

Correction of Habits through Management Principles

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Many managers and supervisors effectively manage others yet ineffectively manage themselves. The first step in determining what habits one needs to correct is to examine total behavior patterns. I feel that the concept of behavioral self-management can be applied to any individual's behavior.

Stepping outside the shell of my image and critically analyzing my behavior patterns, the one habit that I would like to try and correct using Fred Luthan's theory of behavioral self management is procrastination. Luthan's theory is expressed in his article, "Behavioral Self-Management—the Missing Link in Managerial Effectiveness," *Organizational Dynamics* 8:42-60, 1979. The procrastination habit I have involves tasks that I'm either unsure of how to handle or tasks that really don't appeal to me.

Using Luthan's theory and applying this technique to this habit to be corrected, I must fully be committed to correcting my behavior pattern. Cuing stimuli must be identified that intervenes with my completion of the tasks put off either for another time or indefinitely. Some of the stimuli are coffee breaks, morning or afternoon mail, telephone calls, professional reading, and discussions with other librarians that could be set aside for later. Now that these stimuli are identified, strategy must be determined on how to change the behavior pattern.

Strategies that could be initiated:

- 1) Coffee is not available in my immediate office. If I leave my cup where the coffee machine is located, the stimulus of the cup at my desk is eliminated. Reinforcement of completing the task at hand for the reward of coffee break will serve as a new stimulus for completing the avoided task.
- 2) The mailbox again is not in the immediate office area. By setting a new time to pick up my mail after the completion of a task rather than after the known mail delivery will require establishing a new behavior pattern that will remove the cuing stimulus of set patterns to avoid tasks.
- 3) A note on the telephone to limit calls or to set the telephone to call forwarding at another station until the task has been completed is another strategy for changing stimuli. The latter would be an even greater strategy lessening the chance of delayed action upon the task.
- 4) Professional reading material is routed through librarian personnel. If tasks have not been completed, I could route on adding my name at the bottom of the lists to eventually return to me. Knowing that this will mean receiving materials last which may date the currency of reading may be added incentive to keep at the tasks so that I will not have to pass the materials ahead.

- 5) Interactions with other librarians are probably the simplest to resolve unless there is a situation demanding immediate attention. Most librarians are faced with similar situations of completing tasks at hand and will not be offended if told that you will get back to them later.

Following this S-O-B-C (Stimulus-Organism-Behavior-Consequence) management process, procrastinated tasks will be completed as a consequence followed by rewards of coffee breaks, reading of mail and professional literature and enjoyable conversations with fellow librarians. This will provide a new concept of self management and produce a covert reward of self satisfaction for controlling behavior.

As Luthan points out, individuals who are frequently interrupted from tasks that are not completed are probably providing reinforcing consequences for this to occur. I am aware that I provide these interruptions in my behavior pattern to avoid the tasks that I do not want to face. If I can learn to redirect my behavior pattern, I can alter the consequences that lead to this undesirable pattern of incompleteness.

I agree with this theory of self management, having been in management positions, I know that it is almost impossible to lead or motivate others to complete tasks when I have problems completing some of my own individual tasks. I often found myself too busy worrying about my own situation instead of departmental issues at hand. Probably the greatest difficulty I faced was in prioritizing the tasks at hand. It takes a full understanding of the goal or objective of the tasks in order to set the plan into action. If there is not support or organizational structure from your superiors, it is even more difficult to motivate those you supervise. The experience that I had in this type of situation supports Luthan's theory of the misleading view of a manager as contemplative, goal-oriented planner, decision maker, and leader/motivator of subordinates. Lack of support, goal knowledge, and direction made my managerial experience distasteful. The Behavioral Self Management approach takes into consideration the interactive nature of organizational behavior. I am not sure if self discipline or self management in this particular situation would have helped since the interaction within the hierarchy was very negative.

I feel that in my present situation, this type of self management can be most effective and probably the best approach for me to undertake. If I can learn to redirect behavior patterns to improve work performance, the new behavior will lead to strengthen the worth of my position, as well as a new self worth image and awareness.

Again, this type of self management requires a strong personal commitment to change. It also requires a commitment by the individual to record their behavior accurately. I know if I allow an alteration or one slip, the likelihood of this new self management is doomed to failure.

I feel there is a strong case for behavioral self-management leading to effectiveness improvement not only for managers but for individuals as well. I am sure we will see more studies on this type of behavioral self management as a means to producing managerial effectiveness in the future.