

## Making Change Stick - The Masai and Logical Levels



We were recently on holiday in Tanzania and had the privilege of spending some time in a Masai village. In talking with some of the tribesmen we were surprised how many had been to university. Later that day we were talking to the manager of the hotel we were staying in and he explained how the Tanzanian government were exasperated in their efforts to get the Masai to give up their traditional nomadic way of life, despite providing extensive funds for education. Many went away to university, studied for their degree, and then returned to their

village and former way of life.

Research by Gregory Bateson and Robert Dilts suggests that we have a hierarchy in the way we think about things. They identified six 'logical levels of thought', each level providing different information and building on the level below.

### The Six Logical Levels:

- 6. Purpose**                    The big picture for our life or our organisation.
  
- 5. Identity**                    **Who** are you as an individual or organisation? What role do you play to achieve your purpose? How do you think of yourself as a person/organisation - eg 'I am a successful person'.
  
- 4. Beliefs and Values**                    **Why** do you do something? What do you believe in or value?
  
- 3. Capabilities**                    **How** do you go about doing things? As an individual or organisation, what are your capabilities, skills, strategies or action plans?
  
- 2. Behaviours**                    **What** are your typical behaviours? The things that others see you doing and saying?
  
- 1. Environment**                    **Where, when and with whom** do you display your behaviours? What are the external influences on you?

**An Example:** Many of us have been on a time management training programme. So, in theory, most of us have the capabilities needed for good time management. We also know what behaviours help and we know how to organise our environment to enhance our use of time. So, how is it that one of the main areas that people tell us they would like to improve upon is time management? From the logical levels model we can see that most of us only made changes at the bottom three levels in regards to time management. If, for example, we don't believe that utilising a rigorous diary system will work, or we value spontaneity over punctuality or our identity is bound up in being open and accessible to people then, because we haven't made any changes at the higher levels, it is unlikely that after the initial rush of good intentions the principles of time management will be embedded.

## **Sustainable Change**

Making a change at a lower level (eg environment) may, but not necessarily, affect an upper level. However, a change at an upper level (eg belief) will have a distinct impact on the levels below it, as illustrated in the above example. (You may remember previous newsletters that dealt with the fact that beliefs are only beliefs and so can be changed.)

## **Using Logical Levels to Explain/Understand Change**

The above leads to a number of interesting explanations/discoveries:

1. Organisational change. Have you ever been involved in change within an organisation? What are some of the more common change activities?

How about a new organisation chart? Or maybe change to the physical layout of the offices. This is change at the level of environment. Do you think it will be long-lasting? Only if the change is in alignment with the higher levels.

Or maybe staff are told to perform in a different way (behaviour) without receiving the necessary training (capability/strategy). Unfortunately, this happens far too often. When money becomes tight, the first thing cut is the training budget! Again it is unlikely that the change will be long-lasting.

2 Individual Change. Suppose you have a goal for yourself (health, career, ...) and it is not in alignment with one of the higher levels. How successful do you think you will be in achieving your goal?

3. An often cited quote from Albert Einstein is "The problems of today can only be solved at a higher level of thinking than that which created them". I have heard many people refer to this quote yet few can explain how you can actually do it (ie move to a higher level of thinking). Using logical levels, you can easily explain it. For example, if there is a problem at the behavioural level, to solve it we must move to at least the capability/strategy level.

4. Implementing Change. To implement change successfully, either individually or as an organisation, all six levels need to be considered. Something the Tanzania government perhaps needs to think about if they are ever going to succeed in their aim of changing the Masai.

Food for thought?

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