

Reducing Energy Through Behavior Change Requires Multi-Pronged Approach

When evaluating energy reduction ideas within your organization, employee behavior changes are usually the most cost-effective solutions. These require less approval from management, very little up-front investment, and can engage employees in ongoing improvements.



However, getting actual behavior change to take effect can be difficult and frustrating to those leading the change, as many of us have experienced. Even though I've spent many years learning and implementing advanced statistical analysis and flow methodology into organizations, it's the individual behavior change that has been some of the most challenging.

One approach I have found to make behavior changes more successful is the Six Sources of Influence model developed by VitalSmarts (Influencer Training, 2018). It's a simple approach I've used to help get employees to follow the kanban system at work, as well as encourage local coffee drinkers to use reusable cups.

Instead of picking one or two solutions for a behavior change, the Influencer model suggests implementing at least four sources to greatly increase the chance that the behavior change will last in the long term.



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The six sources of influence are:

1. Personal motivation
2. Personal ability
3. Social motivation
4. Social ability
5. Structural motivation
6. Structural ability

A simple matrix can be constructed, with each square representing the key theme of each source. Within each source, I've included the key question to answer for the person making the change.

Six Sources of Influence	Motivation	Ability
Personal	1. Personal motivation – Do you want to make the change?	2. Personal ability – Do you know how to make the change?
Social	3. Social motivation – Do others encourage the change?	4. Social ability – Do others help you make the change?
Structural	5. Structural motivation – Does the environment encourage the change?	6. Structural ability – Does the environment support the change?

Let's look at an example you might encounter at your facility, getting employees to shut off lights when they leave.

BEHAVIOR CHANGE: Make sure employees turn off the lights when they leave for the day.		
Six Sources of Influence	Motivation	Ability
Personal	1. Personal motivation –Employee training on the cost and environmental impact of leaving the lights on, along with how electricity usage impacts the goals and finances of the company.	2. Personal ability –Employee training on how and where to turn off the lights. –Training is added to new hire training program.
Social	3. Social motivation –Employees remind each other to turn off the lights when they leave. –Teams review the electricity metrics each week, discuss who was working during the late shift, and provide feedback to those employees.	4. Social ability –Facilities engineer has regular meeting with late-shift employees to remind them and answer questions. –Post the cell phone for security and facilities in case there are questions or the employee needs assistance.
Structural	5. Structural motivation –Electricity reports posted each week show light usage by hour. –Electricity reduction goal of 5 percent across the facility, tied to employee bonus program.	6. Structural ability –Color-coded labels on electrical panel show each zone tied to each area of the building. –Sign added to exit door reminds employees to shut off lights before they leave.

What Other Ideas Do You Have for Each Source of Influence?

There is no limit to the number of ideas you can generate. This is a great opportunity to utilize brainstorming with your teams to determine simple and cost-effective ways to change behavior.

Let's assume the improvement teams review the brainstormed list under each source, and decide to implement the following ideas from sources 1, 2, 4, and 6:

- Source 1: Employee training on the cost and environmental impact of leaving the lights on, along with how electricity usage impacts the goals and finances of the company.
- Source 2: Employee training on how and where to turn off the lights.
- Source 4: Post the cell phone for security and facilities in case there are questions or the employee needs assistance.
- Source 6: Color-coded labels on electrical panel show each zone tied to each area of the building.
- Source 6: Sign added to exit door reminds employees to shut off lights before they leave.

By implementing at least one solution within four or more of these sources, the team will see a much bigger change in improvement than only implementing one or two of these ideas.

If you think back to past behavior changes you've tried to implement, you can probably think of more sources of influence that can be added to make the change more effective and longer lasting.

This approach is not only useful for reducing electricity, but can be used to help individuals:

- Visit the gym more frequently
- Eat healthier foods
- Floss more frequently
- Bike to work more often
- Wash their hands (watch the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osUwukXSd0k>)

In summary, when you are making behavior changes, don't be content with just one or two solutions. Evaluate the change against the six sources, and make sure you have at least one idea implemented in four or more sources to maximize the effectiveness of the change.

Reference: <https://www.vitalsmarts.com/influencer-training>