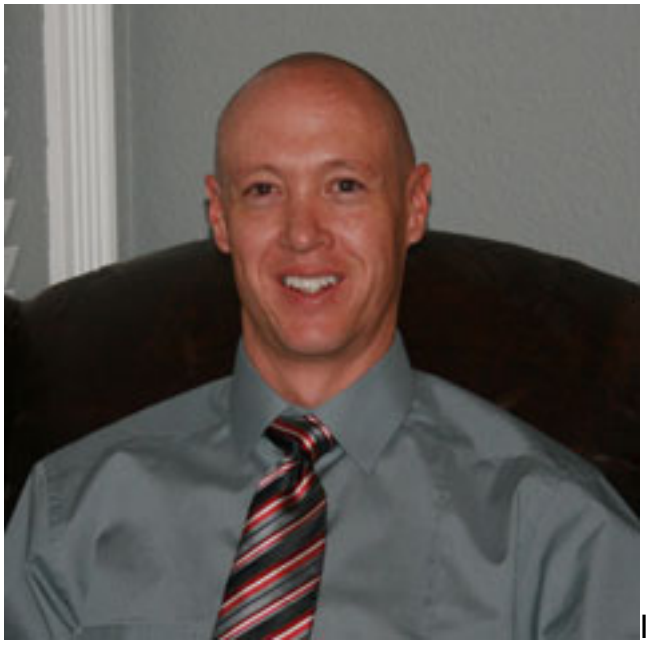
The Performance Change Planner Handbook, Part 1

ALAN NICOL, Executive Member, AlanNicolSolutions LLC

By ALAN NICOL, Executive Member, AlanNicolSolutions LLC



It is not easy to genuinely change the way our teams and businesses operate. Many improvement initiatives plan by reorganizing, issuing directives and possibly some training. We have all seen, however, that such a level of planning does not typically cause real change to occur.

The reason is that none of those elements change the way our people make decisions, respond to pressure or change the types of pressure we induce. Therefore, while the surface appears different, the operational heart and soul of our organization remains the same. Thus, so does our performance.

If we want to plan behavioral change along with organizational and management changes, we need to have some idea where to start. That is the big gaping hole in all of the information and hype about all of the various programs we might adopt. They don’t include plans for the behavioral portion of the necessary planning.

Perhaps one of us will write a good book on the subject one day. In the meantime, however, I offer a few thoughts to get us all started. In a single post, I can’t cover all of the deep woods that are behavioral change, but I can provide some food for thought.

Here is the bullet list of things to consider when planning change. I’ll spend a few lines on each one to explain why they are important. How you use these thoughts to flesh out a plan for your own organization will need to be up to you, and it should be

because every organization is unique:

1. Modeling behavior.
2. Training.
3. Coaching and mentoring.
4. Systems.
5. Traditions and beliefs.
6. Environment.

It is important to understand that the above list is merely a list of important ingredients. To make your own stew, you will probably need some of each at a minimum. You may add your own, in addition to these, and focus your greater effort where you think you need it the most.

Modeling Behavior

The first thing to do is sit with your change leaders and clarify what behaviors are important for your new way. For example, if you are adopting Six Sigma, a critical behavior is using data and statistics to model and predict performance. Also, it is critical to make decisions based on minimizing variation.

Identify the behaviors that everyone needs to adopt. Once these are identified, ensure that your leadership is the first group to begin modeling these behaviors. Whatever your leaders' behavior is, your personnel will adapt to it. Your leaders absolutely must model the behaviors required.

Training

Many times, with new behaviors, we need more than just a new set of guidelines; we need new skills. Make a detailed plan of what personnel needs what skills, how the new skills will be delivered, in what order and by whom. Consider where the training materials will come from and whether they use the language your people will find useful or appropriate to your business culture.

Coaching & Mentoring

Training is never a solution by itself. Never. Training doesn't make anyone skilled. It also doesn't cause a person to use the training. Training requires follow-through.

Make a plan for how your leaders, who are modeling the right behaviors, are going to coach and mentor their personnel through the change to new behaviors and the development of new skills. This process requires good leadership and trust.

Punish an unwillingness to get on board with the new way, but do not punish mistakes. No one will try something new if they fear making a mistake while on the learning curve. Accept that mistakes will happen and coach people through them. Focus on behavior more so than results.

Systems

Systems are sometimes considered when we plan changes, but often are not. A good example is enterprise resource systems configured for specific teams or for batch materials planning that are left in their configuration, while trying to adopt a Lean production methodology. New programs have enough resistance from people without those people having to fight with their systems to do things differently.

Consider what systems, processes, policies, software, machines or logistical chains are not configured to cooperate with the new behaviors you want. Do you need new systems to facilitate new skills? These can be critical planning considerations.

Traditions & Beliefs

This area of planning takes some long consideration in my experience. Plan for three things. First, what traditions, habits or beliefs do you need to get away from? Make a plan to allow them to die peacefully. If you challenge existing beliefs, in particular, defenders of those beliefs will declare war on your new way. Don’t attack existing beliefs or traditions. Simply ask people to try new ones.

Second, determine what traditions, habits and beliefs need to stay. Some parts of your culture are your strengths and you do not want to damage them. Make a solid plan for how you will protect and perpetuate them in the face of changing behaviors.

Third, decide what new beliefs, habits and traditions you need. These can be very important when it comes to reinforcing your new behaviors. They often encompass reward and recognition, or otherwise display the benefits of your new way of working.

Environment

Give some thought to how your workplace either enforces or inhibits your new program. If your new focus is on intimate, focused work teams, do you have enough work areas and meeting rooms for your teams to operate as teams? If the new focus in on efficiency and single-task resource planning, is your work environment conducive to focus, or is it noisy and distracting? If your new way is about innovation and creativity, is your environment sterile and dull, or inspirational?

What’s your take? Please feel free to leave a comment below. Tune into the Chemical Equipment Daily *for part two of this two-part series. For more information, please visit www.bizwizwithin.com* [1].

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