Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer these questions:

1. How do organizations offer appropriate rewards in a timely fashion?
2. What are the best practices that organizations utilize to train employees in new job skills?
3. How do managers and organizations reduce undesirable employee behavior while reinforcing desirable behavior?
4. How can employees be trained to assume more responsibility for self-improvement and job performance with the goal of creating a work environment characterized by continual self-learning and employee development?

EXPLORING MANAGERIAL CAREERS

The Google Way to a Culture of Continued Learning

Google is great at many things—attracting top talent, maintaining employee satisfaction, and encouraging creativity, to name a few.

According to the Association of Training and Development (ATD), companies that offer comprehensive training programs have 218 percent higher income per employee than companies without formalized training. Not only that, but companies that have required programs for their employees see a much higher profit margin than those that don’t. Investing in people and promoting a self-learning environment is the right plan for companies that are looking to keep employees’ behavior in check, train
Spending millions of dollars is not necessary to create a culture that promotes learning.

Google follows the simple principles that gives their employees purpose and a career path. They provide information that is relevant and important to their employees. They know that in order to get this information to stick, it must be pertinent and presented at the right time, and in the right format. They also archive important information, which empowers employees to access this information at any and all times. Instead of providing gateways that impede learning, they open the doors.

Secondly, they share “dumb questions.” This may seem like a silly tactic, but encouraging employees to share their questions and opinions allows for sharing of information and learning on all levels. Google also employs the values of celebrated failure, which allows for the teams to learn from their mistakes and their failures. Then they can move on to the next project with newly found valuable information to get better each time.

Lastly, formalized plans for continued learning are employed for “informal and continuous learning” to occur. Examples of these events can be allowing employees to pursue their own interests, utilizing coaching and support tools, and then training being requested at various times. With these tactics, the cultivation of learning can be expressed throughout the company. Google is at the forefront of this pursuit, but other companies can learn from their methods to get ahead and get their employees on track as well.


**Questions:**

1. What considerations should Google take into account when creating formalized training for their employees?
2. Name three reasons why training and continued learning can be important for a company’s success.
3. Why is encouraging and celebrating failure an important thing for a company to promote?

A major responsibility of managers is to evaluate and reward their subordinates. If managers are to maximize the impact of available (and often limited) rewards, a thorough knowledge of reinforcement techniques is essential. We shall devote this chapter to developing a detailed understanding of learning processes in organizations. We begin by looking at basic models of learning.
place must be relatively permanent. So changes in behavior that result from fatigue or temporary adaptation to a unique situation would not be considered examples of learning. Next, learning typically involves some form of practice or experience. For example, the change that results from physical maturation, as when a baby develops the physical strength to walk, is in itself not considered learning. Third, this practice or experience must be reinforced over time for learning to take place. Where reinforcement does not follow practice or experience, the behavior will eventually diminish and disappear ("extinction"). Finally, learning is an inferred process; we cannot observe learning directly. Instead, we must infer the existence of learning from observing changes in overt behavior.

We can best understand the learning process by looking at four stages in the development of research on learning (see Exhibit 4.2). Scientific interest in learning dates from the early experiments of Pavlov and others around the turn of the century. The focus of this research was on stimulus-response relationships and the environmental determinants of observable behaviors. This was followed by the discovery of the law of effect, experiments in operant conditioning, and, finally, the formulation of social learning theory.

Exhibit 4.2 The Development of Modern Behavioral Learning Theory

Classical Conditioning

Emphasized observable behavior and environmental determinants behavior

Thorndyke’s Law of Effect

Focused on how environmental consequences can either strengthen or weaken behaviors

Operant Conditioning

Showed how operant behavior can be influenced by environmental cues and consequences

Social Learning Theory

Stresses self-control and vicarious learning in reciprocal relationships between person, behavior, and environment

