

**BART DE BONDT**

**A BIBLE FOR  
SUCCESSFUL  
CHANGE BEHAVIOUR  
IN YOURSELF AND  
OTHERS**

**@WORK**

This book was originally published as Change@WORK,  
LannooCampus Publishers (2016).

**D/2016/45/589 – ISBN 978 94 014 4271 8 – NUR 808**

Cover and interior design: Gert Degrande | De Witlofcompagnie

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**LannooCampus Publishers**

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## **ABOUT THIS BOOK**

‘Everyone is aware of the importance of transformation in our rapidly changing world. But how can you achieve successful transformation in your company? What we often forget is that transformation goes hand in hand with behavioural change. If you are unable to anchor the new behaviour you desire in both yourself and your staff, there is a high risk that your transformation will fail. That is the subject of this pocket book by Bart De Bondt. He offers you a practical guide to changing your own and other people’s behaviour. Using a simple model and a series of tips, Bart will explain how attitudes can be altered, including a personal change plan that you can fill in yourself. It is an easy-to-follow book that every leader who is concerned about successful change must have read.’

*Dominique Leroy*

CEO Proximus

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**INCLUDING  
PERSONAL  
CHANGE PLAN**

**p. 88**



# 1

## WHY SHOULD YOU READ THIS BOOK?

We want  
to change our  
behaviour, but  
can we really  
do it?

I have often tried to change a certain type  
of behaviour in myself (or in my staff),  
but it has never really worked.



Great, it's good that you realize this. It also means  
that this book will be a great help to you,  
because it will teach you all the steps you need to  
take if you want to transform your intentions  
into realities. The book is based on many years of  
practical experience and an understanding of the  
most important insights from change psychology.

This book might justifiably be called ‘the bible for behavioural change’, since it tackles the following problems:

- Many people try to change things in themselves, but fail.
- Companies spend a fortune on the staff training, but the return on investment is disappointingly low.

Why does this happen? Do we not really want to change? Yes, of course we do! Although the majority of us tend to feel most comfortable with things that are familiar, this does not mean that we are not open to new challenges - and that means change! But when this change relates to our own behaviour - in other words, when we need to replace our existing automatic behaviour with something new - everything suddenly becomes much more difficult. It is almost as if you want to try and change the route followed by a cart that has been driven over the same track in the same field for many years. Over time, the cart has made deep ruts in the grass in which it can ride easily, perhaps even without the driver needing to pay too much attention. Getting the cart out of those deep ruts and onto the fresh new grass is by no means easy!



This book is a highly practical guide that will show you how to leave behind those old ‘ruts’ - your habits of the past - and how to find new paths that will lead to bigger and better things in the future. It will be useful to you as an individual, if you want to change something in yourself but have so far been unable to do so. But it is also worth reading for managers who want to gain greater insight into the best way to achieve successful change in the behaviour of their staff.

Managers often fail to fully appreciate the importance of behavioural change in their employees. As a manager I was regularly confronted with change processes. Sometimes this involved mergers between different companies; sometimes it involved the need to ‘sell’ new activities, such as the start of a new production line, changes in IT systems, etc. Whatever the reasons for change, we always approached the process in the same thorough and competent way: we analyzed all the elements that in our opinion were ‘in scope’ and drew up a detailed plan to address each of these elements one by one. The result was a long list of actions, deadlines and new responsibilities. But when I now look back on this highly structured approach, perhaps with the benefit of hindsight and a more critical eye, what strikes me most

is how we would hardly ever talk about the ‘behaviour’ of staff, even though this is a factor of fundamental importance in any change environment!

What’s more, it is a phenomenon that I still regularly see in my present job as a consultant. For example, if we at teamdebondt map out a happiness@work trajectory within a company and then discuss the results of the happiness@work survey with the managers and their teams, this usually produces a list of ten or so actions that can make people on the shop floor happier. But even then the actual behaviour of the employees is seldom mentioned. It seems to me that this is something people just don’t think about. Or perhaps managers still fail to realize that the behaviour of their staff is one of the most fundamental aspects of their company’s activities at all levels. It is the foundation on which everything else is built. What is the point of organizing more consultation between teams if you know in advance that the leader of a particular team is going to adopt a highly defensive attitude the moment anything even remotely critical is raised? If that person does not change his or her behaviour, additional consultation meetings between teams will achieve precisely nothing. In fact, they will probably cause more harm than good.

