7

Deadly Myths

about

Culture Change

by Tim Autrey

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7 Deadly Myths about Culture Change

[TRUTH] Achievement of long-term *sustainable* performance improvement, whether you're talking safety, reliability, productivity, or efficiency, requires…culture change.

[MYTH] Most consultants and so-called 'experts' are still preaching that changing culture is *hard* and that it takes a *l-o-n-g* time.
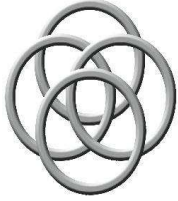
Introduction

Are you looking to make a true change in the performance of your team/organization?

Do you want 'stickability' (in other words, do you want the [positive] changes to *last*)?

If so, you must transform the working culture of your team.

Think about it this way:

> **A.** Every organization (including yours) is perfectly aligned to get exactly the results it is getting
>
> **B.** Culture determines results
>
> **C.** Different (better) results require a different culture

How do you get there?

Well, based upon our experience over the past ten years, working with some of the largest organizations on the planet, I can tell you without reservation- the idea that culture change is *hard* and that it takes a *l-o-n-g* time absolutely does NOT have to be true.

Whether you're wanting to transform the culture of a natural work team or an entire enterprise, before you believe the predominant 'hype' and gear up for a long and difficult haul, take a look at these seven [deadly] myths about culture change (and HOW to overcome them).

NOTE:

This article is an introduction into how to [rapidly & sustainably] transform your culture. Tim Autrey is offering a **FREE online workshop** that provides detailed insights, strategies, and tactics into HOW to honestly, simply, and rapidly move the working culture of your team/organization from where it is to where you want it to be (including development of your own BLUEPRINT for taking action). To register, click here.

MYTH #1: Workers Resist Change

"The announcement of the changes really went well."

Despite what seems to be common opinion, human beings do NOT resist change. Want proof? Why do you think most of us like weekends and vacations? The truth is, the majority of people *want* and even *need* change. Why then is this perception (amongst leaders) so predominant? Because the way most have been going about implementing and managing change directly promotes resistance.

Human beings (which should include the majority of workers in your organization) generically resist two things:

- Confusion- the truth is, a confused mind says, "NO". Many change efforts, especially those designed to promote *behavior* change simply do not make sense to the 'rank and file'.

- Loss of 'Sense of Control'- how do you like it when someone *tells* you what to do? The normal human response, whenever there is a sense of being 'forced' to do something, is to…resist.

Before you can even hope to influence others, you must 'get their attention'. To do so requires that you get past the 'gatekeeper' (also known as the Amygdala, or what I like to call the *lizard* brain). A primary function of this part of the brain is…survival. If your request / attempt to influence is perceived as [even the slightest] *threat*, your efforts to change behavior are doomed. Further, if you really want to grab attention, what you are proposing must be sensed as unique, and even…novel.

How can you [easily] do this?

In addition to the information below, I show you how (specifically) in the free online Next-Generation Human Performance Leadership 3-part video series.

Once you've made it past the 'gatekeeper' and grabbed an individual's attention, you're 'in'. This does not, however, mean that you will necessarily be successful in your efforts to influence. It merely means that you'll be given the opportunity.

Whenever we're asked (yes, you, me, and anyone else) to do anything, our brains immediately process two questions. As a potential influencer, the mind of the person you are seeking to influence MUST come up with a YES answer to both of these questions in order for you to have a prayer of influencing their decisions (and ultimately their behaviors). Here are the two questions:

#1 Is this relevant? Before any decision is made to act in response to a specific request or other form of outside influence, this question is asked: Is this relevant…to me? In other words, WIIFM?

This is really all you need to know about the core of human motivation. Therefore, whenever you want to promote behavior change, you should couch everything from the perspective of WIIFT (What's in it for…THEM).

ONLY if you get a YES to this question does the brain move onto the next:

#2 Can I do this? In other words…do I have the ability? If whatever it is you're asking a person to do is sensed as being confusing, complex, cumbersome, or too difficult, [once again]…your efforts to effect any change in behaviors are doomed.

The solution to this one should be obvious- make everything (to the maximum extent possible) fast, simple, and easy. If what you are proposing is indeed complex, break it down into bite-sized chunks and approach these one at a time.

