



## Changing Behavior Just telling them to do it doesn't work

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As seen in  
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Services



Wouldn't it be nice if you could tell reps to change their behavior, and they would just do it?  
Picture yourself now, saying:

"Mark, please increase your prospecting by 50%."

"Sally, I'd like you to consistently recommend multiple products."

"Joe, your servicing time is much too high. Starting tomorrow, decrease it by three hours per day and spend that time prospecting."

As you know, those directions don't work. And yet they're actions similar to what you probably want and need your reps to take. How do you get them there? Shout it from the rafters every day? Install aromatherapy? Threaten torture?

The real issue in these three examples is behavioral change. Since all of us work on changing our behavior in some way, we know it can be difficult. For reps in the field, it's even more challenging because of the demands of their jobs, the market and competition, the number of products they need to know and the habits they've developed.

That last item --- habit --- is the most difficult challenge to overcome, but usually it's the only one you can change. Notice I said you can change. Yes, it's the reps' habits that are modified, but I assure you it won't happen if you don't initiate it.

You need to take ongoing action if you want change. Yes, I know, you don't have time. But investing in behavioral change pays big rewards later, both in revenue and your time.

I've identified three steps that will either guarantee improvement or demonstrate which of your reps are mismatched for your changing requirements.

First, make sure they know how to do what you're requesting. I'm not talking about slapping them into another training class. It requires that you dig into the issue identified. Ask questions, observe, help and teach. Relating back to our questions above:

- Does Mark know specifically what to say when prospecting? Does he have enough leads or know how to get them? Does he have a plan?

- Does Sally know how to ask enough questions to recommend a multiple-product solution? Does she understand how your products fit different marketing needs?
- Why is Joe spending so much time servicing? Where is he wasting time or effort? What is he doing that he wouldn't need to do?

Once you've addressed the issue, the second step is to instill the new behavior through practice and follow-up. Don't just tell them to practice, stay for practice! Last month I discussed role-playing, and that's one method. Another is for you to demonstrate the skill with a real prospect. Another is to observe reps multiple times, for that one purpose, until you know they can easily do what you are asking.

Make sure you've replaced an old habit with a new one, like Pavlov's dog salivating when the bell rang. Yes, we humans learn change the same way.

That brings up step number three: Reinforce positive change. Do you realize how much your reps crave your approval? Most are not merely working for the money. We all want to do a good job, and positive reinforcement is priceless. Use it liberally, but wisely.

Now that you know how to change behavior for positive results, you can eliminate your budget for loudspeakers, aromatherapy and whips. You already have what you need: You!

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