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By Lisa Earle McLeod

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We talk a lot about major pivots--but what about minor ones? Here's how one small piece of pivotal behavior can change your company for the better.

Behavior is the mirror in which everyone shows their image.--Goethe

Can a single behavior elevate an entire organization? It can--if it's the *right* behavior. Here's how a simple 1-minute act helped an organization reinforce its purpose and outperform its competition by leaps and bounds.

I have a college-age daughter. My family and I were moving her into Boston University (BU) over Labor Day weekend. The four of us, mom, dad, college daughter and her younger sister, were standing on the street, looking befuddled at the campus map. At that moment, a friendly and official-looking gentleman approached us, asking, "Can I help you find something?"

He introduced himself as the dean of students. He asked where we were from, told us he was delighted to have us on campus, and pointed us in the right direction.

Keep in mind that this is a major university in the middle of a huge city with 4,500 freshmen moving in on the same day. Yet the dean himself personally approached us. And here's the kicker: it's not just because he's a friendly extrovert. It's their official campus policy.

Any staff member who sees someone looking at one of the big maps is expected to approach them and offer help. One staff member joked, "It's a fireable offense to walk by people at the map and not offer to help."

They don't view it as a punitive thing. That single behavior--help people when they're standing at the sign--is purposeful for the BU staff. It was emblematic of their organizational culture and how they perceive themselves. It reinforces BU's purpose of "Educating students to be reflective, resourceful individuals ready to live, adapt, and lead in an interconnected world."

Dean Kenneth Elmore, the gentleman who greeted my family at the sign, says, "We should never walk past [people who are] looking at a map or if they visibly look lost. I tell my staff that [this is an] opportunity to step up and see how you can help them. If I do see that you walked past them, because you have other things on your mind, we need to have a conversation and think about whether or not you should still work here."

Greeting people at the sign is more than just a nicety at BU; it reinforces their purpose.

The BU dean's office website says their aim is to "enhance the quality, character, and perspectives of our students." Elmore says, "We have this incredible privilege: we get to engage these young people . . . from all over the world . . . in thinking about their hopes and their dreams. If we can guide them a little bit, that's invaluable; that's our purpose."

It might sound like a lofty goal that applies only to nonprofits or academia, but choosing a pivotal Noble Sales Purpose (NSP) behavior is a simple yet incredibly effective model that any organization can implement.

For example, consider what would happen if an airline established the following company-wide policy for all employees: "If you walk by someone in the airport who looks lost, offer to help that person. It doesn't matter if you're a pilot, a baggage handler, or the chief executive officer (CEO); be proactive and offer to help."

How long would it take before customers started to view that airline differently from the competitors? How much more empathy would employees and executives have for weary travelers if they had more positive interactions with them *before* they started complaining? How would the employees treat their customers if they saw senior leadership consistently modeling helpfulness and patience?

The staff member is able to successfully solve a simple problem quickly and be thanked for it. After doing this once or twice, it becomes self-reinforcing. Staff members start to see themselves as problem solvers and ambassadors for their "company." And you cannot overestimate the ripple effect this has on the organization's culture.

That single policy sends a message to everyone, both inside and outside the organization: "Our goal is to be helpful. We care about people, and we place a high priority on interpersonal interactions."

When employees of every level personally connect with customers, they empathize with them and carry that knowledge back to their job.

Elmore describes the impact it has on staff members: "They're a lot more present. They notice what happens around them a lot more [and] are more actively observant

when they are out walking to get from one place to the next. They started to pick up pieces of paper. They have to be more present in their environment.”

We tend to believe that behavior follows attitude--and in many cases, it does. This book is about how mindset change can result in a behavior change. But one of the ways you can fast track the NSP mindset change is to choose a single behavior that reinforces it.

Changing the way you act will change the way you feel. It becomes self-reinforcing.

Measuring Your Behavior

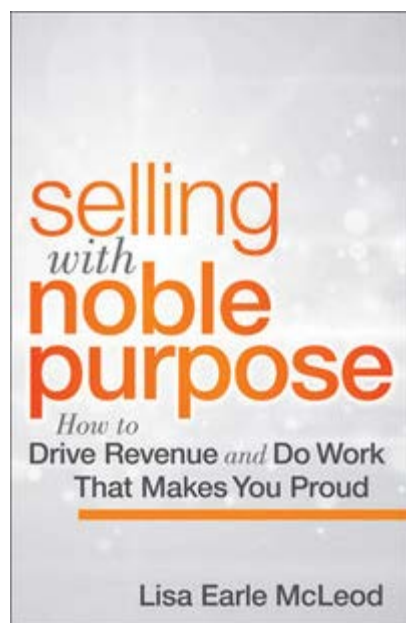
It's always challenging to attempt to measure attitudinal issues. BU's Dean Elmore, who lives in the world of academic metrics, says, "I am always looking to find metrics for the way human beings relate to each other. I am struggling to find little ways we can measure it."

But BU has found at least one measurement to use, and it's the same one that sales forces use: money. Elmore explains, "We saw an increase of 12 percent in the number of students who are participating in our annual giving. That says something about the total good experience they have here."

Measurements, of course, are helpful. But there's no need to make this any harder than it has to be. The concept is simple: choose one behavior that everyone in your company or team can do. If you pick the right one, you'll be aware of the fact that it's working right from the start.

Here's a way to think about it: our NSP is [insert NSP]; that's why we always [insert behavior].

For example, my company says, "Our NSP is to help organizations create passionate, purpose-driven sales forces; that's why we always ask the extra question."



Choosing Your Pivotal Behavior

Here are some guidelines regarding your pivotal NSP behavior:

- It should take less than a minute.
- Everyone in the company should be able to do it.
- You must hold each other accountable for it.
- There are no excuses for not doing it.

You can have the best product in the world, but the only way to evoke true passion is with people. When you make a proactive decision about how you relate to one another, your culture starts to shift.

You've probably heard the expression "act as if." If you aspire to something, act as if you're a person who has already achieved it. If you want to become an organization that makes a difference to customers, act as if you already do. Your NSP speaks to your aspirations for your customers. Choosing one pivotal behavior is a concrete way to prove that you're serious about it.

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--[Lisa Earle McLeod](#) [4] is a sales leadership consultant who has worked with clients like Apple, Kimberly-Clark, and Pfizer to create passionate, purpose-driven sales organizations.

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