

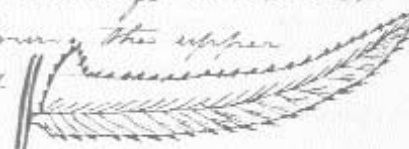
Why Some Enterprise Improvement Models Are More Effective than Others

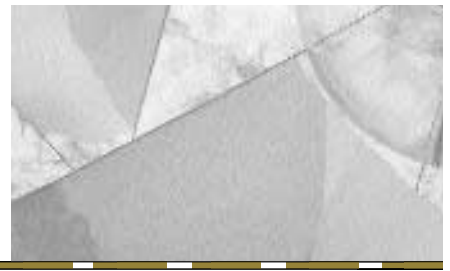
Wendell Brase
University of California, Irvine

The last decade has seen a plethora of popular management books advocating a variety of strategies and dogmas. Yet many process improvement systems are behaviorally naïve—heavy on the rhetoric of “teamwork,” “empowerment,” and “accountability,” but lacking insight into workplace belief systems, values, and motivations that underlie the behaviors targeted for change.

Wendell Brase, administrative vice chancellor at the University of California, Irvine, believes that the most effective means to achieve sustained improvement is through the application of value-based, empirically-validated behavioral models.

by petiole for about 2/10th of the length of the midrib
 reaching at the bottom and from thence to the center
 of sessile. the rib is terminated by a single undivide
 culate jagged leaflet. the leaflets are lanceolate, from 2.1
 cher in length jagged and have a small acute angula
 cation on the upper edge near the base where it is op
 . side inflex. has the projection and obliquely cut on the
 on the other side of the rib of the leaflet. an sketch
 give a better idea in this form. the upper
 face is smooth and of a deep
 the under side of a pale
 and covered with a brown pubescence of a woolly app
 are particularly near the central fiber or rib. these
 to are alternately pinnate. they are in number
 110 to 140; shortest at the two extremities of the
 footstalk and longest in the center, gradually be
 and diminishing as they succeed each other.
 small. firm also rises with a common foot
 the radius and are from four to eight in
 it 8 inches long; the central rib marked with a
 litudinal groove throughout its whole length
 oppositely pinnate about 3/4th of the length
 with from the bottom and thence alter
 all terminating in a simple undi
 culate leaflet. the leaflets are obli
 quely; marked on the upper s
 l groove in place of the cen
 green. near the upper extre
 mity pinnate as are also
 grapes of this neighbor





UC Irvine Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement

The UC Irvine Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement recognizes that most organizations have limited time and resources to devote to improving their programs. The model, therefore, focuses on the tools that research has shown lead most efficiently and assuredly to improved enterprise performance.

Principles

To effectively change the patterns of a bureaucracy, the dynamic of values, expectations, rewards, disincentives, and belief systems that perpetuate the administrative culture of the institution must be altered. The UC Irvine (UCI) model incorporates explicit normative expectations and principles focused on:

- Teamwork—increasingly necessary as organizations become less hierarchical and more networked.
- Simplification—to create explicit counter-pressure against inherent tendencies of bureaucracies to add layers of complexity.
- Effectiveness—quality criteria centered around accountability and performance values.

These principles are intentionally crafted to challenge values and status quo behaviors that have become comfortable. They are promulgated in a number of ways, for example, taught in workshops, folded into performance evaluations, incorporated into stated goals, rewarded through incentive compensation, and embodied in guidelines posted in the workplace. Systems, policies, or practices that run counter to these principles are changed or dismantled.

Workplace Patterns

The UCI model envisions a work environment rooted in shared values characterized by workplace patterns that can be expressed as simple, measurable performance expectations:

1. People who seek better methods are respected and rewarded.
2. People experience a climate of mutual respect in the workplace.

3. Groups value member suggestions, including ones that are initially “wrong.”
4. Co-workers produce ideas that help solve problems when they surface.
5. Problems with the way the group does its work are faced and addressed.
6. Members can criticize the way the work group functions without penalty.
7. People can discuss problems without fear of looking stupid to co-workers.
8. Interpersonal conflicts are addressed and resolved in the work group.
9. Differences of opinion about how to get the job done are discussed openly and resolved using facts.
10. Everyone shares responsibility for the results of group tasks (not just the supervisor or a few key participants).

The Effect of Management Behaviors

While the workplace patterns outlined above were considered inherently worthwhile, it was important to discover whether they were influenced by management behaviors and whether they yielded improved organizational performance. To research this question, employees across the entire administrative services organization at UCI were surveyed to evaluate their supervisors and work groups in terms of the patterns and values considered normative in the Irvine Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement. Analysis of survey responses revealed strong correlations between key supervisory behaviors and organizational effectiveness. Further statistical analysis suggested a multi-stage causal model as shown in Figure 1 on the next page.

This model's simplicity may lead to underestimation of its significance. Its interpretation, too, is straightforward: the primary effect of supervisory behaviors is on workplace respect, which enables workplace cooperation, which then yields organizational performance.

The model demonstrates the foundational role of supervision in enabling teamwork and collaboration, since certain supervisory behaviors are essential to fostering workplace respect—the necessary precursor to patterns of workplace cooperation.

“ the primary effect of supervisory behaviors is on workplace respect ”

Results of the third iteration, or refinement, of the employee survey reveal that as few as twenty key management behaviors may provide a strong prediction of workplace respect.

The tight statistical correlations linking supervisor behaviors, workplace respect, and workplace cooperation suggest that employees view these variables as part of a coherent experience. Consistency and coherence are essential attributes of any model that aims to change an administrative culture. When people sense even the slightest inconsistency in the new rules of the game, they retreat to the safety of status quo behaviors. Coherence calls for a complete, fully integrated set of goals, foundations, and tools that together strike a balance between technical and behavioral dimensions. The behavioral foundations stressed in this model balance and support, rather than supplant, the technical features of a management change model. That balance is critical to stimulating sustainable change.

Are Effective Management Behaviors Innate or Learned?

The evidence from UCI's experience in operationalizing this model suggests that the key supervisory behaviors are not inborn, but can be learned. Employee survey results

provided supervisors with data concerning how they were perceived with respect to the key behaviors. With the help of management consultants, supervisors were able to show significant improvement across all measured behaviors, suggesting that these behaviors—including the ones that seem more like traits than acquired skills—can be codified, measured, and learned.

Conclusion

Truly sustainable change requires an empirically validated model that is:

- balanced, with complementary behavioral and technical tools;
- consistent with the other belief and value systems of both the formal and informal organization;
- internally coherent, with no mixed messages that trigger a retreat to status quo behaviors; and
- capable of providing clear information about behaviors that can be improved through measurement and feedback.

Models that fall short of these fundamentals or that fail to engage and influence employee belief systems about what is expected, tolerated, rewarded, respected, and considered effective may stimulate positive change, but it will be short-lived.

The UCI model demonstrates that a manager can do little to directly influence workplace cooperation and outcomes. Rather, the main role of the effective manager is to excel in the behaviors that lead to workplace respect—the foundation on which desired organizational patterns and, ultimately, performance, critically depend.

Wendell Brase is vice chancellor for administrative and business services at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). UCI's Administrative and Business Services has been recognized with six national awards for process improvement, innovation, and administrative streamlining. Brase has published several articles in *Planning for Higher Education*, and was director of the Society for College and University Planning.

Figure 1

Management Effectiveness Model



N ≅ 175