Exhibit 4.2 The Development of Modern Behavioral Learning Theory (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning is the process whereby a stimulus-response (S-R) bond is developed between a conditioned stimulus and a conditioned response through the repeated linking of a conditioned stimulus
with an unconditioned stimulus. This process is shown in Exhibit 4.3. The classic example of Pavlov’s experiments illustrates the process. Pavlov was initially interested in the digestive processes of dogs but noticed that the dogs started to salivate at the first signal of approaching food. On the basis of this discovery, he shifted his attention to the question of whether animals could be trained to draw a causal relationship between previously unconnected factors. Specifically, using the dogs as subjects, he examined the extent to which the dogs could learn to associate the ringing of a bell with the act of salivation. The experiment began with unlearned, or unconditioned, stimulus-response relationships. When a dog was presented with meat (unconditioned stimulus), the dog salivated (unconditioned response). No learning was necessary here, as this relationship represented a natural physiological process.

Next, Pavlov paired the unconditioned stimulus (meat) with a neutral one (the ringing of a bell). Normally, the ringing of the bell by itself would not be expected to elicit salivation. However, over time, a learned linkage developed for the dog between the bell and meat, ultimately resulting in an S-R bond between the conditioned stimulus (the bell) and the response (salivation) without the presence of the unconditioned stimulus (the meat). Evidence emerged that learning had occurred and that this learning resulted from conditioning the dogs to associate two normally unrelated objects, the bell and the meat.

Although Pavlov’s experiments are widely cited as evidence of the existence of classical conditioning, it is necessary from the perspective of organizational behavior to ask how this process relates to people at work. Ivancevich, Szilagyi, and Wallace provide one such work-related example of classical conditioning:

An illustration of classical conditioning in a work setting would be an airplane pilot learning how to use a newly installed warning system. In this case the behavior to be learned is to respond to a warning light that indicates that the plane has dropped below a critical altitude on an assigned glide path. The proper response is to increase the plane’s altitude. The pilot already knows how to appropriately respond to the trainer’s warning to increase altitude (in this case we would say the trainer’s warning is an unconditioned stimulus and the corrective action of increasing altitude is an unconditioned response). The training session consists of the
trainer warning the pilot to increase altitude every time the warning light goes on. Through repeated pairings of the warning light with the trainer’s warning, the pilot eventually learns to adjust the plane’s altitude in response to the warning light even though the trainer is not present. Again, the unit of learning is a new S-R connection, or habit.\(^2\)

Although classical conditioning clearly has applications to work situations, particularly in the area of training and development, it has been criticized as explaining only a limited part of total human learning. Psychologist B. F. Skinner argues that classical conditioning focuses on respondent, or reflexive, behaviors; that is, it concentrates on explaining largely involuntary responses that result from stimuli.\(^3\) More complex learning cannot be explained solely by classical conditioning. As an alternative explanation, Skinner and others have proposed the operant conditioning model of learning.

**Operant Conditioning**

The major focus of operant conditioning is on the effects of reinforcements, or rewards, on desired behaviors. One of the first psychologists to examine such processes was J. B. Watson, a contemporary of Pavlov, who argued that behavior is largely influenced by the rewards one receives as a result of actions.\(^4\) This notion is best summarized in Thorndike’s *law of effect*. This law states that of several responses made to the same situation, those that are accompanied or closely followed by satisfaction (reinforcement) will be more likely to occur; those that are accompanied or closely followed by discomfort (punishment) will be less likely to occur.\(^5\)

In other words, it posits that behavior that leads to positive or pleasurable outcomes tends to be repeated, whereas behavior that leads to negative outcomes or punishment tends to be avoided. In this manner, individuals learn appropriate, acceptable responses to their environment. If we repeatedly dock the pay of an employee who is habitually tardy, we would expect that employee to learn to arrive early enough to receive a full day’s pay.

A basic operant model of learning is presented in Exhibit 4.2. There are three important concepts of this model:

**Drive.** A *drive* is an internal state of disequilibrium; it is a felt need. It is generally believed that drive increases with the strength of deprivation. A drive, or desire, to learn must be present for learning to take place. For example, not currently being able to afford the house you want is likely to lead to a drive for more money to buy your desired house. Living in a run-down shack is likely to increase this drive compared to living in a nice apartment.

