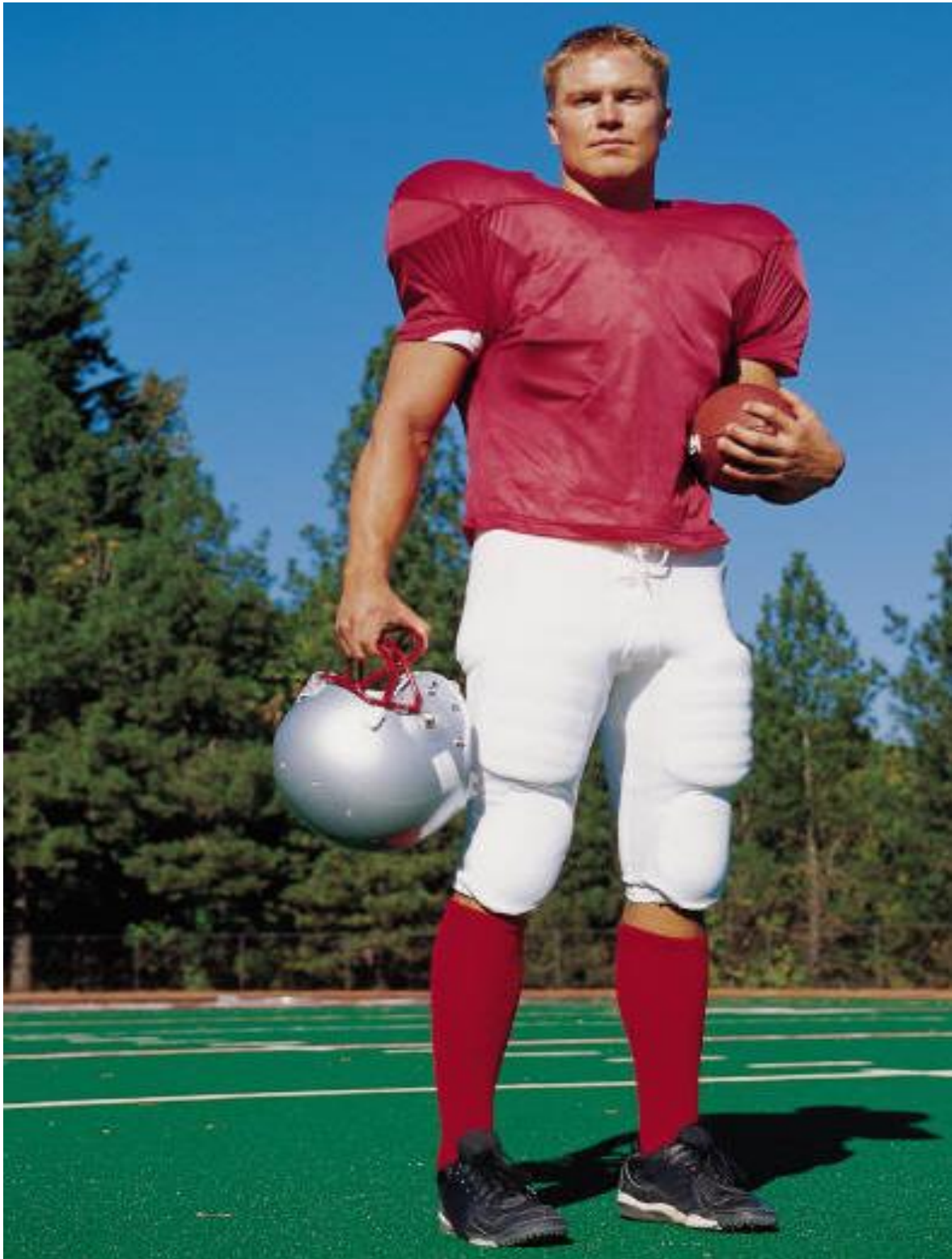


Ready, Willing and Able
The front line change readiness model



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Overview

Organizational change is most visible at the Supervisor-Employee level. While the direction of change can only come from the executive level and the capability for change comes from the senior management level, real change does not occur until workers at the employee level change their day-to-day behavior.

