

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT: A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF PRODUCTIVITY

P. TAFFINDER
C. VIEDGE

School of Psychology
University of the Witwatersrand

ABSTRACT

Organizational Behaviour Management (OBM) represents a new perspective on productivity. In place of addressing "attitudes and motivational drives", OBM concentrates on the control of on-task behaviour. The 3-term contingency of antecedent, behaviour and consequence, or the functional analysis of behaviour as it is known in OBM, provides a delineation of how behaviour is evoked and what maintains or reinforces it. This orientation to productivity requires that the manager establish a contingent relationship between on-task behaviour and reinforcing consequence. The reinforcing consequences may be social as well as financial. The effectiveness of OBM resides in its focus on the essential element of human productivity namely, directed behaviour.

OPSOMMING

Bestuur van Organisasiegerigte Gedrag (BOG) of Organisasiegedrag (OBG) verteenwoordig 'n nuwe uitkyk op die konsep van produktiwiteit daar dit nie soseer op "houdings" of "motiveringsdrange" konsentreer nie as op die beheer van taakgerigte gedrag. Die kontingensie van antesedent-gedrag-gevolg, of die funksionele analise van gedrag soos wat dit bekend staan in BOG, bied 'n uiteensetting van hoe gedrag ontstaan en hoe dit versterk of voortgesit word. Hierdie benadering tot produktiwiteit vereis van die bestuur om 'n kontingente verhouding te skep tussen taakgerigte gedrag en versterkende gevolge. Hierdie gevolge mag van sosiale of finansiële aard wees. Die doeltreffendheid van BOG berus op die sentrale veronderstelling dat gedrag ordelik is en op die fokus wat dit plaas op die kritieke element van menslike produktiwiteit, naamlik gerigte gedrag.

Organisational Behaviour Management is a pragmatic endeavour, attempting to enhance organisational effectiveness through performance improvement amongst workers and managers. A consensus definition established by Frederiksen and Lovett (1980, p. 196) characterises Organisational Behaviour Management (OBM) as "the application of principles of behavioural psychology and the methodologies of behaviour modification/applied behaviour analysis to the study and control of individual or group behaviour within organisational settings."

The focus of OBM is broad and can include businesses, industries, schools, hospitals, and other organisations. In the same way, the issues addressed are diverse, drawing on any behaviour that affects productivity or satisfaction in the work environment.

Conceptually and technologically, OBM is based within the paradigm of operant psychology whose primary datum is the observable behaviour of the individual. Finally, the distinguishing characteristic of OBM is the experimental methodology employed, utilizing response specification, ongoing behaviour assessment, and within-group performance comparison.

The functional analysis

The operant conditioning perspective of Skinner (1953; 1974) describes several principles which explain the behaviour of the human organism in terms of environmental antecedent conditions, the behaviour itself, and the consequences of such behaviour. This functional analysis is referred to as the 3-term contingency (Skinner, 1974):

ANTECEDENT—→BEHAVIOUR—→CONSEQUENCE

Behaviour, in this analysis, is a function of its consequences. An antecedent stimulus sets the occasion for behaviour to occur. Behaviour that has reinforcing consequences will show an increase in the probability of recurrence; behaviour that has no consequence or a punishing consequence will tend to decrease in probability of recurrence.

The 3-term contingency of antecedents, behaviours, and consequences provides a delineation of how behaviour is evoked and what maintains or reinforces it.

Whether they know it or not, managers are using and responding to laws of human behaviour (Brown, 1982). The problem is that managers all too frequently rely on inefficient application of the principles. The manager is a behaviour change agent, and to be effective he must be responsible for modifying undesirable behaviour and encouraging effective performance (Scott and Podsakoff, 1982). In line with the Organisational Behaviour Management approach, Deurr points out (1974, 0. 893): "It is not the function of the manager to pass value judgements on whether or not those with whom he deals have "proper" attitudes. His function is to see that his behaviour, and those aspects of his company's system over which he has control, give people a positive incentive to do what is desired."

This new orientation of management requires a bias towards action and action skills. The technology of Organisational Behaviour Management provides these skills in the form of the functional analysis and several basic principles for managing behaviour.

Reinforcement

Essentially, operant psychology holds that any behaviour that has the consequence of reinforcement will show an increased probability of recurring. As Barling (1983) correctly points out,

ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

ANTECEDENT	BEHAVIOUR	CONSEQUENCE
Feeling tired; see cup	Make coffee	Pleasant conversation with co-workers
Production target (goal)	Packing cartons (with specified performance standards)	Peer-group encouragement to perform at certain level; Avoidance of being fired.
Urgent report	Subordinate writes report within required time for management meeting	Manager thanks subordinate

the concept of reinforcement is in practice defined in terms of its effects: only if the probability of behaviour recurring increases, has reinforcement occurred. Additionally, it is necessary that a contingent relationship between the behaviour and the reinforcement be established. Reinforcement should only be implemented subsequent to a desirable response.

