DELIVERING ON PERFORMANCE IN TRANSPORTATION

How to Create a Culture of Engagement through Behavioral Science

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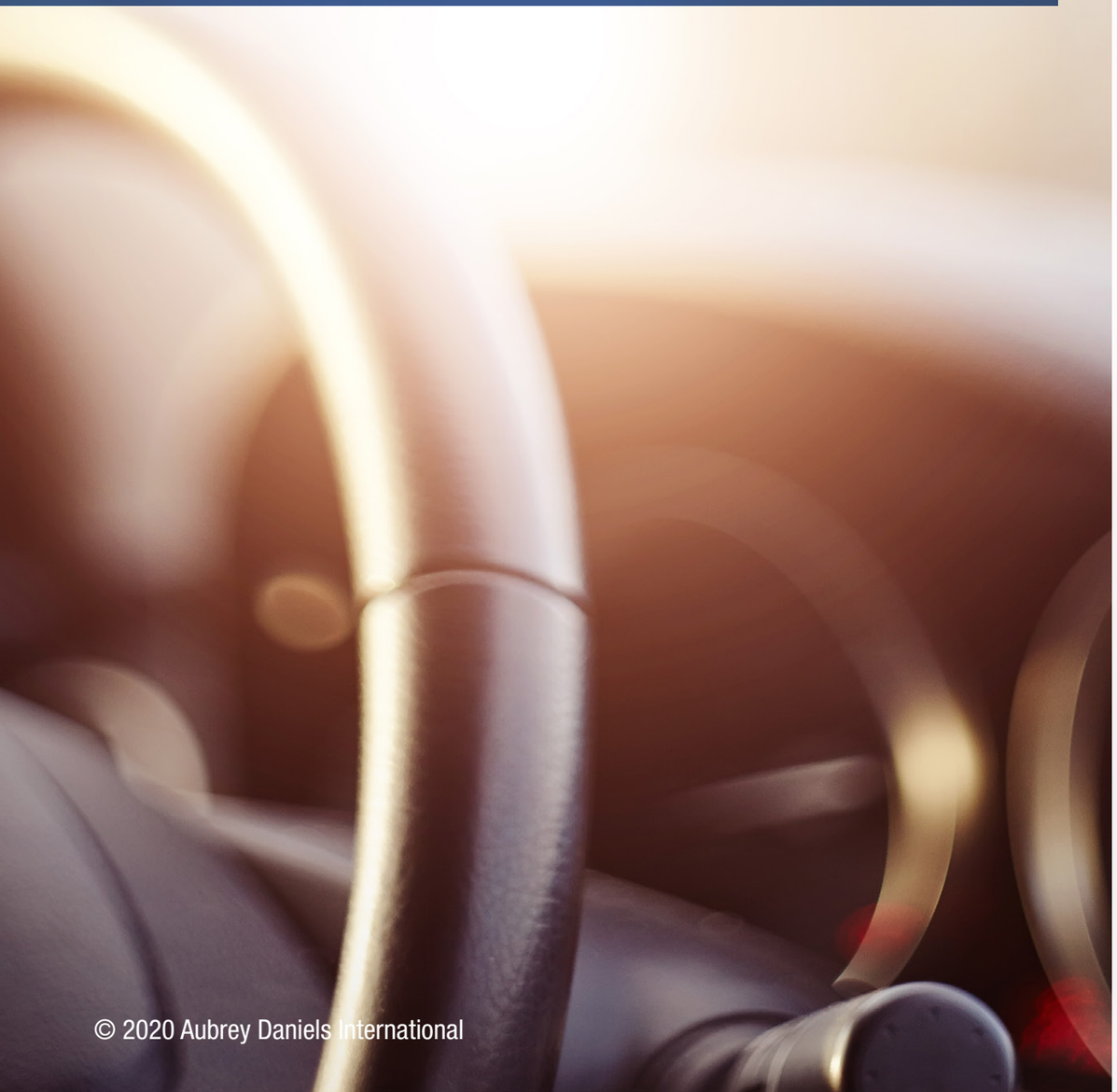


01 CHALLENGES IN TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Industry faces significant challenges...

- Fuel Costs
- Driver Shortages
- Restrictive Regulations
- Heightened Demand for Timely Delivery
- Distracted Driving
- Substance Abuse
- Infrasctructure Decay
- Swelling Traffic Congestion
- Emerging Technologies

These challenges require a flexible business strategy that is quickly translated into consistent behavior change down through the organization. The behavior of your workforce, including the decisions it makes throughout the day, can slowly build or erode the reputation of your organization. Single events resulting from poor decisions can have a catastrophic impact on lives, property, and the community.