Change at the Supervisor-Employee level is actually very straight forward and very simple to understand. Employee performance, defined as “goal-directed behavior,” changes when the employee is ready, willing and able to change.

Who knows how long that three-part slogan has been around? The phrase Ready, Willing and Able is a part of everyday conversation...and of everyday understanding. This concept makes the supervisor’s responsibility for organizational fairly transparent. And it is, of course, the supervisor’s responsibility to make sure his/her subordinates are properly prepared for the change.

The Simple Steps

To manage and direct employee performance change, the supervisor:

1. **Explains** the change to make the employee **Ready**
2. **Trains** the employee until the employee is **Able** to change
3. **Supports** the employee’s performance so that the employee is **Willing** to perform the change continuously.

Equipping supervisors to manage employee change becomes a matter of preparing them to explain, train and support. The depth of needed preparation, of course, varies with the supervisor and the complexity of the change.

The Details

Explaining, training and supporting sound simple - and they may be. But an elaboration of each may help to ensure a full understanding of what is involved.

Explaining

The concept of “explaining” a change to be made in the way the employee is to work sounds simple enough, but there are specific contents of the explanation.

Supervisor’s Actions

- A. **Describe the change** – the supervisor must be able to identify the change and explain why it will add value for the organization. Then he/she must describe in some detail the way that the employee will need to work after the change goes into effect. The level of detail necessary depends on the degree of difference between the “old way of working” and the “new way of working.” The explanation should include a description of the job as it is to be done, the step-by-step work processes and the related tools and procedures involved in the job, as well as the goals and/or

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standards the employees will be expected to meet when the new job goes into effect.

- B. Encourage questions and provide answers** – Most descriptions will meet many of the employee needs for information, but it is the rare description that meets every need. The effective supervisor encourages questions and provides patient detailed answers...even when questions are repeated and/or the answers seem self-evident.
- C. Test understanding and agreement** – the supervisor should make sure the description of the new work is understood by asking the employee to play back the description of the new work as he understands it. An inaccurate playback cues the supervisor to provide more information. The supervisor also tests for employee agreement to do the work the new way. While an employee's nod of the head may be enough for some cases, a handshake over the new work will be a far more robust indicator of agreement.

Tools for Explaining

Explanation can be made much easier if the supervisor has the traditional tools that organizations have developed over the years. These tools include a written job description of the new work, a form that shows the goals and measures that will be applied, and any policies and/or regulations that apply to the new work.

It is the rare supervisor that has the skill or time to prepare these tools. The tools should be prepared and approved for his use by the change management team that is masterminding the whole activity set.

Training

The concept of training is old hat to most supervisors, but some basic training ideas are worth reinforcing.

Supervisor's Actions

- A. Provide Content Information** – At this point, the supervisors has already described the job as it will need to be done after the change. Now it is time to communicate more detailed knowledge which can be organized in several logical ways. The most efficient way is to present the needed information in the sequence of the work processes the employee will be following after the organizational change goes into effect.
- B. Conduct Practice of the New Job** – Knowing and understanding the new way of working is one thing, while being able to do the new way of working is another. Ability can only be developed by “doing” in a practice environment. Practice allows hands-on trial of new work under penalty-free conditions with immediate feedback before the next trial. Practice is by far the most powerful training mechanism, and, ironically, the least used in business situations.
- C. Test for knowledge and skill** – The last step in training is to accurately assess each employee's proficiency in doing the work in the new way. The test should be accomplished under the eyes of the supervisor. Failure of the test cues re-training,

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while passing the test allows certification that the employee is officially able to do work in the new way.

Tools for Training

Invaluable tools for the supervisor who must train his/her employees include work procedures, instructor materials, and student references (notebooks). Once again, in a comprehensive organizational change that is being properly managed, these materials would have been prepared and certified by the change engineering team which might also have organized classroom or computer-based training. When these latter training modes are utilized, the supervisor is still responsible to ensure that his/her subordinates have successfully completed the training. In the absence of these modes (e.g., when the particular training need is limited to just a few people and development of group training modes is not warranted), the supervisor must be prepared to do the training him/herself.

