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SELF-MANAGING BEHAVIOR

Introduction

In a changing world, it is important for people to be able to adapt and go along with the changes. Changes in the external environment necessitate changes in the organization. An organization can be successful first of all through its successful employees. More and more, the manager/management of the organization has to deal with the person/employee by creating the conditions for the development of his/her self-directed behavior. A self-directed person is able to adapt to different situations and conditions. A self-directed person can change his behavior. From the point of view of the leader of the organization, it is important to know which conditions favor the development of self-directed behavior and how the leader of the organization can promote the development of self-regulation.

The following is based on the book *Self-Directed Behavior* by David L. Watson and Roland G. Tharp.

Self-regulation is a concept taken over from cybernetics. Just like, for example, a thermometer, a person also behaves according to the corresponding standard. Humans also have sensors that show actual behavior. When the real/actual behavior is fixed, a comparison is made between two components: the actual and the ideal. It is easy when a person perceives a contradiction and has the interest and will to adapt to a new situation.

Adjustment means harmony, harmony between people's thoughts, actions and emotions. But adaptation also means harmony between personality and environment. Adaptation is better viewed as a skill rather than a condition. A skill is the ability to do something well. Skills are formed on the basis of knowledge and activity/experience. But skills also mean the ability to find alternatives.

Self-control is the ability to control one's own behavior. However, like any skill, it also needs to be developed in different situations. The basis of self-management is thinking, how a person describes his actions. He can describe his actions based on external conditions, he can describe his actions based on himself, but there is also a third option: a person can describe his actions as an interaction between situation and personality. Therefore, human behavior differs in different situations, depending on the skills and the ability to adapt according to the situation.

Self-management is related to willpower. The will arises when the situation, activity is important to the person, when the person is interested. If behavior is observed that does not matter to the person, then nothing changes.

The environment in which the situation or activity is at the moment contributes to the development of interest. Behavior, action, thoughts, emotions are all related to context. Thus, self-management is contextual. Such events caused by the influence of the environment can be conditionally divided into two:

- 1) events that precede the behavior, i.e. pre-events;
- 2) events that follow the behavior, i.e. subsequent events.



In order to manage oneself, a person must have enough adequate information about himself. Self-management is based on self-knowledge. Most people think that they feel good and do not consider it necessary to self-examine. However, people generally do not remember everything from their past because memory is influenced by the moods of the moment. What we believe and what actually is may not always coincide. Such forgetting is a protective function, we forget the bad and keep only the positive. Self-analysis is also important in order to receive information and feedback in order to gradually correct one's behavior. If a person wants to change himself, he must first understand what he is doing.

Changing yourself is about thoughts and emotions. Keeping a structured diary has been suggested as one suitable solution. There you have to observe what the person does, what preceded this activity, what this activity is related to and what he felt afterwards. The letter must also be positive, not only negative. The bottleneck is the mood. Depending on the mood, a person tends to describe his feelings. If there is a bad mood, the negative will emerge.

Sometimes the change can also be caused by an emotional reaction - anxiety or depression. But, in this case, is it self-directed behavior and is the change permanent?

However, a permanent change in behavior is guaranteed by a person's critical assessment of their actions. However, evaluation comes from values. What does a person value? What is important to him?

Behavior change goes through 3 stages:

- 1) another's control over a person's behavior;
- 2) self control;
- 3) automation.

Thus, not all behaviors, and even less all people, are self-directed. In fact, most behavior is due to previous situations.

Self-directed messages and thoughts influence behavior the most. There are three types of messages:

- 1) self-directed orders/guidelines;
- 2) beliefs;
- 3) interpretations.

Such thoughts are related to the **situations/preliminaries preceding the behavior**.

In order to avoid undesired behavior, it is possible to narrow down or avoid pre-events. An example is smoking cessation. The pre-event is sitting in an extremely uncomfortable chair, but it's also the only place where you can smoke.

But not all antecedents can be narrowed down or avoided. In this case, a person's thinking must be changed. One way is to change the language.

Another option is to change the course of the preceding events. Many behaviors are the result of various interrelated events. An example is alcoholics who tend to change public transport just near bars. By changing the location, they eliminate the possibility of buying alcohol while waiting for the bus.

In addition to narrowing, avoiding, and rearranging the chain of antecedents, it is possible to trigger a new antecedent that helps shape the desired behavior. Again, it has to do with our

use of language. Words guide our actions. Words are the shaper of pre-events. According to how we express our thoughts in words, we also begin to act. Consequently, it is important to ensure that there are no negative expressions in our language. Expressions/sentences that carry a negative message must be reformulated into positive ones. If it is noticed that there is a negative message behind the undesirable behavior, then whether:

- 1) the person gives himself instructions in a negative direction, or
- 2) the behavior is routine/automated and I-messages are not accepted. The proposed solution here is to change the chain of pre-events by changing the content of the messages you send to yourself.

It is also possible to change one's behavior by changing the physical environment of the preceding events. It is necessary to create such an environment that eliminates all opportunities to engage in anything other than the desired activity. For example, if there is a desire to focus on learning, remove all things not necessary for learning from the room.