For additional insight on human motivation watch this quick (03:13) video on HOW to get workers to do the 'right thing' at 3:00AM when no one else is watching. It's Video 4 in the Future of Performance Improvement video series, which you can access here: http://bit.ly/2fZ6ZLq

MYTH #2: "We Need More Data"

It seems today that organizations are increasingly run by "number crunchers". I can't tell you the number of times I have witnessed [even senior] leadership being 'shot down' when wanting to implement longer term performance improvement because the short-term "ROI" simply didn't satisfy the bean counters.

Virtually all corporate worlds are full of 'dashboards', graphs, multi-colored bar charts; an entire spectrum of KPIs and [not so "K"] PIs. Yes, indeed, data (especially trends) are important. Process analysis and Six Sigma metrics can provide insight and suggested course(s) of action. However, while I'll likely incur the wrath of an entire number-crunching industry here, it seems to me that such penchant for 'more data' has often either become the 'end' itself (vice the means to the end), or a convenient way to delay taking any action at all. After all, put things off long enough, and they're likely to become someone else's problem.

While trends can point to the need for change, ==data will not ever culture transformation divine==. Running your organization purely on data is like attempting to drive your car by looking in the rear view mirror. Culture transformation is far more 'qualitative' than 'quantitative'. The great news is- culture determines results. Get your culture right, and you WILL satisfy your 'bean counters'.

How can you begin?

Start by looking *forward.* Rather than focusing on analytics and the accumulation of additional megabytes of data, recognize that there is a very simple philosophical framework through which you can begin to make rapid progress. This is the same framework that forms the foundation with which our organization, The Practicing Perfection Institute (PPI), has achieved such results as a 70% reduction in human error rate (higher reliability, productivity, and efficiency), coincident with an 80% reduction in union grievances (higher morale and lower turnover).

The results cited above were achieved over a twelve-month period, within a 2,200+ person facility. There was zero focus on the need for more data, additional controls, or expanded six sigma studies. The focus was placed on four simple precepts:

1. Things are the way they are because they got that way

2. 84-94 percent of human error can be directly attributed to process, programmatic, or organizational issues

3. People come to work wanting to do a good job

4. The people who do the work are the ones who have the answers

Here's a quick (03:49) video with more insight into how these precepts play into the dynamics of culture change. It's Video 10 in the Future of Performance Improvement Video series, which you can access here: http://bit.ly/2fZ6ZLq

MYTH #3: Culture Change is Hard

From what I see, the concept of 'culture' and how to change it continues to be a mystery to most. It tends to be seen as something, which while now recognized as necessary to long term success (thank goodness), is very difficult to do. We're also *still* being told by numerous consultants and so-called 'experts' that it takes a long time (MYTH #4- which I'll address in the next section).

Culture is simply the collective principles, values, and behaviors that are accepted and expected by the members of a specified group of people. Your team, department, facility, and/or enterprise is in fact made up of a specified group of people. This is a given. I imagine that wholesale change-out of your workforce (people) is not an option. And in reality, if this is all you did, it would have very little chance at solving your culture issues anyway (this is a topic for another time). You are therefore left with three variables upon which to focus (and this is where most organizations screw it up).

Most organizations tend to focus on 'values'. The anticipation is that emphasis upon proper (corporately determined) *values* will modify behaviors. This is why we generate slogans such as "Safety is Our Top Priority", the collective "pursuit of excellence", and "quality first." While these sound good, they have little (if any) impact upon how workers actually conduct themselves (i.e., their *behaviors*). In reality, the *values* of the members of your organization are all over the map. This is acutely true when you compare values across different generations and different ethnicities. Furthermore, people resent being told what their values *should* be, and corporate efforts to instill new ones are typically met with resistance (see MYTH #1). Finally, values are fickle. They change as rapidly as the seasons.

So, if you cannot physically change the people, and focusing upon *values* isn't going to get you from where you are to where you want to be, what are you to do?

Your answer lies in the two remaining variables: *Principles* and *Behaviors*.

While *values* are very fickle, *principles* generally change little (if any). Furthermore, there are a set of *natural principles* that generally resonate with (and are important to) the majority of the human race. For example, think about "respect". Being treated with respect is intrinsically important to virtually all human beings. What you want to do within your organization is to define, communicate, and focus upon a small set of "Core Principles". When you do this correctly, you will find very little resistance. In fact, running your organization based upon principles allows people with differing values to work together effectively.

For an example of an exceptional set of Core Principles (at least in my opinion), go here: https://www.ppiweb.net/core-principles/

And this brings us to the final variable: Behaviors.