**Habit.** A *habit* is the experienced bond or connection between stimulus and response. For example, if a person learns over time that eating satisfies hunger, a strong stimulus-response (hunger-eating) bond will develop. Habits thus determine the behaviors, or courses of action, we choose.

**Reinforcement or reward.** This represents the feedback individuals receive as a result of action. For example, if as a salesperson you are given a bonus for greater sales and plan to use the money to buy the house you have always wanted, this will reinforce the behaviors that you believed led to greater sales, such as smiling at customers, repeating their name during the presentation, and so on.

A stimulus activates an individual’s motivation through its impact on drive and habit. The stronger the drive and habit (S-R bond), the stronger the motivation to behave in a certain way. As a result of this behavior, two things happen. First, the individual receives feedback that reduces the original drive. Second, the individual strengthens his or her belief in the veracity of the S-R bond to the extent that it proved successful. That is, if
one's response to the stimulus satisfied one's drive or need, the individual would come to believe more strongly in the appropriateness of the particular S-R connection and would respond in the same way under similar circumstances.

An example will clarify this point. Several recent attempts to train chronically unemployed workers have used a daily pay system instead of weekly or monthly systems. The primary reason for this is that the workers, who do not have a history of working, can more quickly see the relationship between coming to work and receiving pay. An S-R bond develops more quickly because of the frequency of the reinforcement, or reward.

**Operant versus Classical Conditioning**

Operant conditioning can be distinguished from classical conditioning in at least two ways.\(^6\) First, the two approaches differ in what is believed to cause changes in behavior. In classical conditioning, changes in behavior are thought to arise through changes in stimuli—that is, a transfer from an unconditioned stimulus to a conditioned stimulus. In operant conditioning, on the other hand, changes in behavior are thought to result from the consequences of previous behavior. When behavior has not been rewarded or has been punished, we would not expect it to be repeated.

Second, the two approaches differ in the role and frequency of rewards. In classical conditioning, the unconditioned stimulus, acting as a sort of reward, is administered during every trial. In contrast, in operant conditioning the reward results only when individuals choose the correct response. That is, in operant conditioning, individuals must correctly operate on their environment before a reward is received. The response is instrumental in obtaining the desired reward.

**Social Learning Theory**

The last model of learning we should examine is noted psychologist Albert Bandura's social learning theory. Social learning theory is defined as the process of molding behavior through the reciprocal interaction of a person’s cognitions, behavior, and environment.\(^7\) This is done through a process that Bandura calls reciprocal determinism. This concept implies that people control their own environment (for example, by quitting one's job) as much as the environment controls people (for example, being laid off). Thus, learning is seen as a more active, interactive process in which the learner has at least some control.

Social learning theory shares many of the same roots as operant conditioning. Like Skinner, Bandura argues that behavior is at least in part controlled by environmental cues and consequences, and Bandura uses observable behavior (as opposed to attitudes, feelings, etc.) as the primary unit of analysis. However, unlike operant conditioning, social learning theory posits that cognitive or mental processes affect our response to the environmental cues.

Social learning theory has four central elements: attention, retention, reproduction, and incentives. Before someone can learn something, they must notice or pay attention to the thing that is to be learned. For example, you probably would not learn much as a student in any class unless you paid attention to information conveyed by the text or instructor. Retention is the process by which what you have noticed is encoded into your memory. Reproduction involves the translation of what was recorded in your mind into overt actions or behaviors. Obviously, the higher the level of attention and the greater the retention, the better the reproduction of what was learned. Finally, incentives can influence all three processes. For example, if you are rewarded (say, praised) for paying attention, you will pay more attention. If you are rewarded for remembering what you studied (say, good grades), you will retain more. If you are rewarded for reproducing
what you learned (say, a promotion for effectively motivating your subordinates), you will produce that behavior more.