THE **LONE WORKER** CHALLENGE

Managing human performance is difficult in any industry, but the significant number of lone workers in the transportation industry limits the opportunity for managers to engage with the workforce and ensure that their behavior is aligned with the current goals of the organization.

Managing people who are on the road for hours or days without an opportunity to observe their work, discuss challenges, and provide feedback makes meeting business objectives and handling change more difficult.

How can supervisors provide the motivation and support needed to meet customer and company expectations efficiently and safely?

02 THE SOLUTION: **BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE**

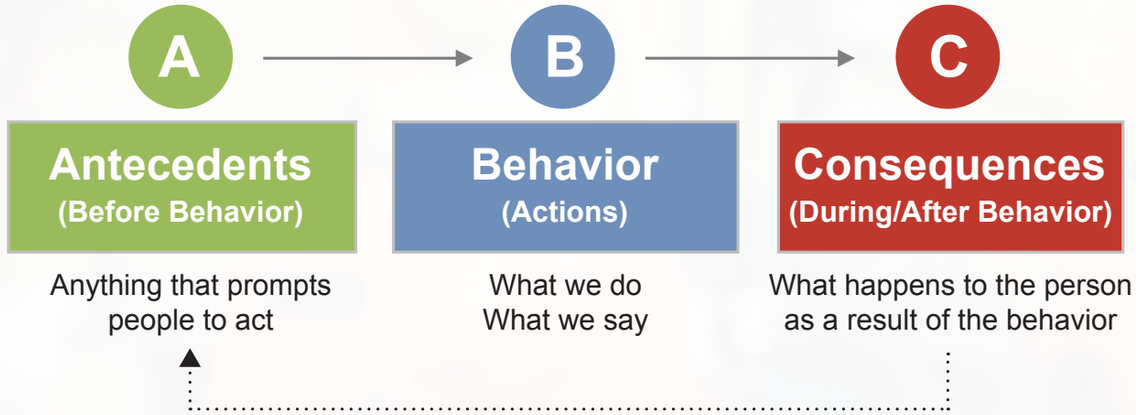
Does your organization have the **behavioral expertise** to overcome these challenges?

The time-tested, evidence-based strategies of the science of behavior have helped create cultures of engagement where all workers are energized and focused on the organization's success.

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

Understanding Why People Do What They Do

Addressing these challenges from a behavioral perspective first requires understanding why people do what they do. **The ABC Model** (Antecedents-Behavior-Consequences) is the foundation of a behavioral approach and provides the framework for that understanding.



BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

Antecedents

Antecedents are events, conditions, etc. that come before behavior and prompt it to occur. Examples of antecedents include instructions, work procedures, management expectations, fatigue, schedule, time of day, and traffic.

Scientific research has demonstrated that antecedents are necessary but not sufficient for improving human performance. Training, meetings, signage, and reminders are important, but by themselves won't lead to permanent behavior change.

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

Consequences

Behavioral consequences follow the behavior (what happens to the person during or after the behavior) and have the greatest impact on whether or not that person will continue that behavior in those conditions. People do what they do largely because of what happens to them when they do it.

No amount of training or telling (antecedents) will lead to consistently safe and productive behaviors. What happens to people when they drive the speed limit, handle cargo with care, and interact positively with customers has a greater effect on behavior than what the people are trained and told to do.

Antecedents get behavior going. Consequences keep it going.

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

The Sources of Consequences

Consequences come from a variety of sources:

OTHER PEOPLE
(supervisors and managers, peers, customers, pedestrians, other drivers)

ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS
(procedures, incentives, scheduling, staffing)

YOURSELF
(feeling good about making up time on the road, pride in good customer service)

Natural Consequences

Consequences also can occur naturally (automatically) during or immediately after a behavior. The time and effort required for the behavior are common examples of natural consequences that often discourage desired behaviors. Natural consequences have a significant influence on behavior because they are immediate and predictable.