Of course, I am now touching on a theme that is much broader than the more limited ambitions I have for this 'bible'. Suffice to say that if you want to successfully change behaviour within your company, it is, of course, a huge benefit if there is a high degree of mutual trust between and within the individual teams. It is the only way you can be sure that people will have the courage to talk openly, without fear.

In a company where vulnerability and trust exist between people, conflict is not a dirty word and colleagues talk with each other about their behaviour in a transparent way. This is crucial for bringing into clear focus exactly what needs to be changed. In an open and trusting atmosphere, we act as each other's mirrors, helping people to see their own blind spots and thereby increasing the opportunities for positive growth. However, the best way to develop this kind of open culture is not the subject of this book, either (perhaps the next one). Instead, this book concentrates on how you can successfully change your old, existing behaviour and replace it with the new behaviour you want.

The final chapter of the book is a blank personal change plan that will help you to bring into practice all the

different steps you will read about in the following pages. The idea is for you to fill in this plan, so that it can support you in your efforts to transform your intentions into realities. I wish you every success!

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People who are reading this book for their individual development rather than as a manager can go straight to chapter 3.

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## 2

### HOW CAN YOUR OWN BEHAVIOUR HELP YOUR STAFF TO CHANGE SUCCESSFULLY?

Criticism is not  
a threat; in fact,  
it can help you to  
grow

The behaviour of a company's staff is one of the most important success factors for achieving good organizational results. This is a fact that is all too often forgotten in practice. Just check how much of your training budget is spent on *hard skills* and how much on *soft skills*.

As a manager, you are probably not fully aware just how strong an impact your own behaviour can have on the behaviour of the people who work for you. Researchers

have discovered that the behaviour of leaders is frequently copied - often unconsciously - by their followers. We also now know that the working of the human brain is plastic, so that our work environment - and therefore our managers - have a significant influence on the creation of patterns and connections inside our head.

Neurological science has identified four separate areas on which managers should consciously focus if they want to achieve successful behavioural change with their staff. These four areas are:

### **SAFETY**

A human being receives about 50,000 sensory impulses every second, 5,000 of which are given access by the brain to our working memory. The brain gives priority to so-called 'survival signals'. This means that 'safety' and safety-related matters play an important role in the internal guidance of people. For example, if an employee suspects that he is working in a judgmental culture, he will soon make sure that he says or does nothing wrong.

It is therefore important for leaders and managers to devote sufficient attention to their 'cultural' environment

and the way they organize it. If you are in a conversation with someone, make sure that the telephone is on hold. Have you offered them a coffee? Have you arranged the room (chairs, lighting, etc.) so that your conversation partner will feel at ease? Have you tried to create a good emotional atmosphere? Laughing can help ease tension. Compliments help, too. Once you are satisfied that you have made the setting as reassuring as possible, you can start with your coaching, discussion, consultation, etc.

### **MIRROR NEURONS**

Mirror neurons are brain cells that are activated whenever we see someone else do something. They ensure that your staff will subconsciously and therefore automatically take account of your behaviour as a manager. This is a huge opportunity, since it makes it possible for you to exercise influence over your team simply by setting a good example. Being consistent in what you say and what you do is crucial. If you say one thing and do another, problems and confusion are certain to arise.

### **THINKING PREFERENCES**

Some people have a *fixed mindset*, while others have a *growth mindset*. Someone with a fixed mindset assumes that intelligence is immutable. This makes him appear

clever. He avoids new challenges, since this might lead him to make a mistake. His priorities are scoring (easy) successes, seeming to be smart, being accepted and feeling like a winner. His biggest fears are failure, looking stupid, being rejected and feeling like a loser. When confronted with obstacles, his behaviour is defensive and he quickly gives up. He sees the success of others as a threat. However, the result of this static mindset is that he fails to develop and achieves less than his full potential.

