

change  
anything

# Change Anything

## The New Science of Personal Success

Forty years ago, management scholar Aubrey Daniels brought the business world to a startling realization: *an organization can't improve if its people don't improve*. The planet responded with a resounding, “Duh.”

So Daniels went a step further: *The best way to help an organization improve is to make individual performance improvement a structured and intentional process*. Enter The Performance Management System.

It was Daniels who initiated corporate America's forty-year experiment in using yearly feedback, quarterly feedback, 360° feedback, forced ranking and a variety of structured methods to engage individuals in intentional efforts to improve performance. But little changed.

While Daniels' initial logic remains convincing, the process he gave birth to hasn't delivered the goods. A recent VitalSmarts study shows, for example, that while **97 percent of employees struggle with some career-limiting habit, fewer than one in five succeed at changing it**.<sup>i</sup> This statistic becomes all the more startling when you consider that 87 percent of employees report they've been unable to change in spite of the fact that their change challenge cost them a substantial amount of money in lost pay increases.<sup>ii</sup>

The problem with Daniels' idea was not in the basic logic. Most certainly human change is the key to organizational change. Any improvement in an organization's capacity to achieve its mission ultimately requires human beings to act differently. The problem was that the responsibility for change was misplaced from the start—it was handed to bosses rather than employees. Those who have tried to get someone else to change by nagging know externally driven change—even when augmented with potent bribes and threats—rarely works. And that's exactly what performance management became: *institutionalized nagging*.

# Change Anything: The New Science of Personal Success

## Self-Directed Change

If organizations depend on human change to achieve collective success, is there a better way to get there from here? Important new research shows there is. In fact, this science-driven method for facilitating individual change is not just an incremental improvement over the old saw—evidence suggests it is exponentially more effective. The **odds of success at pulling off dramatic personal change increase tenfold** when individuals, rather than bosses, are empowered to engage in self-directed change.<sup>iii</sup>

To uncover this teachable, scalable change method, VitalSmarts combined 50 years of the best social science research with a study of more than 5,000 everyday people attempting to overcome intrepid career and personal challenges. What resulted is Change Anything Training.

The benefits of this breakthrough training approach carry far beyond performance improvement. When individuals have the skills and support needed to succeed at changing their behavior, they become substantially more effective at:

- **Performance Management:** Research shows that 70 percent of employees who are aware their boss is unhappy with their performance can't tell you what they are doing wrong or how they will change.<sup>iv</sup> On the other hand, employees equipped with the skills to change career-limiting habits can realize their professional potential.
- **Corporate Wellness:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention puts a \$3,391 price tag on each employee who smokes: \$1,760 in lost productivity and \$1,623 in excess medical expenditures.<sup>v</sup> Companies that teach employees to achieve greater personal health substantially reduce their healthcare costs while increasing the wellbeing of their workforce.

- **Change Management:** Few organizations can successfully drive rapid, comprehensive change—even when the organization finds itself on a burning platform. While leaders might understand the recipe for change, they struggle to get their people to adopt required behaviors. As a result, one initiative after another fails. On the other hand, leaders who enable their employees with the skills to direct their own behavior are ten times more likely to influence system-wide change.<sup>vi</sup>

Imagine a company that truly invests in increasing every employee's capacity to create self-directed change. Employees in these organizations recognize that their workplace is a resource for achieving not only professional success, but also a meaningful, happy and healthy life. Skills taught in Change Anything Training enable workplaces to become communities of learning and growth that lead to unprecedented levels of employee engagement.

Most of us are just one habit away from being more successful, healthier, wealthier and happier. Change Anything Training is a breakthrough methodology for empowering individuals to succeed at the most important challenge they—and their organizations—face: the challenge of personal change.

## The Research

Of the 5,000 people we examined who wanted to overcome their habits, we discovered 300 individuals who suffered from life- and career-limiting habits for years but eventually found a way to not only overcome their bad habits, but also remain successful for three or more years. We named this successful minority the Changers. Our research shows that while Changers are few—their path to success is completely learnable.