Leadership's role is to ensure timely positive consequences for the behaviors that will support their strategic objectives and organizational values.

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

Consequences for Lone Workers

When leaders and frontline workers are co-located, it is easier to manage workplace consequences to ensure safe, productive behaviors. With lone workers out on their own away from management's support, they are exposed to a wider range of consequences, many not within the control of management. The solution lies in management working cooperatively with lone workers to analyze all potential consequences and the impact they might have on lone worker behaviors.

For example, if customers berate a driver and complain to management when a delivery is late, a well-intended driver might be tempted to speed to avoid those negative consequences. No amount of training or reminding (antecedents) about driving the speed limit will overcome the power of those consequences. Managers need to understand how there can be negative consequences for the behaviors they're asking for and the impact those consequences are likely to have on behavior. By understanding what is likely to influence behavior, leaders can design more effective consequence solutions to support the behaviors they want.

03 APPLYING THE SCIENCE
Short Coaching Interactions

One of the most efficient and effective strategies to ensure desired behavior is providing frequent, short coaching interactions. Every time leaders interact with their direct reports, they have the opportunity to use consequences to shape behavior. These interactions don't need to be face-to-face, but they do need to be planned and carefully executed in order to have the desired impact.

APPLYING THE SCIENCE

Consequence Management Strategies

There are **two general consequence management strategies** leaders can use:

1

Management By Exception: The default approach for most leaders is to ignore what the performer is doing right and instead use their interactions to discuss improvement opportunities. This leads to employees reporting that they only hear from their boss when they have done something wrong. Managing largely through exceptions leads to "just enough to get by" performance—people do the minimum required to stay out of trouble. This suppresses engagement. For exception management to motivate behavior, employees must know that if they don't do the minimal performance, there will be negative consequences.

In the case of lone workers, this strategy breaks down. Drivers on the road understand that their boss won't know if they don't use turn signals or exceed the speed limit. Telling drivers they better follow the rules or else simply doesn't work with lone workers. It isn't a good way to manage anyway. It breeds resentment and encourages workarounds.

2

Positive, proactive approach that engages workers through feedback and positive consequences:
The better approach to managing any kind of performance is managing primarily through positive feedback and reinforcement. When people feel supported and appreciated, they are more likely to be engaged and go above and beyond the minimum requirements (discretionary effort) to help the organization meet its goals and live its values.