Think of it this way: The cumulative *behaviors* of the members of a group generate the observable aspects of the *culture* of the group. And just as behaviors serve to generate the culture, so are they influenced by the culture. This is one of the reasons why so many think culture change is so gosh darn difficult.

If you want to make a step-change in your culture, you must exert overt action and energy (on purpose) to promote the types of behaviors you seek. This is called *influence.* And here is a key thing to understand about influence: ==Any attempt to influence is a transaction. And in order for any transaction to be sustainable, both parties must profit==. Perhaps this will help you understand why previous efforts to 'motivate' might not have had the lasting impact you had hoped for.

The way to make culture change *easy* is to first draw a 'line in the sand' by defining/refining, communicating, role modeling, and reinforcing your Core Principles. This will establish distinction between the 'old' (rear view mirror) way of doing things, and the next-level approach of focusing upon a handful of vital behaviors that virtually all team members will be happy to actively support.

Second, provide on-purpose experiences, on an ongoing basis, that promote, support, and reinforce the behaviors you want to see in others. Beyond role modeling these behaviors yourself, express your appreciation to your team members when you see such behaviors in action. This is vitally important, because what is appreciated gets repeated.

For a quick (03:47) video on HOW to greatly increase your ability to influence others, watch Video 8 in the Future of Performance Improvement Video series, which you can access here: http://bit.ly/2fZ6ZLq

For a detailed look at how to engage others in a manner that promotes desired behaviors that align with organizational Core Principles, see Chapter Nine in my book, 6-Hour Safety Culture

MYTH #4: Culture Change Takes a L-O-N-G Time

Let's say that you're the captain of an oil tanker making its way from the Persian Gulf to the United States. Out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, at normal cruising speed, you decide to make a 90-degree turn to port (to the left). Do you have any idea how far you must travel before you've completed your turn? Approximately two nautical miles- a tremendous distance traveled, huge energy expended…lots of time elapsed.

Now, let's say that you're in a speed boat in the middle of Lake Washington, cruising along at 'normal cruising speed', and you decide to make a 90-degree turn to starboard (right). How far must you now travel to complete the turn? Well, you can kick the rear end of your small craft around and negotiate that turn almost immediately. Very little distance travelled, very little energy expended, [almost] instantaneous results.

When most organizations consider culture change, they're looking to turn the oil tanker. It's overwhelming- the details, nuances, personalities, agendas, and motivations of all involved are nearly impossible to conceive. This is one of the reasons many organizations attempt to 'drive' culture change (and end up with the resistance discussed in MYTH #1).

👍 The 'speedboat' solution…

What if I told you that there is a simple process that effectively turns your 'oil tanker' organization into a 'fleet' of speed boats? What if I also told you that PPI has used this process with tens of thousands of workers around the globe over the past ten years to generate truly amazing results?

This process, which we call the Code of Honor, is the single most powerful thing I have EVER seen for transforming the culture of an organization. Even after all this time and thousands of 'Codes' generated, the power and impact of this process continues to blow me away.

Through this process, which is conducted at the natural work team level (your 'speedboats'), workers are allowed to define their 'ideal' working environment; to set their own expectations. Our experience has shown that when you do this properly, workers set higher expectations for themselves than management would ever consider. Further, since they created them, they *own* them- no directives from 'on high', no forced *compliance*, no 'management police' required!

The Code of Honor process taps into intrinsic aspects of human nature, at a team level, in a manner that organically and synergistically supports the Core Principles of the organization.

 If you would like to see a sample Code of Honor and learn more about how this process works, go here: https://www.ppiweb.net/our-approach/code-of-honor/

MYTH #5: The 'C-Suite' must be 100% Onboard (or it won't work)

There are two predominant schools of thought regarding culture change. One is that it must be 'driven from the top' ("Top Down"). Such an effort typically involves vision, direction, and focused emphasis from senior levels. These can begin with signs of promise, especially in the senior to middle management ranks; however, without frontline 'buy-in' and upward viral growth, the energy required to continually 'drive' solely from the top is rarely sustained long enough to achieve lasting results. If you've ever tried this, you know what I mean.

The opposing predominant philosophy is that true culture change must grow upward through the ranks ("Bottom Up"). When such efforts are attempted, it's like igniting small flames, hoping to fan them into a roaring blaze of enthusiasm and commitment that rages throughout the organization. Unfortunately, without proper tending and fanning from the top, the fire often dies out. Those who had been 'fired up' are often left more burnt out and discouraged than if nothing had been done at all. Again, if you've ever been a 'victim' of such an ill-fated attempt, you are well aware of that which I speak.

