Unit 2 DB Lecture:

Welcome to Unit 2, students! This week, your reading focused on consequences for behavior in organizations. In this Discussion Board lecture, we will add to your knowledge of reinforcement and punishment and learn that an understanding of these concepts is crucial to understanding behavior in the workplace. Additionally, the PIC/NIC analysis will be introduced.

One of the core principles of operant conditioning is that behavior is a function of its consequences. The means that performance is impacted by what occurs after that performance. Furthermore, any action an individual takes in the environment changes that environment and related behaviors in some way. Remember the law of determinism? Behavior does not occur in a vacuum. Just like behavior outside an organization, any behavior, whether desired or undesired, continues or ceases based upon the consequences that follow the behavior — whether the consequences are programmed or accidental. The good news is that with a strong understanding of the antecedents that precede behavior and the consequences that follow behavior, the power of reinforcement can be utilized to increase desired behavior from staff.

Let’s review the concepts of reinforcement. Reinforcement is the presentation (positive) or removal (negative) of a stimulus following a behavior that increases the likelihood of that behavior occurring in the future, whereas punishment is the presentation or removal of a stimulus that decreases the likelihood of the behavior occurring in the future. Behaviors that are reinforced will occur more frequently, and behaviors that are punished will occur less frequently. There are tons of behaviors that occur every day, and each produces a consequence. If managers, supervisors, and owners of organizations can use reinforcement effectively, they will see changes in performance. If there is no change in performance, then reinforcement is not actually occurring.

To further understand how consequences that follow behavior in the workplace can increase or decrease the probability of those behaviors occurring in the future, let’s take a look at the PIC/NIC analysis. The PIC/NIC analysis is an extension of a basic ABC analysis that looks at how different consequences are classified. Consequences can be positive or negative, immediate or future, and certain or uncertain. When conducting a PIC/NIC analysis, one would examine all the antecedents related to undesired and desired behavior. Just as in an ABC analysis, one would examine a pattern in the antecedents, consequences, and the PIC/NICs. There are many combinations of these classifications of consequences, but one thing is clear, the most desirable and effective consequence to achieve is positive, immediate, and certain. What you may find when analyzing patterns in behaviors is that desirable behaviors may have negative, immediate, and certain consequences, and undesirable behaviors may have positive, immediate, and certain consequences. Additionally, many commonplace business practices, such as a paycheck, may be positive and certain, but they may be delayed so they do not maintain the many behaviors that occur day in and day out. Taking the time to identify patterns in behavior and classify consequences will lead to the ability to create consequences that capture high performance and discretionary effort from employees.

One final, tricky consideration with reinforcement in organizations is the kinds of reinforcers that may be effective and feasible to deliver. Remember, a reinforcer that can be delivered consistently is better than one that is delivered inconsistently — and the reinforcer must have value to the performers. What serves as a reinforcer for Jack may not for Jill, so consider the performer’s preferences. Also, remember that social reinforcers do not cost anything, so managers should give all the genuine kudos they can muster. To determine what may work for individuals, try testing something, asking the performers, and even observing behavior to see where people’s preferences lie!

Thank you for viewing to the Unit 2 Discussion Board lecture! Go forth and apply the astonishing power of reinforcement where you can!