Organizational Transformation
A New Application of Persuasive Technology

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Persuasive technologies are designed to drive changes in people's beliefs, values and actions.

- On a mass scale, this is exactly what is required to transform entire organizations.

- Through our experiences over the past 12 years, we have developed a methodology for organizational transformation that leverages persuasive technology.

- This specialized process consists of four components, each supported by a specific area of research:
    - Set-the-Bar
    - Motivate Change
    - Sustain Change
    - Scale the Change

- Positive deviant wisdom is used to initially set the bar for the organization

- People are motivated to embrace the positive deviant wisdom by persuasive technologies that are built on the concept of fair process

- Recent advances in the neuroscience of positive visualization and affirmation, when incorporated into persuasive technologies, further motivate adoption of the change

- Neuroscience also drives long-term persuasion of individuals within the organization.

- Finally, the concept of mass customization enables each person within the organization to have a unique experience with the persuasive technology, driving quick adoption by mass numbers of people.

- Companies using this approach have seen remarkable, positive change within their organization, enabling them to generate millions in additional sales and profits

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever tried to change an entire organization?

Changing an organization can be incredibly difficult because many people must change their beliefs, values, and actions quickly and completely for an organizational transformation to occur and sustain. These types of changes are, of course, exactly what persuasive technologies are designed to drive. As far as we can tell, however, they have rarely been systematically applied to drive organizational transformations.

WHY FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS?

Continuous change is the reality for most organizations.

The private sector must change to respond to consolidated world markets, intense competition, rapidly developing technology and evolving business models, among other factors. For example, in order to survive in the highly competitive fast food industry, a company had to implement a new approach to restaurant management in its 1,400 restaurants. The new approach placed much greater emphasis on teamwork and mutual support as well as significantly modifying many operational procedures. This company had to change or it would go out of business.

> *Persuasive technology is specifically designed to change what people believe and do.*

Similarly, the public sector and non-profit organizations are constantly pressured to respond to new demands for client services, evolving patient communities, budget crises and many other factors. For instance, in order to ensure strict adherence to regulations during a time of significant budget reductions, a federal agency had to change the mindset and processes of its safety inspectors. Most organizations must continually change to survive.

In many cases these changes require the adoption of new values and beliefs and the performance of new functions by many people, sometimes numbering in the thousands of people and sometimes spread around the globe. Driving this type of profound change in such large numbers and diverse circumstances is extremely difficult. In fact, there are few examples of where such changes have been successfully implemented, at least until the recent application of persuasive technology.

PERSUASIVE TECHNOLOGIES TRANSFORM ORGANIZATIONS

Fortunately, persuasive technology can help organizations transform themselves.

Persuasive technology has been defined as technology that changes what people believe and do [9]. This definition easily applies to critical organizational transformations as well as personal change. Organizational change occurs when enough individuals change what they believe and do to actually transform the substance of the organization. The requirement for large-scale individual change as the foundation for large-scale organizational transformation provides an ideal, though relatively unexplored, application for persuasive technology.

Over the last 12 years, we have developed a methodology for organizational transformation that leverages persuasive technology to drive changes in organizations faster, more completely and more predictably than has previously been possible. More specifically, this methodology for organizational transformation consists of four components each of which is supported by a specific area of research:

- Set-the-Bar – Uses research on "positive deviance" as the foundation for a methodology for creating a comprehensive image of the outcome of the desired change.
- Motivate Change – Uses research on "fair process" and "neuroscience" to motivate people to engage intensely in the change process
- Sustain Change – Uses other research from neuroscience to guide people to sustain the change, particularly when

confronted by pressures that undermine the change
- Scale the Change – Uses "mass customization" to drive the changes to large numbers of people in widely separated locations

