Behaviors and Nudging from a Human Resources Perspective

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Performance

• Personality Trait Measures (e.g. loyal, team-player)
  - Little developmental value
  - Ambiguous, not consistent across raters, people hesitant to give poor feedback such as employee is “not conscientious”

• Outcomes and Results (e.g., profit, revenue, number of calls taken, etc)
  - Can be influenced by factors beyond the employee’s control
  - Can encourage the ‘wrong’ behaviors’ (quantity/quality issues)
  - Can create low confidence levels and low development for new hires
Performance cont’d

• Focus on Behavioural/Competency Measures (e.g., works well with others)
  ❖ Very effective for development
    • Helps people understand what to start, stop, or continue doing
    • Developed using systematic job analysis

• Note: Courts tend to favour behavioural feedback as:
  ❖ Within person’s control
  ❖ Gives sense of direction
  ❖ Based on Job requirements; therefore, required for all employees
    • Minimizes bias
The Evidence

• Providing a list of behaviors has been shown to improve performance for decades
  • Loggers (Latham & Wexley, 1977)
  • Scientists (Latham et al, 1975)
  • Students (Brown & Latham, 2006)
  • Leaders (Brown & Warren, 2009, 2011, in press)
  • Entrepreneurs (Brown & Hanlon, in press)
Why do Behaviors Work?

- Sense of direction
- Cues people to ‘what’ is important
- Yardstick to measure performance
- Increase self-efficacy/confidence
  - Within employee’s control
Role Of Goals

- **Goal Setting Theory** (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2014)
  - Assuming goal commitment, specific, difficult goals improve performance over vague goals (do your best – DYB)

- **One of the most effective and practical motivational techniques for the workplace**
  - Supported by over 1000 studies

- **Goals**
  - Guide behavior
  - Give sense of direction
  - Cue where to allocate effort and resources
Newer Research - Priming

• Priming with a “winning photo” raises performance of
  ❖ Call center employees (Shantz & Latham, 2011)
  ❖ Brainstorming (Shantz & Latham, 2009)

• Priming with a word puzzle with “fairness words”
  ❖ Improves fair decision making (Ganegoda et al., 2015)