

Behavioral Homeostasis

Success Culture™ Beliefs & Models

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concept

Behavioral homeostasis

[n.] the ability or tendency of a system to maintain an equilibrium by adjusting its responses to the environment.

A thermostat exhibits the quality of homeostasis—when the room temperature rises above a set point, the thermostat activates the air conditioner; when the temperature falls below the set point, it activates the heater. A characteristic of this system is that it *resists* changes in the temperature of the room, and expends energy in the process.

However, when it encounters a novel environment or situation, it has no inherent capacity to innovate—it will continue to execute its pre-determined set of tactics to the best of its ability regardless of the result. If a window is open and it is wintertime, the room will get colder and colder. This is characteristic of all automatic systems, including unconscious elements of Culture.

Individual and group beliefs and behaviors may also exhibit homeostasis. A sales team may consistently complete the same number of cold calls each week, despite external efforts to shift to a higher number. The sales team has a set point for cold-call production, and the team collectively and unconsciously *resists* deviations from the set point.

Depending on the nature and location of the set point, the automatic behavior may serve the organization, or impede it in some way.

Role of resistance in identifying Culture

Homeostatic set points are a powerful tool for identifying unconscious elements of Culture. They exist wherever behavior appears to resist an attempted change. This is what accounts for the mysterious tendency of behaviors to persist, despite intense conscious efforts to change them. Until the entire confluence of beliefs have been unearthed and inspected, I cannot begin to consistently affect the set point.

Until a set point is understood, leadership can waste energy attempting to change automatic behaviors associated with it. Set points are a part of Culture, a part of the Value system, usually unconscious. They can be “re-programmed” just as other elements of Culture can.

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Using behavioral homeostasis to support “golden habits”

Once an automatic behavior pattern has been identified, what are the available opportunities? What can I do?

An unconscious behavioral set point is an automatic choice made in response to a set of environmental stimuli. The first opportunity is to assess how that automatic choice has served me, pro and con. If the “cons” dominate, there may be painful judgments associated with the behavioral pattern that can be cleared and healed.

Then I may wish to consider alternate possible choices—choices that I sense will serve me better, so that the “pros” dominate. Once I settle on a new choice, I can begin to use conscious willpower to assist me in practicing the new behavior.

In this way I can establish a new and different homeostatic set point, which now can support me as a “golden habit.”

Summary

Unconscious learning tends to set up homeostatic set points for behaviors. Resistance often appears when I challenge or stress a behavioral set point. This resistance helps to identify the location and nature of the set point.

Once identified, a set point can be re-programmed by consistently practicing a new behavior, so as to create a golden habit. This requires the intervention of conscious willpower until the golden habit establishes itself as a replacement for the old pattern. Once the golden habit is clearly established, conscious willpower may be deployed elsewhere.

REFERENCES:

Avoidance, Protection, and Resistance
Success Culture™ Glossary

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