These components combine to create a comprehensive sustainable persuasive experience for organizations (Figure 1).
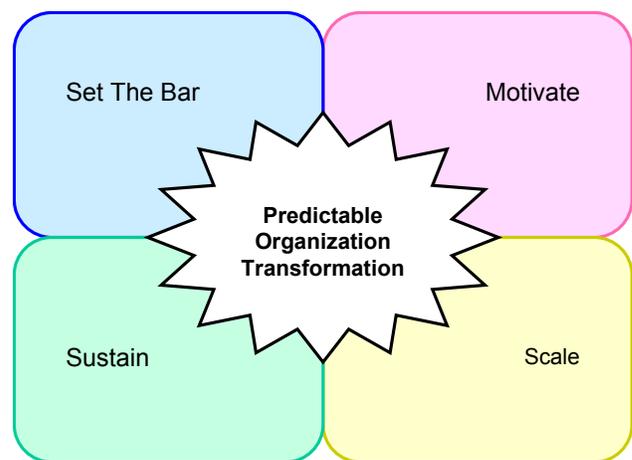

Figure 1. Four Components of Persuasive Methodology for Organizational Transformation

Setting-the bar captures the passion and processes of the positive deviants which, when presented through persuasive technology designed for fair process, creates the same response to change that people experience when using positive visualization and affirmations. Additional experiences, which are also guided by persuasive software designed for mass customization, create the repetition and focus that sustains use of the positive deviant images.

SETTING-THE-BAR WITH POSITIVE DEVIANTS

Do you need a clear image of the desired outcome of a persuasive experience to effectively guide the

experience? Of course! In order to effectively change an organization using persuasive technology, the organization must have an extremely clear, comprehensive image of the outcome of the desired change. This image must include the desired beliefs, values and commitments as well as the specific operational procedures required to execute the new functions.

How can you create such a complete image? Fortunately, there are already people in most organization who have at least some of this image. These "positive deviants" [3], are the most consistently successful and respected people in an organization. The respect they are given is the first element in creating the persuasive experience. Because they are so highly respected, people tend to respond more completely and quickly to anything they say or do.

Because they are so highly respected, people tend to quickly embrace what Positive Deviants say and do.

In addition, positive deviants display two other traits that help drive persuasion:

- They are extremely passionate about their work
- They are extremely efficient in performing their work.

Positive deviants love their work. The primary reason for their love of their work is that they are always motivated by commitment to achieving a greater social or moral objective. For example, positive deviant pharmacy managers in a large chain were passionate because they thought of themselves as helping families in distress (which was in sharp contrast to other pharmacy managers who thought of themselves as filling 120 prescriptions per day). Positive deviants generate a powerful energy, which is harnessed to stimulate a persuasive experience for others.

Positive deviants are also very good at what they do, achieving consistently superior results usually with less effort and stress. For example, restaurant managers in a fast food chain had identified the place to stand while supervising the restaurant that optimized their ability to manage the operational processes of the restaurant. In contrast, others stood in places where their management views and capabilities were restricted. Positive deviants' superior operational abilities, particularly when combined with their passion, also drive persuasion.

All of the positive deviants' "secret sauce" can be gathered using a highly efficient "Wisdom Discovery" process that requires just 6-8 people working together for 3 days. Wisdom Discovery, which is guided by a software application, while not specifically designed to be a persuasive experience, nonetheless leads participants to change their beliefs and functions very quickly [7]. However, the primary purpose of Wisdom Discovery is to create a comprehensive image of the desired outcome of a persuasive experience that others will have when they are using the persuasive technology.

MOTIVATING CHANGE – FAIR PROCESS AND NEUROSCIENCE DRIVE INITIAL PERSUASION

Can you persuade people in an organization to change if they don't want to be persuaded? Not easily! Organizations create many barriers to change such as rigid compensation structures and job descriptions. In order to be effective at transforming an organization, a persuasive technology must create sufficient motivation to overcome these barriers. The positive deviant's powerful image of the desired outcome is a good first step toward driving motivation, but it is not sufficient to create change.

