PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: CHANGING BEHAVIOR THAT DRIVES ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, FIFTH EDITION

Aubrey C. Daniels, PhD | Jon S. Bailey, PhD

reviewed by Kennon A. Lattal, PhD

Performance Management (fifth edition), by Aubrey C. Daniels and Jon S. Bailey, is the latest iteration of a highly successful volume outlining the application of the principles of behavior analysis to, in the words of the subtitle, "drive organizational effectiveness." This review first considers the book's organization and topical coverage, followed by an analysis of three concepts: (1) feedback, (2) reinforcer effectiveness, and (3) extinction. Several additional topics represented in behavior-analytic basic research are discussed as complements to the other subjects. The new edition represents the best in applied behavior analysis both in its research foundation and its application to strategies for making businesses better and more profitable. *Performance Management: Changing Behavior That Drives Organizational Effectiveness, Fifth Edition* (2014; 344 pages; ISBN-13: 978–0937100257; hardcover $69.95) is published by Performance Management Publications.

INTRODUCTION

First published in 1982, this is the latest iteration, the fifth edition, of what has become a classic and widely used textbook about performance management. As with some of the earlier editions, Aubrey C. Daniels, who coined the term "performance management," shares authorship with another prominent behavior analyst, in this case, Jon S. Bailey. The two of them bring their long histories of reinforcement to bear on questions concerning how to positively and effectively, to use Daniels's now-famous phrase, "bring out the best in people." As in previous editions, they succeed in providing a well-organized and readable overview of what behavior analysts call the "science of behavior" as it applies to human performance. They do so in a manner that is both educational and entertaining.

Synopsis

Each of the 23 chapters of the 344-page book is short and concise. With quick response codes judiciously placed, the reader can easily access both more detailed and broader information about the topic under consideration.

Chapter Summaries

We are introduced in the opening chapters to the notion that business *is* behavior along with a review of both the science of behavior and of performance management. Chapter 4 is worthy of special comment, for here

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the authors encourage the reader to first consider what behavior is when they refer to Ogden Lindsley's "dead man test" (if a dead man can do it, it is not behavior) and what it is not (attitudes and other mentalisms derived from an antiquated, misdirected folk psychology), and then they focus on behavior change.

Chapters 5 through 8 provide very useful material on defining and measuring behavior, followed by a series of chapters (9–16) outlining basic principles of behavior analyses with an emphasis on how they can be applied in the workplace. As a behavior analyst, to me the most striking thing about these chapters is how well the authors translate the principles into practice through example after example drawn from their years of experience in workplace applications. A laudable feature of this section is a sophisticated discussion of schedules of reinforcement applicable to the workplace. Understanding the varied effects of the different schedules of reinforcement on behavior often is overlooked. When well understood, however, these schedules can accelerate rapid change and sustained performance levels.

In the next section, chapters 17 through 20, the reader is guided through both complex and controversial issues in the workplace. I particularly like the inclusion of guidelines for providing corrective feedback as a way of eliminating unwanted behavior. It is my sense that too often in the workplace, as well as in other places, people are reluctant to provide one another with systematic and timely feedback about performance. Rearranging environments to promote greater use of feedback is a logical outcome of the authors' analysis.

The last section of the book, chapters 21 through 23, addresses how to use the principles of behavior in implementing performance management with multiple people or units within an organization. As a basic experimentalist, for me the most informative of these three chapters is the one that covers "planning reinforcement." The second of the last chapters is on research designs for evaluating change, an essential topic for those interested in knowing if what they are doing is making a difference in performance. Research design is not restricted to large-scale interventions but is as useful there, as with individual interventions. This chapter is key, and when teaching it should be linked to the earlier assessment and methods chapters. The chapter on behavioral safety nicely rounds out the section by illustrating a large-scale intervention.

COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

I will discuss three of the many issues that make this book a valuable resource: (1) feedback: chapter 13; (2) creating reinforcers: chapter 14; and (3) extinction: chapters 12, 16, and 20.

Feedback is defined as "information about performance that allows a person to change his/her behavior" (p. 157). The authors suggest that "feedback alone does not change performance; rather performance changes because of the *consequences* directly associated with the feedback" (p. 161). I appreciate the point that, when people are given feedback and their behavior changes, new behavior brings them into contact with other reinforcers not previously available to them. Feedback depends on some behavior, so it occurs after the response and not before it—and most usefully, immediately afterward (cf. p. 3)—thus meeting the operational definition of a reinforcer. If the feedback changes behavior in a positive direction, it functions as a reinforcer. If it does not, it is not a reinforcer. If it is a reinforcer, supplemental or backup reinforcers may become unnecessary.

A useful finding (p. 165) from an unpublished experiment by P. Roberts is that feedback for new behavior given before a session leads to better learning than feedback given for such behavior after a session. These data are compatible with a reinforcement interpretation, with the feedback reinforcer occurring long after the behavior. In addition, the data suggest a second function of feedback: to serve as an antecedent or discriminative stimulus guiding the subsequent behavior. Basic research shows that reinforcers often concurrently serve as discriminative stimuli, and the results of Roberts's experiments align with this finding.