Reinforcement may be categorised into positive and negative reinforcement. The former, positive reinforcement, is the process of enhancing the reappearance of specific behaviour by conditionally linking a favourable consequence to the behaviour. In contrast, negative reinforcement is the process of enhancing the reappearance of specific behaviour by conditionally terminating an unpleasant event (Kreitner, 1982). Commonly, there are misconceptions about the nature of negative reinforcement. It must be noted that a negative reinforcer will strengthen the probability of any behaviour that reduces or terminates that reinforcer. Both positive and negative reinforcement, therefore, operate to *increase* the frequency of behaviour.

Extinction

Extinction is the process of reducing or terminating specific behaviour by discontinuing delivery of a reinforcer after occurrence of a response.

Punishment

The process of discouraging the appearance of certain behaviour, whereby an undesirable consequence is conditionally presented or something of value (i.e., a reinforcer) is conditionally withdrawn, is termed punishment.

While immediately effective, punishment effects are shortlived and behaviour usually returns to its previous level of emission.

Moreover, punishment tends to result in dysfunctional side effects due to its inherently coercive nature (Luthans and Kreitner, 1975). It is rarely, if ever, employed in OBM interventions.

Shaping

Shaping is a technique in which the criterion for reinforcement is raised in small successive approximations to more complex forms of behaviour, until eventually only the desired behaviour is reinforced. Peters and Waterman (1982), in their widely acclaimed work, *In Search of Excellence*, refer to this technique as "chunking" and describe it as "breaking things up to facilitate organisational fluidity and to encourage action" (p. 126).

Research Support

Applications of these principles in controlled experimental environments (e.g., schools, psychiatric institutions) have been performed with great success (see for example, Bandura, 1969; 1977; Kazdin, 1978). In response to these studies, interest was stimulated amongst industrial psychologists concerning theory, terminology, field applications and reviews (e.g. Joblansky and De Vries, 1972; Mawhinney, 1975; Latham, Wexley and Pursell, 1975; and Schneier, 1974).

The diversity of OBM applications is reflected in studies on absenteeism (Kempen and Hall, 1979), productivity (Brand, Staelin, O'Brien and Dickinson, 1982), organisation development (Abernathy, Duffy and O'Brien, 1982) self-management (Gaetani, Johnson and Austin, 1983), preventive maintenance (Komaki and Collins, 1982), training and management development (Feeney, 1981; Warren, 1982).

Furthermore, the *Journal of Organisational Behaviour Management* and two handbooks, *Industrial Behaviour Modification: A Management Handbook* (O'Brien, Dickinson, and Rosow, 1982) and the *Handbook of Organisational Behaviour Management* (Fredericksen, 1982) have stimulated a wider appreciation of the theory and technology of OBM.

In South Africa, the recent applications of OBM in the industrial field have been discussed by Barling (1983) and success has been reported in such areas as the effects of different pay

schedules on work performance (Saad and Barling, 1977) and behaviour modelling (Sorcher and Spence, 1982). Indeed, Gardner (1976) has indicated that behaviour modification (OBM), out of all methods available for changing behaviour, is the strategy least affected by culture.

The advantage of OBM is that it offers all personnel a powerful technology for managing behaviour. This may be particularly important in South African where the culture gap between employees of different races hinders communication. The technology of OBM, and the delineation of a functional analysis of work, serve to elaborate the contingent relationship between work behaviour and organisational consequences such as peer approval, bonuses, praise, personal time off with pay, job rotation, etc. On the other hand, ambiguity about work demands and eventual outcomes exacerbates work performance deficits.

In addition, the rising power of the trade union movements in South Africa requires management to recognize and act upon the contingent relationship between performance and results.

Labour negotiations will necessitate that management have a clear understanding of how they are prepared to make workers' demands (reinforcers) contingent upon specific work behaviour (i.e., increased production). Unfortunately, the situation is often misrepresented as follows:

ANTECEDENT	BEHAVIOUR	CONSEQUENCE
Production target	Cartons packed	Workers receive an increase in non-contingent wages

The result is that *any* behaviour during the course of the month (including *lower* performance levels) is reinforced.

Correctly assessed in terms of the functional analysis, the *quid pro quo* would be:

ANTECEDENT	BEHAVIOUR	CONSEQUENCE
Increased production target	Cartons packed (with specified performance standards)	Contingent group bonus for additional cartons packed according to performance standards

Reinforcers, of course need not be financial. Brown (1982) has identified three categories of potential reinforcers: social reinforcers (i.e., people-to-people rewards such as smiles, recognition, feedback on performance etc.); activity reinforcers (i.e., preferred tasks or desirable assignments); and tangible reinforcers (i.e. money, awards, promotion, uniforms, commendations by letter, tie-pins, wall plaques, etc.).

These kinds of "rewards" are indeed nothing new. But a functional analysis stresses the *contingent* presentation of a reinforcer upon desirable behaviour. A bonus for high levels of performance awarded at the end of the month simply reinforces any behaviour immediately preceding it. It does not reinforce the on-task performance at work.