Two other areas of research help solve the motivation problem: the theory of fair process and recent advances in the neuroscience of positive visualization and affirmation. The theory of fair process [2] suggests that persuasive experiences that treat people fairly and even enhance their sense of honor and dignity tend to be more effective then those that diminish people. For

The theory of fair process and recent advances in neuroscience help solve the motivation problem.

example, persuasive experiences consistent with ethical uses of persuasion are more effective than those that derive from unethical approaches [1]. By presenting the positive deviant images in screen formats that create engagement with the positive deviant passion and encourage active participation in applying these images to their own situation, users come to feel honored by the opportunity to learn and grow. The interaction with positive deviant content guided by the technology motivates users.

Furthermore, in this persuasive technology, users are guided by screen prompts to read out loud. Reading the positive deviant content out loud causes them to visualize themselves as having the same passion and commitment as the positive deviants. This stimulates neurological responses similar to those reported during positive visualization [5]. People see themselves as very successful, and, apparently, neurotransmitters are released reinforcing that feeling, so they become highly motivated to absorb the positive deviant content.

Interactions with the positive deviant content through carefully designed screens [8], can initiate a powerful, persuasive transformational experience.

SUSTAINING CHANGE – NEUROSCIENCE DRIVES LONG-TERM PERSUASION

Is initial persuasion sufficient to produce a sustained result? Unfortunately, it is not. For persuasive technology to be effective for organizational transformations it must provide a steady stream of persuasive experiences over an extended period of time. Organizational change is so difficult that single, isolated or limited experiences for individuals do not produce the desired results. Instead organizational change requires frequent exposure to highly repetitive, systematically delivered persuasive experiences for every key person in the organization.

Neuroscience again provides the direction on the type and structure of

these experiences. The most fundamental learning from neuroscience is that "neurons that fire together wire together" [6]. Persuasive technology focuses the users' attention on the new beliefs and functions by converting the efficiencies of positive deviants into a series of structured user activities that are organized in the application into a project-like schedule. This is further reinforced when the application to continuously reminds users of the importance of the content and the need to complete the practice activities. The intensity and consistency of the focus drives neurons together, creating a long-term change in people's perceptions and behaviors.

Mass customization enables the economies of scale and efficiencies required to transform an entire organization.

However, at approximately six weeks into use of the persuasive technology, users encounter a barrier that can block the transformation. At six weeks, users commonly complain that the persuasive experiences are "too hard" and that they "do not have enough time to do the work." Fortunately, this does not appear to be a meaningful response as the reaction disappears with approximately two more weeks of persuasive practice. Persuasive technology helps people through this difficult passage by providing

management with continuous progress tracking information and easy to read management summaries that enable quick, efficient management support for the change effort.

After this period, adoption of the positive deviant beliefs and capabilities is so complete that the users of the persuasive technology often deny that they were ever in the previous condition. Persuasive technology has achieved the ultimate result for the individual, a complete transformation of what they think and do.

SCALING CHANGE – USING MASS CUSTOMIZATION TO PERSUADE MANY

How do these individual transformations lead to an organizational transformation? So far, we have concentrated on how an individual changes. In order to transform an organization, enough people must go through the above transformation fast enough to create a sense of organizational momentum. Persuasive technology is critical to develop this organizational momentum, though it must be designed to enable each individual to have a unique persuasive experience.

Mass customization [4] principles, designed into the persuasive technology, are an excellent way to achieve these results. Using mass customization, the technology is designed to create the economies of scale, efficiencies and consistency of mass production while providing a unique experience for every user. The organization receives the benefits of using a standard process to change large numbers of people simultaneously to a standard outcome while enabling each person to have a unique interaction with the positive

deviant content. When enough people are individually transformed, the organization as an institution organically changes. Thus, persuasive technology transforms an organization.

PERSUASIVE ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

While much of the previous focus of persuasive technology has been to transform individuals, the integrated, cumulative effect of these four components – Set-the-Bar, Motivation, Sustaining and Scaling – in a methodology that relies on persuasive technology is to enable organizations to change in ways that were not previously thought possible. Imagine that an executive team can identify a need to improve customer service, speed product development or better serve patients and, within a few weeks, the entire organization has begun to change. Because of persuasive technology, organizations can change faster, more completely and predictably than was ever thought possible.

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