Another important factor influencing behavior is the example of others. Watching others do what a person wants to do can eventually influence them to the point where they adopt a pattern of behavior.

One of the ways to change behavior is to propose a counter-action/substitute action during the pre-events that prevents unwanted behavior from occurring. For example, smiling makes frowning impossible.

One important factor in achieving self-regulation is **positive feedback** and recognition for desired behavior. Recognition after the desired behavior helps reinforce the desired behavior. Positive reinforcement is that which results in an increase in the desired behavior. In this case, the asset is something that a person wants to do or have. Different activities are the best anchors. Any activity that a person is willing to perform can be used as an anchor. This is known as Premack's principle. **Premack's principle** states that any everyday behavior can be a reinforcer of desired behavior. In this case, you have to force yourself to perform the desired behavior before performing the daily habitual activity.

A very good method is if the acknowledgers are well-known, famous and important people. Therefore, if one wants to change behavior, one's social network must act accordingly and support one's efforts.

So far, we have been talking about recognition that has been done by someone else. But if we want a person to become self-directed, then the change and also consolidation must come from the person himself. But how to achieve this? If a person recognizes himself, then the problem here can be that the recognition is available in any case, regardless of whether the desired behavior was or was not. In this case, the question arises, does the recognition given by the person himself help to establish the desired behavior? If the recognizer is the person himself, there are always two related questions:

- 1) is the recognition given by oneself sufficient to achieve the desired change in behavior; and
- 2) if recognition is sufficient, is the change permanent?

The answer to the first question is yes. Yes, people are capable of recognition enough to induce a change in behavior. Bandura argues that this is usually done by imitating others. Kanfer's view is that people recognize themselves based on existing guidelines, and Speidel

and Tharp are of the opinion that self-recognition is established as a result of recognition by others. In summary, theorists are convinced that self-recognition contributes to behavior change because it is done consciously in order to achieve a new goal, and the new goal is set in order to change one's life for the better.

But, is such a change also permanent, or is recognition an anchor? The problem is that internal fixation can only take place if the person himself is motivated and the external environment must also encourage the person to change. Thus, the consolidation of behavior is directly related to the influence from outside.

When should the consolidation take place? Ideally, immediately after the desired behavior occurs. The longer the gap between the behavior and the reinforcement, the smaller the effect.

The most effective confirmer is oral/verbal confirmer or praise. You can also share praise with yourself.

Summary

The book *Self-Directed Behavior* by David L. Watson and Roland G. Tharp is a good methodological resource for managers. Managers expect their employees to be active, responsible, constantly ready to go along with innovations. Such employees behave in a self-directed manner. How does a self-directed person develop? The head of the organization can create conditions to encourage the development of self-directed behavior. In order to create these conditions, the leader must know what self-regulation is, which ensures the formation of self-directed behavior, how to contribute to changes in behavior. It is precisely these questions that the authors of the book discuss.

The book is based on the **behavioral paradigm**. The key words of the behaviorist paradigm are learning and behavior. Behaviorists argue that human behavior is learnable. If you practice a lot, the behavior model will be fixed. Usually, this pattern of behavior is formed, either by someone or by the environment.

Based on the behaviorist paradigm, managers can design and establish appropriate models of behavior. The process is time consuming and one recipe does not fit all. But the book has brought out many different possibilities and illustrated the points with different examples.

A lot of attention has also been paid to a person's own actions in the development of self-directed behavior. The authors have emphasized on many occasions the involvement of the person himself. If there is no interest, if the person himself does not want to change his behavior, then nothing will change. At the same time, the authors have pointed out the opportunities and situations that leaders can take advantage of and how they can contribute to the change of a person.

The environment is important. Many examples are given for designing the physical environment. This is where managers can do the most. The book also talks a lot about recognition / positive feedback. Feedback is important, and verbal recognition, or praise, is what managers can use the most. Most of all, we are talking about positive feedback.

More modestly, we talk about punishment (punishment) and negative feedback. Punishment has also been considered as one of the ways to shape a person's behavior, to consolidate his behavior. But it is not known how a person behaves after being punished, and is it possible to somehow assess the impact of punishment on a person?

The book deals in great detail with antecedents, as factors that directly influence behavior. It is described in detail how it is possible to avoid, prevent, and change pre-events. Each option is illustrated with plenty of examples, along with comments from the authors.

Much has also been said about the use of language. The well-known slogan "think positive" sounds like Watson and Tharp's recommendation in several chapters of the book.

The book is good and interesting. Although the text is in English, it is easy and logical to read. The abundance of examples and comments also makes understanding easier. At the same time, the question remains unanswered: what if a person still does not want to change? This book is primarily intended for use by people who want and want to change. But if there is no will, if there is no interest, then the manager cannot do anything.

Finally, as many people as there are different opinions, different solutions. A manager cannot apply one method/approach to all. He must know and know the employees and, like a doctor, find a suitable solution/treatment for each one of them. And just like in medicine, sometimes a doctor is powerless and can't do anything anymore, so a leader can't always change everyone and everything.

Used sources:

Watson, D. L., Tharp, G., R. (1997). *Self-Directed Behaviour. Self-Modification for Personal Adjustment*. (7. edition). Pacific Grove (Calif.) : Brooks/Cole.