Central to this theory is the concept of vicarious learning. **Vicarious learning** is learning that takes place through the imitation of other role models. That is, we observe and analyze what another person does and the resulting consequences. As a result, we learn without having to experience the phenomenon firsthand. Thus, if we see a fellow employee being disciplined or fired for being disruptive in the workplace, we might learn not to be disruptive ourselves. If we see that gifts are usually given with the right hand in the Middle East, we might give gifts in that manner ourselves.

A model of social learning processes is shown in **Exhibit 4.4**. As can be seen, three factors—the person, the environment, and the behavior—interact through such processes as vicarious learning, symbolic representations, and self-control to cause actual learned behaviors.

**Exhibit 4.4  A Basic Model of Social Learning  Source:** Adapted from “A Social Learning Approach to Behavioral Management: Radical Behaviorists ‘Mellowing Out,’” by Robert Kreitner et al. *Organizational Dynamics.* (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

**Major Influences on Learning.** On the basis of this work, it is possible by way of summary to identify several general factors that can enhance our learning processes. An individual’s desire to learn, background knowledge of a subject, and the length of the learning period are some of the components of a learning environment. Filley, House, and Kerr identify five major influences on learning effectiveness.  

Drawn largely from behavioral science and psychology literature, substantial research indicates that learning effectiveness is increased considerably when individuals have high **motivation to learn**. We sometimes encounter students who work day and night to complete a term paper that is of interest to them, whereas
writing an uninteresting term paper may be postponed until the last possible minute. Maximum transfer of knowledge is achieved when a student or employee is motivated to learn by a high need to know.

Considerable evidence also demonstrates that we can facilitate learning by providing individuals with feedback on their performance. A knowledge of results serves a gyroscopic function, showing individuals where they are correct or incorrect and furnishing them with the perspective to improve. Feedback also serves as an important positive reinforcer that can enhance an individual’s willingness or desire to learn. Students who are told by their professor how they performed on an exam and what they could do to improve next time are likely to study harder.

In many cases, prior learning can increase the ability to learn new materials or tasks by providing needed background or foundation materials. In math, multiplication is easier to learn if addition has been mastered. These beneficial effects of prior learning on present learning tend to be greatest when the prior tasks and the present tasks exhibit similar stimulus-response connections. For instance, most of the astronauts selected for the space program have had years of previous experience flying airplanes. It is assumed that their prior experience and developed skill will facilitate learning to fly the highly technical, though somewhat similar, vehicles.

Another influence on learning concerns whether the materials to be learned are presented in their entirety or in parts—whole versus part learning. Available evidence suggests that when a task consists of several distinct and unrelated duties, part learning is more effective. Each task should be learned separately. However, when a task consists of several integrated and related parts (such as learning the components of a small machine), whole learning is more appropriate, because it ensures that major relationship among parts, as well as proper sequencing of parts, is not overlooked or underemphasized.

Exhibit 4.5  Stop sign in Quebec  Would your prior learning lead you to come to a full stop while driving in Quebec, just north of New York State? (Credit: Joe Schlabotnik/ flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

The final major influence on learning highlights the advantages and disadvantages of concentrated as
opposed to distributed training sessions. Research suggests that *distribution of practice*—short learning periods at set intervals—is more effective for learning motor skills than for learning verbal or cognitive skills. Distributed practice also seems to facilitate learning of very difficult, voluminous, or tedious material. It should be noted, however, that concentrated practice appears to work well where insight is required for task completion. Apparently, concentrated effort over short durations provides a more synergistic approach to problem-solving.

Although there is general agreement that these influences are important (and are under the control of management in many cases), they cannot substitute for the lack of an adequate reinforcement system. In fact, reinforcement is widely recognized as the key to effective learning. If managers are concerned with eliciting desired behaviors from their subordinates, a knowledge of reinforcement techniques is essential.