Supporting

Employees work to sustain their way of life. Employment allows workers to earn a living wage and to derive satisfaction from their work, their co-workers, and praise for accomplishment. Sustenance doesn't come free, however. The centuries-old contract is in play: work for food. Companies are willing to provide the support needed to sustain employees provided those employees do their assigned work for the company. The supervisor is the hard-wired connection between an employee's work and his wage.

Supervisor's Actions

- A. *Evaluate the Changed Work of the Employee*** – Employees should be made aware that their post-change performance will be monitored. This gives them an extra incentive to do what is expected of them. It also is a fair warning so that they are not caught by surprise when they start getting feedback. The supervisor must be able to see the work of each employee and to assess the quality and quantity of work against the employee's new goals or job standards. Evaluating employee work frequently involves both "metrics" and the judgment of the supervisor based on his experience. The bottom line is that the supervisor must decide whether the employee is doing "good enough" or "not good enough" at performing of the changed way of working.
- B. *Problem Solve with the Employee*** – The supervisor who finds that an employee has not successfully made the required change in day-to-day operations should problem solve with the employee. What parts of the change are being done or not done? What are the obstacles in the way of changed performance? Is it a problem of knowledge and understanding or a problem of attitude? The outcome should be a remediation plan. Joint problem solving helps the employee feel supported and respected, gives the employee an opportunity to understand the need for remediation and to buy into the plan, and should result in the employee doing the new work "good enough."

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- C. Reward Changed Work** – As the final link between employee work and reward, the supervisor’s duty is to ensure that company rewards (pay, praise, and recognition) are given only for changed work behavior. The decision rule is simple and clear: pay for changed work; no pay for unchanged work. Despite the clarity of the rule, it seems very difficult for most supervisors to toe the line on this one. Failure to make a direct connection between work and rewards is a fatal flaw that will stop employee change in its tracks. Fortunately, most employees “get it” and understand the requirement to make changes called for in an organizational change.

Tools for Supporting

The standard tools used by most organizations include the performance appraisal system/form and the salary review system/form. While most supervisors are accustomed to using these forms on an annual basis, using the forms as a part of their management of employee change may be new. The idea would be to “use the performance appraisal form” to assess the employee’s work prior to the change, and then to use the form again sometime after the change to assess the employee’s level of performance against his new job description, goals, and standards. Use of the appraisal form puts a clear focus on the needed connection between work (in this case, changed work) and pay.

It is also helpful for the supervisor to be empathetic and non-judgmental – at least during a brief period immediately following a change. The employee’s performance may simply be due to learning curve struggles or it may actually be the supervisor’s fault due to inadequate explaining and training. So allowing a grace period during which employees can experience “no-fault” difficulties is often appropriate.

Call to Action

Change happens when employees are ready, willing and able to change the way they work. Supervisors must be disciplined about explaining, training, and sustaining. Simple enough, right? As any reader of this paper knows, shelves of books have been written about the theory and practice of explaining, training, and sustaining. Experience indicates that today’s supervisors and managers may know too much of what’s in those books, not too little.

Today’s challenge is to direct supervisors and managers back to the simple big picture of ready, willing and able. The figure below says more than enough to keep things on the right

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track without getting lost in the myriad of theories, slogans, and buzzwords being used today.

		Explain	Train	Support
		Supervisor Actions	What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The job • The Processes • The Goals
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe • Question/Answer • Test U & A (Understanding & Acceptance) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Content • Conduct Practice • Test for knowledge & skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate • Problem Solve • Remediate • Reward
With	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Description • KPI or MBO Form • Policies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures • Instructor Materials • Student Notebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Appraisal Form • Salary Review Form

	Ready	Able	Willing
	Employee Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared • Inclined • Available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable • Skilled • Competent

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About Endeavor

Endeavor Management, is an international management consulting firm that collaboratively works with their clients to achieve greater value from their transformational business initiatives. Endeavor serves as a catalyst by providing pragmatic methodologies and industry expertise in Transformational Strategies, Operational Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, and Transformational Leadership.

Our clients include those responsible for:

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- Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Operations
- Technology Deployment
- Strategic Human Capital
- Corporate Finance

The firm's 40 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, deep operational insight and broad industry experience. This experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets. Endeavor's clients span the globe and are typically leaders in their industry.

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