**Take note:** These Changers were not people who dropped a habit only to pick it up again a few months later. We've all done that. Nor did they conquer only easy challenges. These Changers did everything from overcoming a tendency to procrastinate to kicking a drug addiction to becoming fit—and they remained changed years later.

## The Model Can Be Learned by Anyone

Interestingly, Changers were not more *motivated* to succeed than their less successful counterparts. One of the most pernicious misconceptions about change is that willpower is the key. Rather, the key to the Changers' success was not their commitment, but their methodology. The implications of this finding for the rest of us who struggle with change are profound.

As an employer, you don't have to search for people with a special endowment of grit. As a leader, you don't have to constantly remind, or even harangue, people to abandon their unhealthy and unproductive ways. Instead, you can teach others how to apply a proven change model to their unique change challenge. As people learn and apply the Change Anything Model to their own set of circumstances and challenges, they too will be able to overcome their life- and career-limiting habits.

## And It Will 10X Your Chances of Success

The Change Anything Model works because it teaches individuals to alter every source of influence governing their behavior rather than arming them with a single tool. Once participants learn how to recognize the gang of forces currently working against them, they learn how to get these very same forces working in their favor. Imagine the impact. When individuals transform dozens of negative sources of influence that are forcing the status quo of dismal results into positive influences, change goals that once seemed impossible become likely. The previously impossible becomes the new inevitable.

The results of following this model have been remarkable. As we suggested earlier, our research shows that armed with a proven model (and its dozens of change tactics), individuals are ten times more likely to change and remain changed for years to come. Think about it. It's not every day you learn how to improve your odds of success by a thousand percent. But that's exactly what happens as people learn and apply the Change Anything Model. They are ten times more likely to replace their limiting habits with healthy ones.

## Training

Change Anything Training follows the model below, a model that was named the Change Management Approach of the Year by *MIT Sloan Management Review*.

### 1. Escape the Willpower Trap

Most people fail to swap bad habits for good ones because they assume that if they simply try harder, they'll succeed. This common

assumption leads people into what we call "the willpower trap." They assume all it takes to drop a bad habit is to employ more strength of character, tenacity, or resolve—and they're wrong. People who change and stay that way learn that it takes far more than willpower to change habits. Once they come to this realization, they turn their attention to other more powerful, complete and sustainable change methods.

### 2. Be the Scientist and the Subject

Changers discover that not only must their personal change plan be more robust than a pep talk or a stern speech, they learn that for any plan to be effective, it must be tailored to one's unique needs and circumstances. Those who adopt other people's plans, techniques and tactics, nearly always fall short. Plenty of well-intentioned people will advise exactly what they've done, and they'll be wrong. No one would even consider wearing someone else's retainer, but many folks borrow change plans from friends and acquaintances without thinking twice.

Typically, after trying a variety of highly recommended off-the-shelf methods, Changers learn to design their own plan by studying their own day-to-day successes and challenges. As they do so, they become the scientist and subject in their own experiment. They learn to create, test and adjust their own tailored plan until they eventually marshal influence strategies of sufficient magnitude and relevance, resulting in lasting change.

### 3. Identify Clear, Measurable, Time-Bound Results That Reflect What You Really Want

The first predictor of success at change is goal clarity. Most of us start off the process of change with clear dissatisfaction with the present state of things—but only a fuzzy sense of what we want to achieve. Our research shows that translating vague aspirations into concrete goals is a potent step toward real change.

### 4. Create Vital Behaviors

One of the most empowering discoveries about change is that it is not a 24x7 challenge. In fact, there are usually just a handful of *crucial moments* that determine people's success or failure at change. These are the times when change aspirants are most at risk—and if they only acted differently, they'd achieve a far better result. Once Changers identify their crucial moments (and these moments vary greatly from one individual to the next), they then create two or three high-leverage behaviors that, if enacted, will lead to success. Nobody can work on a dozen behaviors at once, but selecting two or three vital behaviors causes the chance for success to grow exponentially.