With the two descriptions above, it would appear that support, role modeling, and appreciation from the top is important, while 'starting the fire' on the front line levels is also essential. Both of these are true; however, the ultimate answer to culture transformation is that it must grow from…the inside out.

👍 From the inside out…

When you consider the Individual Performance Model (watch Video 8 in the Future of Performance Improvement Video Series), thoughts generate feelings, feelings manifest as behaviors, and behaviors determine results. The collective behaviors of a group of people generate the observable part of the group's culture. Culture change requires collective behavior change. The only point at which I, or anyone else for that matter, will genuinely change our behavior is when we *want* to. Internal motivation. External behavior. Inside out.

When you put the 'busting' of each of these seven MYTHS collectively into context, you should recognize that this is an 'inside out' approach. The great news is that it can be implemented within any team, any department, or any facility, irrespective of whether the 'C Suite' is onboard or not. As a matter of fact, it is actually BEST to begin with a segment of the organization. As the results become readily apparent, other organization leaders (including the 'C Suite') will then come fully onboard (and it won't be because of someone they saw speak at a conference or some random book they read). They will *want* to come onboard because the results will be staring them in the face. This is the best of all worlds when it comes to culture transformation.

We actually promote this type of beginning (rather than coming in 'from on high'). It makes it more real to the initiators and to the early adopters. It gives them a chance to truly make a difference within the organization. It taps into *viral change* and ultimately fosters *Viral Accountability®*. I like to think that there's a special kind of energy that grows when things start this way, just like Margaret Mead offered:

> *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."*

PPI has been in business for over ten years. During this time, we've helped some of the largest organizations on the planet dramatically reduce errors, improve reliability, elevate efficiency, and ultimately increase profitability. Furthermore, our client results have been *sustainable* because in the process, working cultures have been transformed.

Quite honestly, in most cases, had we needed to wait for our clients' 'C Suites' to be fully onboard before someone within the organization had the courage to get started, there would have been no organization-wide implementations, no transformations, no amazing results, and PPI (as an organization) would have never gotten off the ground.

Getting leadership support is the single biggest challenge (by a factor of 2 compared to the next highest) for those wanting to implement performance improvement. If this is a challenge for you, check out this short (04:44) video and download the associated tools. It's Video 9 in the Future of Performance Improvement Video Series. You can access it here: http://bit.ly/2fZ6ZLq

MYTH #6: It Takes Charisma to Change Culture

Charisma is defined as a 'personal magic of leadership arousing special popular loyalty' and as 'a special magnetic charm or appeal'. Since the concept of *culture change* has been such an enigma and so overwhelming (for reasons already discussed), many consider that the only way to successfully achieve it is through such 'magical powers'.

No charisma required

Nothing could be further from the truth. I can tell you that some of our greatest success stories have involved very non-charismatic leaders. Yes, they were smart. They were intelligent enough to 'get it' relative to *human performance* and its relationship to changing the culture, and they were thoughtful and consistent in their approach. But charismatic? Not even close.

When approached properly, efforts to improve performance and ultimately transform culture tap directly into intrinsic aspects of human nature. Such efforts engender motivation, which always comes from 'inside'. The result? Proactivity, commitment, and a sense of ownership (both of behaviors and outcomes). In short, behavior change. And with collective behavior change comes…culture transformation. No charisma required.

If you'd like a bit more insight about the concept of "human performance" and how it fits into the culture transformation equation, here's a short (03:28) video. It's Video 1 in the Future of Performance Improvement Video Series, which can be accessed here: http://bit.ly/2fZ6ZLq

MYTH #7: Sustaining a New Culture Requires Monitoring and Control

So once you've made some headway, once you're starting to see desired behaviors, once a few positive results begin to become apparent, this is where you need to ramp up monitoring and control, correct? ABSOLUTELY NOT.

"But," you may posit, "we must prove that our results justify our efforts, AND we need to enforce the desired behaviors." Place your focus as such, and you will likely kill whatever progress you've made.

Opening a door…

As identified in Video 10 in the Future of Performance Improvement Video series, the only way to effect rapid culture transformation is to, "open a door and invite people to step through it." When you do this properly, because of many of the factors mentioned in this Report, most will *want* to step through such a door, and they'll do so with enthusiasm and growing levels of commitment.

Should you choose, at some point, to depart from the voluntary and begin to enforce compliance, you will be slamming the door in their collective faces. Do this, and you will be worse off than if you hadn't done anything in the first place. You'll promote resistance. You'll lose the benefits of tapping into the positive intrinsic aspects of human nature (and likely invoke some of those less admirable).

