

Crucial moments and vital behaviours

 By Leigh Andrews

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The majority of businesses today would say they're customer-centric, or at least that 'the customer comes first'. But HumanEdge's *Influencer: Power to change* workshop warns that many of us forget the most important customers of all - our own employees, who can quickly identify a flaw in our processes before it snowballs through a bad customer experience.

Al Switzler, one of the authors of *Influencer: The new science of leading change*, explains that crucial moments are those where you need to act fast – even if it's just a small act – to veer onto a different path, or accelerate towards a desired outcome that prevents further problems downstream.



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The way you respond to a bad customer experience is one such crucial moment, as it impacts your customers' brand loyalty and your reputation down the line. [Click here](#) for a reminder of how two different restaurants 'resolved' a bad customer experience.

Crucial moments can be:

- Specific circumstances, like a missed deadline;
- Set times, like change of shift in factory;
- Different people and how you interact with them, such as with your boss and with your subordinates;
- Places, like a new venue; and/or
- Emotion like frustration, annoyance or anger, often met by a call centre.

One way to identify your own company's crucial moments is to ask employees to submit stories of something positive or negative they have experienced in the organisation, and then the next step is to diagnose the vital behaviours that fit the crucial moments. Don't change the wording or grammar, just absorb the story.

Then identify the high-leverage actions that, if routinely enacted, lead to the results you want: This is the 'what'. Most businesses would benefit if they stop any self-defeating and escalating behaviours and instead start a reaction that leads to good results. We need to change these and it only takes a few vital behaviours to create the big changes in results you care about. It's as simple as doing the vital behaviour when you realise you've reached a crucial moment - a case of: 'If X, then Y'.

While that's a simple explanation, it's not quite as easy to implement. Ways to do so can include positive deviance – where there are positive results despite poor circumstances, and through leverage, as some behaviour leads to or influences others.

Facilitator Chantelle Solomon pointed out that we often want people to act a different way in a certain situation, but we don't understand why they do what they do, as we don't properly diagnose the context of whether their action is based on ability or motivation, across personal, social and structural levels. Without diagnosing, it's hard to come up with the right solution or strategy to fix the problem.

Shake them out of their moral slumber

One strategy that works well is that of '200% accountability', where you hold not only yourself but also the next person accountable for a specific action – as simple as reminding your colleague to turn off his laptop when exiting the office if you see him step away from his desk at 5pm with that blue glow still emanating from his desk, if you're aiming to reduce your office's electricity bill. This is a strong personal motivator and instils a sense of wanting others to also do well.



There's often a multitude of reasons why we perform a specific task a certain way, so we need a multi-layered response to find out why and how something is being done that goes against the grain. In addition, many 'bad' or even *status quo* behaviours feel good, like trawling Facebook during work hours while 'good' behaviours feel bad, like having to cold call a list of potential sales leads or going the extra mile.

Solomon clarified that none of us are fundamentally bad, which is why the right intervention can be successful: it's more a case of moral slumber. We need to wake our colleagues up to the fact that what they're doing is wrong by appealing to influence and motivation in particular. That said, you can't motivate someone who just isn't motivated, especially when they're insulated from the effects of their behaviour. What you can do is help them find their personal source of motivation. To do so you need to connect to the values they already hold, which is accomplished in three ways:

1. Create **direct experience** through a field trip – take the C-suite out onto the factory floor and make them run a faulty machine for a few minutes;
2. Tell **meaningful stories** about the company and your customers' experience that's vicarious;
3. **Allow for choice** and a little more freedom in how they accomplish a required task.

If all else fails, ask the employee just to try rather than committing to something larger and scarier at first. Change will happen as this becomes the entrenched 'way we do things'!

[Click here](#) for a reminder of my first feedback session from the workshop, read *Influencer: The new science of leading change* for more or contact HumanEdge to book your spot at the next [Influencer: Power to change](#) workshop.

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