Someone with a growth mindset assumes that he can develop his skills, if only he makes the necessary effort. This means that he is keen to learn new things. He is also happy to accept new challenges and does not give up if the going gets tough. Perseverance, he believes, is the pathway to mastery. He seeks to learn from criticism and is inspired by the successes of others. The result of this mindset is that he continually moves up to the next level. Research has demonstrated that growth organizations with an innovative approach are generally run by managers with a growth mindset. An opposite effect has also been identified: people will fail to make further efforts if their leaders show that they no longer believe in their future development as individuals.



## **CELEBRATE SUCCESS!**

If you regularly give compliments as a manager, you stimulate the release of dopamine in the brains of your staff. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that makes it easier for people to pick things up and encourages them to take more risks, which can only work to the benefit of the innovation levels in your organization. Dopamine also helps us to feel safer.

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As a manager, you can benefit considerably from applying your knowledge of the brain with regard to safety, mirror neurons, thinking preferences and the celebration of success. What's more, this only requires minimal extra effort on your part.

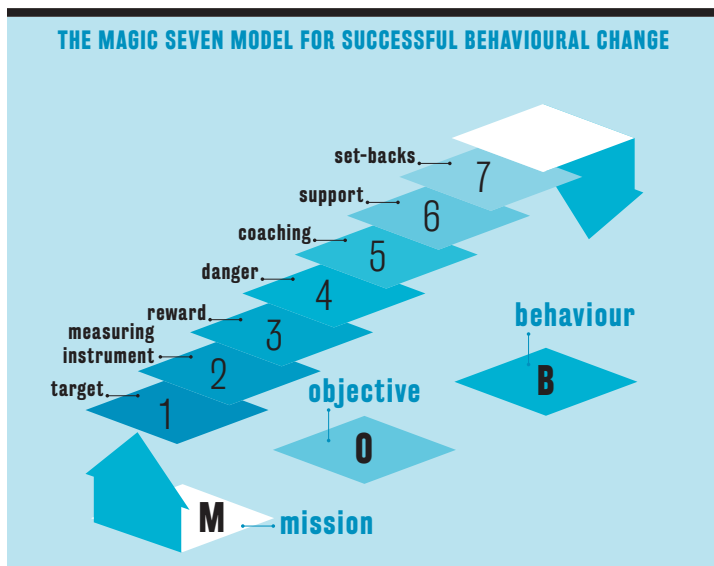
Your exemplary behaviour determines whether or not your staff will grow. As a manager, setting a good example is therefore of fundamental importance for successfully changing behaviour within your team.

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In the following chapters, we will run through all the different phases of successful behavioural change. We will do this using the model developed by teamdebondt, which we have named *The Magic Seven*. The model

contains all the steps necessary to ensure that your behavioural change trajectory will be a successful one.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the seven key building blocks. You need to work through these blocks one by one, once you have made concrete decisions about the nature of the new behaviour you desire. Each of the building blocks is described clearly and concisely, so that you can easily make a start with your change process once you reach chapter 13.



# 3

## WHAT IS YOUR MISSION?

How can  
you lead or  
manage people  
if you don't know  
who you really  
are?

Of course, it is impossible to set a good example for others if you have still not decided what you actually stand for yourself. Before you can start thinking about leading others, you first need to answer the questions:

**‘Who am I?’**

**‘Why am I here?’**

(Also see the first rung in my book *De ladder van leiderschap*.)

If you are not capable of answering these questions in a few inspiring sentences, how on earth do you expect

to guide yourself through life, never mind give guidance to others? If you don't have concrete answers, you just blow wherever the wind takes you. How can you ever hope to inspire and direct people, if you don't even have a compass to show them the right way? A compass that will help you to check at every step whether or not everything you do and everything you say is consistent. Let me be very clear about this: the right answer to these questions is not: 'I am x, I studied y, I have z children...' No, a good answer sums up in a few clear and motivating sentences exactly who you are and what you believe in. It might sound like this:

'I am a social and empathic person who wishes to put all his abilities at the service of others in the most effective way possible, so that they can discover and develop their potential to the full, allowing them to appreciate and cherish the beauty of who they are, while finding the strength to give authentic shape and form to their values, beliefs and desires.'

Does this sound a bit 'pie-in-the-sky', perhaps a touch too 'fanciful'? If so, read the sentences again - because they are nothing of the kind. Look at every word in this answer and imagine that you could say them when talk-