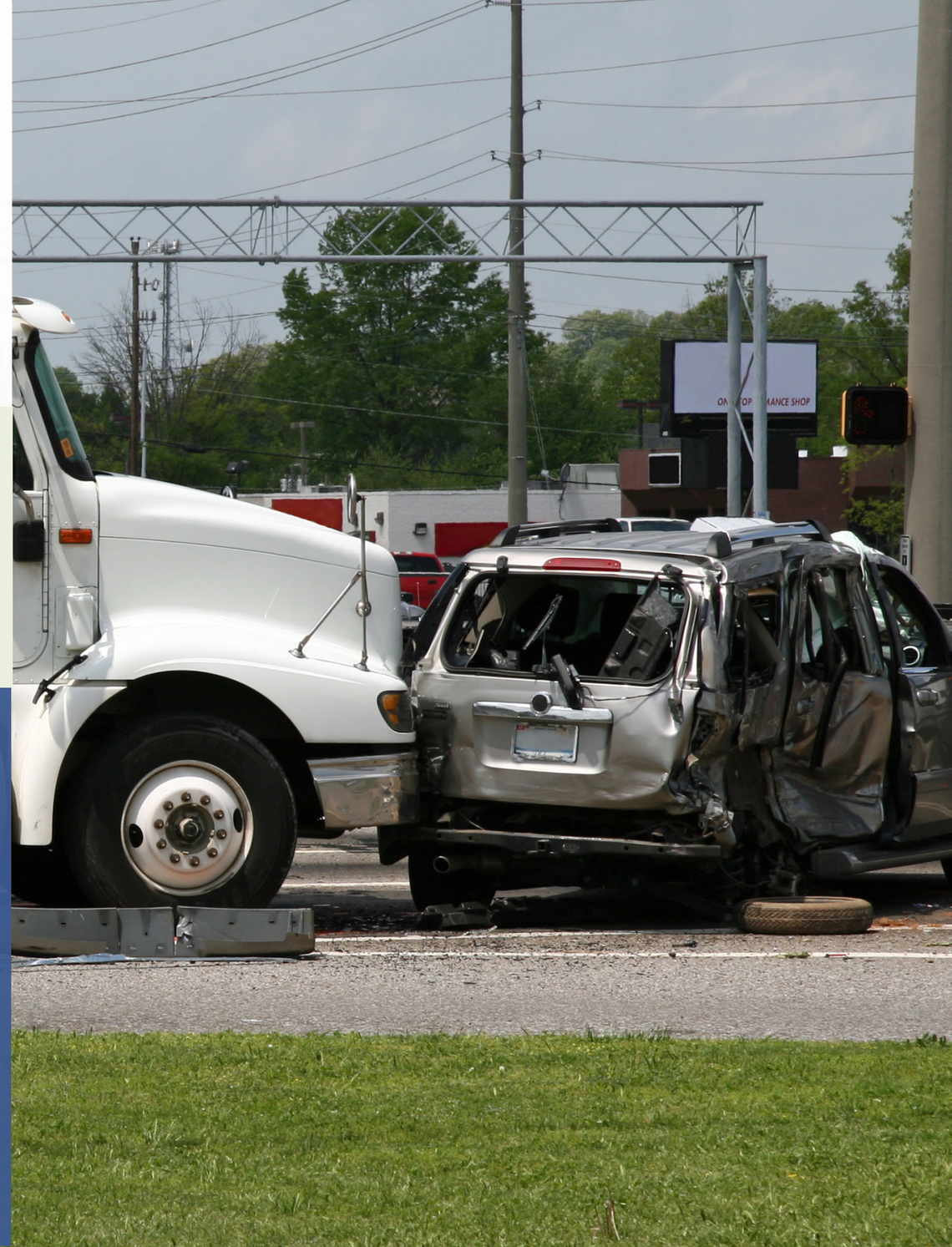
APPLYING THE SCIENCE

Transportation and Safety

While there are many safety issues in the transportation industry, they are most often related to the behavior of drivers.

- **Driving the Speed Limit**
- **Responding to Hazards**
- **Obeying Posted Signs**
- **Maintaining a Safe Distance**

The concern isn't just the safety of employees. Passengers, other drivers, and bystanders are also at risk. In transportation, the potential for catastrophe can be significant.



04 CASE EXAMPLE
Industrial Chemicals

Transporting chemicals to customer sites requires safe driving as well as safe loading and unloading of product. One organization that had generally safe drivers had a few significant behaviors that were hard for them to do consistently:

- **Driving the speed limit in speeding traffic**
- **Always chocking wheels**
- **Using three points of contact when climbing up tanks to unload**

After drivers agreed on what was most important to work on, they set up a simple process to self-monitor the frequency of critical behaviors. They tracked barriers to doing the behaviors and identified how supervisors could help them, but largely they worked as a team, encouraging each other as they improved on the behaviors.

Despite the dangerous nature of their work, management agreed not to discipline drivers for reported at-risk behavior and trusted the drivers to figure out strategies to improve.

The drivers felt empowered, trusted, and valued. They made significant improvements in safety as a result.

CASE EXAMPLE

Railroad

Engineers who drive long-haul trains can go weeks without seeing a supervisor. Regulatory requirements to check for the safe operation of trains can mean that the few interactions that occur between engineers and supervisors are corrective in nature. In one organization, the focus on regulatory compliance inadvertently led to mostly negative interactions and an *us-against-them* environment. This undermined the safety culture. The overemphasis on what engineers were doing wrong felt unjust and led to a fear of reporting and having open conversations about safety.

They developed a more open culture by building in brief but frequent positive interactions around safe and productive behaviors that were observed.

- Engineers felt valued and confident that leaders were aware of all they did well around safety.
- Leaders found that the interactions resulted in a better understanding of what engineers dealt with daily, and they took on a supportive role rather than policing.
- The improved trust and credibility enabled the development of a learning culture—workers were more willing to report near misses and incidents and to talk openly about safety challenges.

