Unit 8 DB Lecture:

Welcome to the Unit 8 Discussion Board lecture! This unit’s lecture focuses on the role of technology in organizations and behavior change, as well as the long-term role of performance management. Additionally, you will discuss humble behaviorism, which encourages behavior analysts to remain open in order to collaborate with others.

Technology has made a huge impact on everyday life and organizations are no exception. The increasing use of cell phones, computers, and other technology has increased the efficiency of business process and connectivity. However, as your text points out, at times, technology also interferes with work performance and productivity. Let’s take text messaging for example; the consequences for sending text messages are most often Positive, Immediate, and Certain (PIC). As you know from earlier units, these are the most effective consequences maintaining behavior. The consequences would be similar for using social media. This means that at any given time, performers have access to PICs that have nothing to do with, and, in fact, interfere with, the work that needs to be done.

Technology can, however, benefit organizations by helping to create and, eventually, sustain change in organizations. Technology can be used in many facets of the organization, including training, manufacturing, and other routine, everyday tasks. Knowing that some forms of technology produce high rates of reinforcement, organizations can take advantage of the PICs inherent in technology and work technology into the tasks themselves. For example, using a tablet to collect data, pressing a button to graph the data, and then seeing the data on the graph can produce PICs and, therefore, maintain high rates of the behavior of collecting and graphing data. This type of intervention does not take any individual to implement to ensure reinforcement is delivered but will result in the delivery of the reinforcement on a regular basis, maintaining behavior change over time. Technology can also be used to complete training, ensuring the efficient and accurate delivery of training in an organization. This will enable efficient information delivery, ensuring that performance remains at desired levels for the long term. Technology decreases the response effort of many tasks, making the likelihood that people will successfully complete those tasks considerably higher.

As discussed throughout the course, executives and managers are integral to maintaining staff behavior and to maintaining and sustaining changes in an organization; therefore, precise performance management is needed. Following the pinpoint process, it is the responsibility of executives and managers in the company to tie the pinpoints to the values of the organization. Tying the changes to values helps individuals understand why change is necessary, making it more likely that people will accept change. Your text points to the fact that executives should be heavily engaged in this process, even more so than engagement in processes that are directly related to profit.

The organization’s system and structure have strong impacts on staff performance long term. It is the responsibility of executives and managers to set up strong systems that will lead to desired outcomes and promote desired behavior of performers operating within the system. This should include a strong system for reinforcement in which immediate reinforcement is imbedded into as many tasks as possible. Structures in organizations should support the day-to-day reinforcement of behavior goals. Reinforcement systems should be clearly defined, including the limits of what can be utilized for reinforcement, the non-competitive nature of reinforcement, and the equal opportunity of all to gain reinforcement. Additionally, data collection and evaluation should take place on a regular basis to determine the effectiveness of a reinforcer and its effect on long-term performance. Data should drive all decisions regarding changing an intervention or modifying the system.

Another consideration in an organization is the matching law. Simply described, the matching law explains why people behave in the ways they do. As Aubrey Daniels says, “Behavior goes where reinforcement flows.” People will allocate their behavior in relation to how much reinforcement is associated with the completion of that task or behavior. Therefore, the more reinforcement available for engaging in, or completing a task, the more the individual will allocate behavior towards that task. If little reinforcement is available for engaging in a specific task, and reinforcement is available elsewhere in an organization, individuals will allocate their behaviors away from the task with little reinforcement. Additionally, when considering a new initiative, one must make sure there is more reinforcement associated with the new way of doing things than the old way. If there is more reinforcement available for the old way, staff will allocate their behavior to the old way and the new initiative will not be sustained.

Some of the final considerations in increasing sustainability and maintenance begin with the intervention process and are incorporated in the long term implementation of the intervention. Including the staff in the development process of the intervention, and the long term evaluation of the intervention, will create more ownership and lead to long term changes in behavior. Including effective staff training and incorporating clear expectations are also important. Additionally, creating and utilizing a data collection system and using the data to support the intervention ensures that the intervention stays on track and enables key information to be shared throughout the organization. Finally, as has been highlighted many times throughout each step of the problem solving process, having a clear and consistent system to deliver consequences and, more specifically, reinforcement can have a huge impact on the long term success of a program.

In addition to creating internal structures and supportive reinforcement systems, agents of change, such as consultants, must be able to garner support from individuals both inside and outside the organization. Behavior analysts working inside and outside the OBM field must often work with individuals from other disciplines or backgrounds. In your library reading this week, Nueringer discusses “humble behaviorism,” which encourages behavior analyst to be open to alternative explanations and be tentative when drawing conclusions. He points to the idea that if behavior analysts, as a group, could be more humble, their effectiveness would increase. Behavior analysis has often been criticized for its focus on observable behavior, as others believe that this may somehow downplay thoughts, emotions, and feelings. They may often feel that this focus rejects the concept of free will and, therefore, when faced with behavior analytic interventions, may be less likely to go along with them or to assist in maintaining change in an organization. If behavior analysts can anticipate potential disagreements with those outside their field, and remain open to others’ perspectives, they can humbly explain procedures in ways that are approachable and understandable. In your future career as a behavior analyst, remember to approach each situation with empathy. Understanding the performers’ perspectives will allow you to fully understand patterns in behavior. Additionally, becoming more approachable and relatable will increase the likelihood that performers will accept and support change, or other suggestions, and work towards long lasting, effective solutions.

This concludes our Unit 8 Discussion Board lecture! Thank you for viewing!