CONCLUSION

A panacea for organisational ills may seem improbable and indeed past experience reinforces this contention, but all too often the failure of such a universal remedy can be traced to its contamination by an eclectic dilution of the technology.

Effective managed performance is dissipated by neglecting to contingently couple on-task behaviour to potential organisational reinforcers.

The effectiveness of Organisational Behaviour Management resides in its central premise that behaviour is lawful. The powerful technology of OBM demands systematic and integrated application in order to yield its full potential. Correctly utilized, Organisational Behaviour Management provides the focus on *directed behaviour* – that is, the *sine qua non* of human productivity.

REFERENCES

Albernathy, W.B., Duffy, E.M. & O'Brien, R.M. Multi-branch, multi-systems programs in banking: An organization wide intervention. In R.M. O'Brien, A.M. Dickinson, and M.P. Rosow (Eds.), *Industrial behavior modification: A management handbook*. New York : Pergamon, 1982.

Bandura, A. *Principles of behaviour modification*. New York : Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969.

Bandura, A. *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Barling, J. Work motivation. In J. Barling (Ed.) *Behaviour in organisations: South African perspectives*. Johannesburg : McGraw-Hill, 1983.

Brand, D.D., Staelin, J.R., O'Brien, R.M. & Dickinson, A.M. Improving white-collar productivity at HUD. In R.M. O'Brien, A.M. Dickinson and M.P. Rosow (Eds.), *Industrial behaviour modification: A management handbook*. New York : Pergamon, 1982

Brown, P.L. *Managing behavior on the job*. New York : Wiley, 1982.

Deurr, E.C. The effect of misdirected incentives on employee behaviour. *Personnel Journal*, 1974, 53, 890-893.

Feeney, E.J. Beat the high cost of training through LCI. *Training and Development Journal*, 1981, 35(9), 41-43.

Fredericksen, L.W. (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior management*. New York : Wiley, 1982.

Frederiksen, L.W. Coming of age. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, 1983, 5(2), 1-3.

Frederiksen, L.W. & Lovett, S.B. Inside organizational behaviour management: Perspectives on an emerging field. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour Management*. 1981, 2, 193-203.

Gaetani, J.J. Johnson, C.M. & Austin, J.T. Self-management by an owner of a small business: reduction of tardiness. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour Management*, 1983, 5(1), 31-39.

Gardner, J.M. Cross-cultural diffusion of behaviour modification. In P. Sheehan and K. White (Eds.), *Behaviour modification in Australia*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1976.

Joblansky, S.F. & De Vries, D.L. Operant conditioning principles extrapolated to the theory of management. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 1972, 7, 340-358.

Kazdin, A.E. *History of behavior modification*. Baltimore: University Park Press, 1978.

Kempen, R.W. & Hall, R.V. Reduction of industrial absenteeism: Results of a behavioral approach. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, 1977, 1, 1-21.

Komaki, J. & Collins, R.L. Motivation of preventive maintenance performance. In R.M. O'Brien, A.M. Dickinson and M.P. Rosow (Eds.), *Industrial behavior modification: A management handbook* New York: Pergamon, 1982.

Kreitner, R. Controversy in OBM: History, misconceptions and ethics. In L.W. Fredericksen (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior management*. New York: Wiley, 1982.

Latham, G.P., Wexley, K.N. & Pursell, E.D. Training managers to minimize rating errors in the observation of behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1975, 60 (5), 550-555.

ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

- Luthans, F. & Kreitner, R. *Organizational behavior modification*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott Forsman, 1975.
- O'Brien, R.M., Dickinson, A.M. & Rosow, M.P. (Eds.) *Industrial behavior modification: A management handbook*. New York: Pergamon, 1982.
- Mawhinney, T.C. Operant terms and concepts in the description of individual work behavior: Some problems of interpretation, application and evaluation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1975, 60(6), 704-712.
- Peters, T.J. & Waterman, R.H. *In search of excellence*. New York : Warner, 1982.
- Saad, L.J. & Barling, J. Relating pay incentives to work performance: the effects of fixed ratio (group and individual contingent) versus fixed interval reinforcement in industry. *Psychologia Africana*, 1977, 17, 135-142.
- Schneier, C.E. Behavior modification in management: A review and critique. *Academy of Management Journal*, 1974, 17, 528-548.
- Scott, W.E. & Podsakoff, P.M. Leadership, supervision, and behavioral control: Perspectives from an experimental analysis. In L.W. Frederiksen (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior management*. New York: Wiley, 1982.
- Skinner, B.F. *Science and human behaviour*. New York: Macmillan, 1953.
- Skinner, B.F. *About behaviourism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- Sorcher, M., Spence, R. Behaviour modeling as a social technology in South Africa, *Personnel Psychology*, 1982, 83, 557-581.
- Warren, M.W. Frederiksen (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior management*. New York: Wiley, 1982.