CASE EXAMPLE

Passenger Bus

Passenger bus drivers are responsible for the safety of their passengers and typically have to adhere to strict schedules. When behind schedule, drivers can be tempted to drive over the speed limit, stop and start abruptly, and skip safety checks.

One organization ensured that when drivers were behind schedule, supervisors asked first about safe driving behaviors. By taking the following steps, drivers felt valued and respected:

- Listened to the reasons drivers got behind schedule
- Acknowledged the challenge of balancing safety and timeliness
- Recognized what drivers did well to find that balance

Supervisors were able to work cooperatively with drivers to identify ways to improve both safety and on-time performance.

05 THE PROMISE OF **TECHNOLOGY**

Many transportation companies use technology to help address some of the challenges associated with managing lone workers.

Sensors and cameras installed in trucks, buses, trains, and other mobile equipment (dump trucks, fork lifts, front-end loaders)

are used to

track vehicle position, speed, braking, alertness of driver, and distracted driving.

Technology is valuable for allowing organizations to know how unsupervised operators are driving and for providing feedback to improve safe driving behaviors. Yet the natural tendency is to set up systems that alert management to driving exceptions—the things drivers do wrong. This leads to more frequent negative feedback and discipline to manage the behaviors. Drivers view this technology as "big brother" and resist its use, going so far as disabling the technology to avoid negative consequences. If you understand behavior scientifically, you know that anything that leads to more negative consequences is going to be resisted. To make this technology effective, use it to positively reinforce safe driving behaviors and improvements in those behaviors, in addition to using the system to provide coaching on at-risk driving behavior. The balance of consequences should heavily favor the positive. Any technology that leads to more positive reinforcement will be welcomed, not resisted.

OTHER BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Fuel Costs

Safety isn't the only challenge in transportation. The science of behavior can help transportation leaders improve a variety of performance issues.

Managing fuel costs requires a multifaceted approach, including managing driving behaviors. These behaviors significantly reduce fuel costs, but also require changing long-standing habits (even when no one else is around):

- Driving the speed limit
- Accelerating gradually
- Shutting down engines at long stops
- Pacing

Training and telling isn't enough for success, nor is the do-it-or-else management approach. Building in more frequent feedback and associating that feedback with positive reinforcement is key. Strive to create a link between the behaviors you want and natural reinforcers (automatic positive consequences). Most workers want to do the right thing, so strategies that show them the positive impact of their actions are likely to be reinforcing.

One organization used technology to provide frequent feedback on driving behaviors that conserved fuel and challenged drivers to beat their own record or maintain a streak of good performance. It started as a game to improve their score, but after management linked the driving behaviors to fuel savings, the natural reinforcement kicked in. Drivers got engaged in how their behavior contributed to the bottom line.

OTHER BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Retention

It's impossible to drive on a freeway without noticing "Drivers Wanted" signs on trucks. Drivers are in high demand so they often switch companies for small increases in pay. It may seem impossible to fight the temptation of more money, but as most exit interviews show, the number one reason people leave an organization is supervision, not pay.

Improving the way your managers and supervisors manage the performance of your workforce is the easiest way to develop a strong competitive advantage.

The way workers are treated and managed influences their performance and improves retention. Developing good relationships with employees, using a healthy balance of positive reinforcement, and truly valuing employees are just some of the ways to create a culture that attracts and retains people. For transportation employees who rarely interact with management, every interaction can profoundly affect how they view leadership and their organization. It takes deliberate effort, especially when employees are out of sight most of the time.

OTHER BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Customer Service

Because drivers are often the only person the customer sees, they become the face of the company.

- What the driver says and does during delivery can influence customer satisfaction.
- How the driver loads and unloads cargo can influence quality.
- How the driver drives can influence on-time delivery.

With so much riding on the behavior of one individual, it is important to create a culture that ensures engaged employees are committed to behaviors that lead to positive outcomes in quality, timeliness, and customer service.

As with all the examples above, the key is building in frequent positive feedback and reinforcement for essential behaviors.

Meeting the challenges in transportation will never be simple, but leaders who use the science of behavior as their guide will be successful in positively managing any and all behavior. ADI's culture change consultants can help you find the solution you need to deliver on performance in transportation. Contact us today to get started.

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