

Think like an influencer

 By Leigh Andrews

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"You can't predict anyone's work load for the day, we pad out our budgets to avoid hiccups down the line and deadlines are just crazy." This description, which would fit almost any business today, was part of a fictional scenario set-up in the recent HumanEdge Influencer change workshop and which had attendees nodding their heads in agreement.

- Ensure you have a culture of accountability and ownership for specific tasks
- Create consequences for non-delivery and rewards for good results
- Check that the goals you set really are [SMART](#)
- Have the right people in place for the tasks at hand
- Note any skills gaps preventing the job from getting done
- Rework your policies and procedures to support delivery

The above bullets are just some of the solutions to the intro problem that we brainstormed as a group, but the real answer is simpler than that:

It's not unusual that when a company starts off small, they do things a certain way. As they expand, their 'ways and whys of doing' aren't explained to new team members, so things become more loose and vague, making it harder to hold anyone accountable for suddenly dropping the ball on what came easily to the startup. The change isn't properly managed and can lead to all sorts of problems down the line

Why 'be proactive' isn't a good business goal

Facilitator Chantelle Solomon added that we tend to go to strategies, processes and policies to address issues first, but should instead set goals for better performance or engagement. Linked to this, many of the potential solutions we came up with in the workshop session initially seemed to be on the right track but missed the mark, such as the all too vague, non-measurable, non-time-bound: "Be proactive". Instead, to really address the crux of the problem, we need to start with the key behaviours that need to change.



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These are actions that are specific, observable and repeatable. It's common to take a result as an action. So, while: "Keep

all projects in the green” sounds like a good start, it’s actually an outcome, not a set behaviour one can take. “Act with integrity and courage” isn’t a behaviour either, it’s a value quality. Our individual interpretations of these qualities differ from person to person, so this is definitely not specific enough to implement and expect a specific result across the board.

Good journalistic practice for any business division

We need to go back to the boardroom and debate the difference between results such as ‘delivering orders on time without damage,’ or ‘reducing overall customer complaints’ to behaviours that are demonstrable and specific. These would include steps like acknowledging failure and asking for help when something goes wrong, which link back to using actual verbs instead of nouns.

It’s also as simple as using the word ‘communicate’ in listing a required behaviour instead of the more common ‘communication’, which is a noun and more of a goal than a specific action. We also need to be careful to better define words such as ‘regular’ – to some that could mean hourly, to others it’s daily, weekly or monthly.

It’s also a good idea to borrow the first rule from Journalism 101: Think of the ‘What, Why, Who, Where, Why and How’ you want the required change to happen, as it’s bound to make your problem-solving more specific.

A good basic behaviour any business can implement is to ask each employee to speak up as and when something goes wrong for them in the workplace in order to solve the problem faster, share the experience and avoid more serious consequences down the line and move on.

[Click here](#) for a reminder of my first feedback session from the workshop, [here](#) for more on crucial moments and vital behaviours, 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.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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