### 5. See All Six Sources

Bad habits are hard to change, not simply because individuals lack willpower, but because a whole host of personal, social and environmental forces both motivate and enable an existing behavior—keeping it securely in place for years. In short, the world is perfectly organized to keep people procrastinating,

micromanaging, neglecting relationships, sleeping in, smoking, spending excessively and otherwise acting against their long-term best interests. Effective Changers learn how to recognize the forces that are acting on them—keeping them locked in place—from six different sources of influence. Then, once they know how to see the forces working against them, they learn more than a dozen tactics for turning the forces in their favor.

## Design

Change Anything Training is a video-based, highly interactive, one-day course. By the end of the training, participants have a thorough understanding of what it takes to create significant and lasting changes in life- and career-limiting habits. Equally important, they will have created their own complete, self-tailored, first draft of a personal change plan.

**Materials.** Each participant receives:

- **Change Anything: The New Science of Personal Success**—The *New York Times* bestselling book behind the training.
- **The Change Anything Participant Toolkit**—The personal guide through the one-day training course and a take-home summary of what participants learn.
- **Change Plan: Your First Experiment**—Throughout the course, participants anchor their learning experience to an actual challenge they face by creating a detailed, personal change plan that will start them down the path of becoming the scientist and subject of their first experiment.
- **Change Anything Audio Companion CDs**—A four-CD audio recording that features each of the authors discussing, applying and expanding on the concepts taught in the training. Additional change tactics not covered in the one-day course are explored on the CDs.

**Platform.** The training is delivered through an exclusive projection-based platform developed by VitalSmarts. This platform has been meticulously designed to serve trainers of varying experience and skill levels. The platform consists of the following:

- **Trainer Guide**—The comprehensive, step-by-step, easy-to-follow guide provides a thorough content overview, helpful cues and trainer tips that keep the training on point, on time and on track.
- **Trainer Assists**—The training platform offers a help button for trainers to use when preparing to train the course. The trainer assists available on each screen include notes from the trainer guide and, in several places throughout the training, video of a master trainer instructing complex principles.
- **Participant Response System (PRS)**—Participants are quizzed at key points throughout the training to test concept mastery. Each participant is provided with a remote control for answering questions anonymously. Correct answers and classroom results

are immediately displayed on screen to teach correct responses as well as help trainers determine what concepts have been understood, where participants may be struggling, and what concepts may require additional instruction. The PRS is also used to facilitate ongoing, friendly competition between participant teams, which keeps energy levels high and serves as an effective review throughout the training.

- **Award-Winning Video**—Many of the concepts and strategies taught throughout the training are illustrated in video segments featuring several of the Changers. Video segments of the authors along with a serialized video case study help round out the rich, vicarious experience created by VitalSmarts' award-winning videos.

<sup>i</sup> VitalSmarts, *Career-Limiting Habits* study, May 2011.

<sup>ii</sup> Change Anything Labs, *Lake Wobegon at Work* survey, February 2010.

<sup>iii</sup> Joseph Grenny, David Maxfield, and Andrew Shimberg, "How to Have Influence," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2008): 47–52.

<sup>iv</sup> Change Anything Labs, *Lake Wobegon at Work* survey, February 2010.

<sup>v</sup> Kristein, "How Much Can Business Expect to Profit From Smoking Cessation?" *Preventive Medicine* (1983); 12:358 – 381.

<sup>vi</sup> Grenny, Maxfield, and Shimberg.

<sup>vii</sup> Grenny, Maxfield, and Shimberg.

## VitalSmarts®

P. 801.765.9600

E. [salessupport@vital-smarts.com](mailto:salessupport@vital-smarts.com)

A. 282 River Bend Lane, Suite 100  
Provo, UT 84604

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**About VitalSmarts.** An innovator in corporate training and leadership development, VitalSmarts combines three decades of original research with 50 years of the best social science to help leaders and organizations change human behavior and achieve new levels of performance. We've identified four high-leverage skill sets that, when used in combination, create healthy corporate cultures. These skills are taught in our award-winning training programs and *New York Times* bestselling books of the same titles: *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Accountability*, *Influencer*, and *Change Anything*. VitalSmarts has worked with 300 of the Fortune 500 companies and trained more than one million people worldwide. [www.vital-smarts.com](http://www.vital-smarts.com)