It takes more than motivational talks, training to be successful

A motivational talk might make you temporarily thrilled, but the excitement soon fades. PHOTO | FILE

IN SUMMARY

- Cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and social psychology have revolutionised how we see human behaviour and how to achieve realistic and lasting change.
- Centonomy employs cutting-edge research on leading methods to attain personal success in various fields of personal finance, entrepreneurship, and career building for trainees.
- One needs to become disciplined to change training information into behaviour action changes.

As Kenyans, we love to attend motivational talks. We hear the personal success stories of great business leaders like Anne Mutahi, Vimal Shah, Bob Collymore, Chris Kirubi, or James Mwangi and we feel inspired to infuse their life experiences into our own personal journeys. We talk with others before and after the motivational speech and share the excitement about the probability of life change.

However, here lies the great fallacy of the motivational speaking and book industry. Sadly, motivational inspiration does not change lives. Neale Martin in his 2008 book states “it is not enough to be inspired”. It is not enough to have good happy thoughts. Cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and social psychology have revolutionised how we see human behaviour and how to achieve realistic and lasting change.

First, find quality training based on scientific principles. A motivational talk might make you temporarily thrilled, but the excitement soon fades. Instead, get trained by qualified trainers. Throughout Kenya we unfortunately host hundreds of briefcase trainers who Google random concepts and try to pass off as experts on things they only learned five minutes before a training began. Further, often times not only do such trainers lack depth of knowledge, but they also fail to link many concepts together into an intelligent scientific tapestry that allows a trainee to achieve meaningful success.

All throughout the universe, everything we see and even microscopic particles that we cannot see, are all governed by causes and effects. If someone heats water as a cause, then steam gets produced as the effect. Also the same water being placed into a freezer as a cause turns into ice as the effect. Likewise, if you cause conflict in your office by eating your coworker’s lunch, then the outcome would entail interpersonal conflict as the effect.

Social scientists have conducted thousands of studies in the past ten years that show the appropriate steps for leaders, managers, supervisors, entrepreneurs, students, and everyone in between on how to achieve success with the highest probability. So, do not fall for fake trainers without scientific knowledge. Some training content from unskilled trainers can cause business collapse or personal career meltdowns because the trainer does not understand causes and effects supported by research.

Kenya luckily holds three indigenous firms that pack powerful training utilising scientific causes that lead to desirable outcome effects. First, Centonomy employs cutting-edge research on leading methods to attain personal success in various fields of personal finance, entrepreneurship, and career building for trainees. Second, WYLDE International looks deeply into human motivation to mold strategic direction into participants. Third and fourth, Raiser Resource Group and Training Solutions incorporate innovative techniques to yield higher training retention of foreign content in our local setting.

Second, we must take personal action to retain training information. Once you identify high quality trainers, then you must actively try to remember what you learned. A study funded by McKinsey & Company found that training, in particular leadership training, saw no change in leader behaviour post-instruction. Simply attending a training will not garnish any behaviour change in you unless you interact with the material thereafter and become disciplined. The University of Waterloo shows that by the second day following a training, we already lose up to 80 per cent of the content from our memories. Our brain constantly records new salient information and stores it in temporary memory.

If we do not actively move the information to long-term storage, so to speak, we lose it almost completely. By day seven after a training, we only remember roughly 7 per cent of the content and by day 30, we only can recall between 2 per cent and 3 per cent of the training. The loss represents a colossal waste of time and resources.

Trish Varao-Sousa and Alan Kingstone and other researchers came up with methods for retaining information garnished during training. First, in the first 24 hours following training, spend ten minutes going over the content. Then a week later, spend five minutes to reactivate the material. Finally, once you reach upon the thirty day point post-instruction, then spend another two to four minutes looking over the material again. You should have permanently locked the information into your brain’s long-term memory by this juncture.

Depending on the level of engagement of the trainer, you might even have to spend even less time to lock in the knowledge. Trainers that make you laugh, feel engaged, or challenge your assumptions evoke emotions in the trainees. When trainees feel an emotion along with new information, the combination helps lock the information into long-term memory. So, good well-educated trainers can go a long way, but the participant needs to take the final steps.

Action changes

Third, one needs to become disciplined to change training information into behaviour action changes. How many times have overweight people, like this author, heard that one more piece of pizza harms their calorie intake and thus further perpetuates their weight gain? Yet, many of us still proceed to eat the pizza anyway. Alternatively, we heard an outstanding lecture, read a moving article, or watched a phenomenal TED Talk? We might have agreed with the author or speaker wholeheartedly, but we did not alter our behaviour as a result.

In order to change your life, you must change your unconscious life. Remember that an emotional connection makes a memory. As Neale Martin’s research shows, habits do not need conscious thoughts. Our prefrontal cortex where conscious thought and reasoning takes place is slow and unreliable.

In summary, follow step one and secure a good trainer. Then conduct the memory building exercises in step two above. Then become consistent in enacting the behaviour change that you desire. Once you consciously start behaving unswervingly in the new behaviour, then your unconscious mind takes over. Only then does it become a habit and it translates your training goal into actual permanent behaviour.

Share your experiences about great trainers as well as horror stories of wasted training times with other Business Daily readers through #KenyaTrainers on Twitter.

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