When you put the pieces together as I've described in this Report, you are offering *Purpose* and *Autonomy*. By so doing, over time, your team members will naturally develop greater and greater levels of *Mastery*. This is WIN-WIN in its purest sense. Not only will you see your culture rapidly transform, with proper nurturing (notice I did not say *control*), it will continue to get better and better. As your culture gets better, so will your results.

In my book, *6-Hour Safety Culture,* I talk about PAM (Purpose, Autonomy, and Mastery), which is my spin on Dan Pink's insights on *motivation* offered in his book, *Drive*.
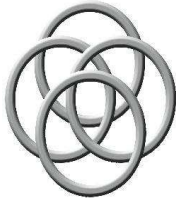
Conclusion

If you've ever had the pleasure of working and/or leading within an environment having an exceptional culture, you know what a blast it can be. Not only can it be fun, but it is truly rewarding. It's not about controlling, it's about laying the foundation, opening the door, and appreciating the efforts of those who make your organization work.

The insights offered in this Special Report regarding each of the "Seven Deadly Myths" have been provided to [perhaps] help shift your thinking- from resistance to acceptance, from quantitative to qualitative, from 'one-in-a-million-shot" overwhelm to recognition that there is indeed a sane, simple, and very doable approach to genuine culture transformation.

I obviously could have gone into much more detail regarding these antidotes to outdated thinking about culture change; however, I wanted to keep this document as brief as possible. If you would like to go deeper, to learn more about specifically WHAT to do and HOW to do it (and even develop your own actionable for transforming your culture), I highly encourage you to take action and register for our free online 3-part video series: Next-Generation Performance Improvement.

At PPI, we are uncompromising champions of human possibility. As such, we are wholly committed to your success as one who truly wants to make your organization (and ultimately the world) a better and safer place. Should you have any questions, concerns, or issues in which we might be able to help you, please let us know. We are here to serve you in any way possible.

Thank you for being you.

Tim Autrey, Founder
Practicing Perfection Institute, Inc.

About Tim Autrey
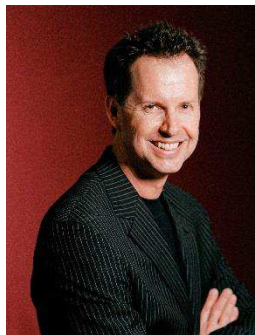
 TIM AUTREY is the creator of Practicing Perfection®, the next-level approach to achieving and sustaining next-level human error reduction, safety improvement, and human performance enhancement. He is the Founder/CEO of the Practicing Perfection Institute, Inc. (http://www.ppiweb.com), which since 2005, has worked with some of the largest organizations on the planet, helping tens of thousands of workers to sustainably reduce errors, enhance safety, and grow quality and reliability.

Results achieved through implementation of the Practicing Perfection® approach include sustained reductions in the rate of human error of up to 87.5%, supplemental (contract) workforce error reduction of 72.4%, and a facility's best safety and output record in a 26-year operating history. A measurable example of the associated culture transformation includes a year-over-year 80% reduction in bargaining unit grievances.

Due to the expansion of international operations, PPI Global, Ltd. was established in 2014 to function as the global orchestrator of Practicing Perfection® services, training, and implementation. Associated companies include the Practicing Perfection Institute, Inc. (USA), and PPI Canada, as well as affiliates in Belgium and South Africa. Trainings have also been conducted in China and Russia.

Tim Autrey is the author of the Electrical Power Research Institute's (EPRI) official Guideline on Human Error Reduction. He has been instrumental in helping to guide The Joint Commission in its efforts to promote High Reliability in Healthcare in the United States. He has spoken at Stanford University and The Mayo Clinic. Tim is a Telly and Emmy Award winning producer, and has been seen on ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX networks.

Wholly committed to making the world a better and safer place, Tim and his wife Suzette have financed startup of the international not-for-profit Human Performance Association (http://www.hpaweb.org), designed to bring brightest thinking and best action together- to change the global conversation on human performance.

Tim Autrey's ground-breaking book, *6-Hour Safety Culture: How to Sustainably Reduce Human Error and Risk (and do what training alone can't (possibly) do)* was released in June, 2015. It details the underlying precepts and lessons offered by this revolutionary approach to next-level performance; an approach that can be quickly and easily applied within any organization (http://www.6hoursafetyculture.com).