One quibble that I have with chapter 14, "Finding Reinforcers, Creating Reinforcers," concerns the first subheading: Finding Effective Reinforcers. A reinforcer does not function as a reinforcer until it reinforces; that is, it increases the future probability of the behavior. Therefore, functionally there is no such thing as an ineffective reinforcer. *Effective* is an acceptable description only in relative terms, never absolute terms. Thus, money may be a more effective reinforcer because it maintains more behavior than a metal bolt or a piece of string, but it is redundant to say that money by itself is an effective reinforcer.

Quibbling aside, the real point of the chapter section is that those who manage or influence others must discover what reinforces a particular employee's behavior. In this section, it is suggested that reinforcers can be found by asking people what they like as a start, observing behavior (better), or testing a consequence (yes!). I agree with all that the authors say here. It is a great stepwise progression of analysis. The material on how reinforcers are established raises the interesting question

of how we transform things or events that people have not experienced or really do not like in reinforcers. This is important in a dynamic business setting. Allyon and Azrin (1968) addressed the former situation by using a reinforcer sampling procedure in which, for example, patients on a psychiatric ward were invited to attend free events such as music events or movies. Before doing this, few patients spent the tokens they earned for work. After sampling the noted events, the patients began to spend their tokens on these now established reinforcers. Making activities such as exercise a reinforcer is trickier, but it can be done (e.g., by first reinforcing exercise with something else). This allows the behavior to be sampled, which in turn may result in its becoming a reinforcer. Such reinforcers are sometimes called *natural* or *automatic*.

Despite the fact that extinction is the wellspring of many procedures designed to reduce behavior (e.g., differential-reinforcement-of-other-behavior schedules, differential reinforcement of alternative behavior, and time out), there is relatively little research on its most basic properties. Chapter 16 discusses a problem largely unexplored by experimental or applied behavior analysts, the relative efficacy of extinction following exposure to the different schedules of reinforcement. Similarly, the ubiquity of the well-known extinction burst immediately following the onset of extinction has been questioned in a meta-analysis reported by Lerman and Iwata (1995) but never examined experimentally. The book also briefly covers extinction-induced variability in responding (pp. 153–154), including mention of the fact that "[w]hen creativity is needed, extinction can generate variations in behavior that can lead to new products or processes" (p. 153). Such variability is described as a barrier to effective skilled-job performance, which it certainly can be. However, this recognition of the role that extinction-induced variability can play in creating more novel and inventive behavior is understudied and often underemphasized in discussions of extinction. Through increased variation, induced behavior of other sorts, and resurgence (Lieving & Lattal, 2003), extinction is the source of new behavior that can in turn be reinforced.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR EXPLORATION

The basic science of behavior is not only well represented in this book but also illustrated with many detailed examples that are germane to the workplace. There are additional topics worth considering to complement the translation of research into practice that is so well exemplified in *Performance Management*.

One topic is Neuringer's (e.g., Page & Neuringer, 1985) exquisite experimental analysis of how response variation is as amenable to reinforcement contingencies as any other response. This suggests that when behavioral variability is observed, it is not necessarily because some other behavior is being extinguished, as was discussed earlier. Instead, that variability perhaps is being reinforced. Such research reveals the flexibility of the operant as a unit of behavior and provides a model for the analysis of more complex behavior in workplace environments.

Another subject with broad implications for performance management is experimental work on behavioral momentum and resistance to change. At the most general level, resistance to change is a common obstacle in everyday work life. It may have little to do with employee disgruntlement or hostile individuals and much more to do with managing opposition to change by considering the environmental circumstances that give rise to it.

A third topic is behavioral economics (e.g., Madden, 2000). Things such as open and closed economies, as well as the shifting demand for reinforcers with changes in cost and delays to access, have altered the way that we conceptualize reinforcement. A reinforcer used to be a reinforcer, but behavioral economics has shown us the importance of context in determining the effectiveness of a reinforcer.

Finally, the notion of recurrence of previously eliminated behavior, also mentioned earlier, has made a huge comeback in basic science in the past decade. Its implications are many for intervention failures and for the reappearance of old behavior patterns when interventions are discontinued (e.g., Lattal & St. Peter Pipkin, 2009). Recurrence includes three interrelated phenomena: (1) resurgence; (2) reinstatement; and (3) renewal. Resurgence, discussed briefly on page 154, primarily seems to be reinforcement to an extinction-driven process, whereas the other two phenomena emphasize the role of discriminative stimuli in recurrent behavior.

CONCLUSION

The approach to performance management outlined in the book is based on positive reinforcement, which also is the foundation of the life's work of Daniels. Using this principle, he has consistently focused on how those who manage or influence others can create nonthreatening conditions in which every employee can thrive without the burdensome effects resulting from punishment, threat, and fear. Although Daniels understands the contingencies giving rise to the latter, he has driven a stake in the ground and proclaimed that those who manage others owe their employees a rewarding place to work. Creating such places is the catalyst of true business success. It is hard to dispute the rigor and discipline that

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Daniels has applied across his life's work, which includes his highly successful 35-year-old consulting firm and five other books on topics ranging from a behavioral analysis of leadership to the follies of widely accepted business practices.

The authors' commitment to the use of positive behavior-change methods (see the yellow R+ on the book's cover) and how the methods can be taught based on their experienced understanding of the science are the central themes of the book. *Performance Management* describes in a clear and persuasive way how the powerful principle of positive reinforcement can be adapted and used to make a difference in organizational effectiveness and in the lives of employers and employees alike—indeed, to bring out their best.

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