

# Get your employees to become masters of self-directed change

 By [Lia Marus](#)

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We have a lot of lost potential in our organisations. It is believed that if you direct focus at elements such as your company's strategy, structures, products, processes and systems, you will be able to achieve the results you want in your organisation.

However, says Helene Vermaak, clinical psychologist, co-owner and principal consultant of The Human Edge, this couldn't be further from the truth. A lot of what happens in organisations and teams happens below the surface.

The majority of energy in your organisation and team is drained when your people aren't engaged and being responsible for the work that they do.

To uncover the source of the energy drain and why your people aren't engaged with your organisation, you must seriously look at the culture of your organisation and identify what factors are causing your employees' lack of interest in their work.

As a starting point, Helene believes that there are four competencies you need to encourage your employees to build before you can expect them to change their current behaviours and become a cohesive team:

1. At a personal level, all your employees need to be engaged in self-directed change. They need to be asking themselves questions such as:

- Do I have the ability to understand my behaviour?
- Do I have the ability to know what change plan I need to put in place to alter whatever vital behaviours I need to enforce in my life?

2. At an interpersonal level, if you do not have open and honest conversations in your team and organisation, your long-term results will be affected.

3. At a team level, you need to be competent around accountability.

"In the last probably 12-18 months, all the organisations we have spoken to have said that accountability is a big challenge for them," says Helene.

4. At an organisational level, we need to become competent in influencing people's behaviour.

Are there people out there who want to change something in their lives?

Vital Smarts conducted a survey to find out how many people had tried to change something in their lives. Five thousand people responded saying that they had experienced change in their lives. When the researchers followed up on their stories, they found that 4,400 of the 5,000 had tried to change but failed, while only 600 were successful. These 600 stories had a number of things in common:

1. They started off knowing that they wanted to change.
2. These 600 people were able to identify crucial moments in their lives, i.e. moments when they knew that if they "got it right" their results would be hugely positive.
3. These individuals were also able to see how sources of influence were working for/against them.
4. The 600 people who had success had developed a complete change plan for their lives.

## Escape the willpower trap

We all have some bad habits that we're trying to get rid of. However, many of us don't succeed because we can't control our behaviour itself; we can only control what influences us to behave how we do.

So how can we escape the willpower trap?

Get your employees to learn these three steps to changing any habit

1. Identify what is influencing the bad behaviours.
2. Learn how to remove those things that motivate and enable bad behaviours.
3. Determine what will motivate and enable you to create a new behaviour.

You need to have a plan in place, accomplices and friends to help you overcome these forces which influence your behaviour. These are very strong which means that you can't do it alone - you need help!

## ABOUT LIA MARUS

Lia Marus is the editor of HR Pulse, which is an online HR publication published by ITWeb. She has a BA in French, Italian and Linguistics from UCT, an MA in translation from Wits and a Postgraduate Diploma in Management from the Wits Business School. She is currently studying towards her LLB through Unisa.

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