**EXPANDING AROUND THE GLOBE**

Learning to Be Effective Overseas

General Motors has learned by experience that it pays not to have managers learn only by experience how to function effectively while working in foreign countries. Managing expatriate assignments in difficult locations was brought to life by the experiences of Richard Pennington, General Motors’ head of global mobility for the EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa) region. He knows from experience some of the things that tend to go well, as well as some of those that don’t, and has learned lessons from moving employees to places like Uzbekistan. This became important when the company took on a new engine manufacturing operation in the capital, Tashkent, as well as an existing manufacturing plant in Andijan. The objectives were the same as for most global mobility projects: to get the right people to the right place at the right time for the right cost. The general approach was Action—Plan—Do—Check.

Pennington urged potential relocation candidates not to be overreliant on the Internet and, if possible, to go and see for themselves. “Nothing beats going to a location—particularly a harsh location—you yourself,” he says. Pennington also emphasizes the importance of selecting suppliers on the ground carefully, even if you already have a network of existing suppliers. Strong relationships in the host location are of paramount importance. In difficult locations, it is particularly important that the local HR, finance, and legal staff work with you proactively, as making payments at the right time can be critical. Equally, cultural training and language providers are essential.

These training programs involve a wide variety of teaching methods. Factual information may be conveyed through lectures or printed material. More subtle information is learned through role plays, case studies, and simulations.

The research on cross-cultural training suggests that the more involved participants are in the training, the more they learn, and that the more they practice or simulate new behaviors that they need to master in the foreign environment, the more effective they will be in actual situations.

The results for GM have been impressive. Most companies that do not provide cross-cultural training for their employees sent on international assignments experience failure rates of about 25 percent, and each failure or early return costs the company on average $150,000. GM has a failure rate of less than 1 percent. Also, in GM’s case, the training has been extended to the manager’s family and has helped reluctant spouses and children more readily accept, if not embrace, the foreign assignment.
Reinforcement and Behavioral Change

2. What are the best practices that organizations utilize to train employees in new job skills?

A central feature of most approaches to learning is the concept of reinforcement. This concept dates from Thorndike’s law of effect, which, as mentioned earlier, states that behavior that is positively reinforced tends to be repeated, whereas behavior that is not reinforced will tend not to be repeated. Hence, reinforcement can be defined as anything that causes a certain behavior to be repeated or inhibited.

Reinforcement versus Motivation

It is important to differentiate reinforcement from the concept of employee motivation. Motivation, as described in the next chapter, represents a primary psychological process that is largely cognitive in nature. Thus, motivation is largely internal—it is experienced by the employee, and we can see only subsequent manifestations of it in actual behavior. Reinforcement, on the other hand, is typically observable and most often externally administered. A supervisor may reinforce what he or she considers desirable behavior without knowing anything about the underlying motives that prompted it. For example, a supervisor who has a habit of saying “That’s interesting” whenever she is presented with a new idea may be reinforcing innovation on the part of the subordinates without the supervisor really knowing why this result is achieved. The distinction between theories of motivation and reinforcement should be kept in mind when we examine behavior modification and behavioral self-management later in this chapter.

Strategies for Behavioral Change

From a managerial standpoint, several strategies for behavioral change are available to facilitate learning in organizational settings. At least four different types should be noted: (1) positive reinforcement; (2) avoidance learning, or negative reinforcement; (3) extinction; and (4) punishment. Each type plays a different role in both the manner in which and extent to which learning occurs. Each will be considered separately here.

Positive Reinforcement. Positive reinforcement consists of presenting someone with an attractive outcome following a desired behavior. As noted by Skinner, “A positive reinforcer is a stimulus which, when added to a
situation, strengthens the probability of an operant response.”

A simple example of positive reinforcement is supervisory praise for subordinates when they perform well in a certain situation. That is, a supervisor may praise an employee for being on time consistently (see Exhibit 4.6). This behavior-praise pattern may encourage the subordinate to be on time in the future in the hope of receiving additional praise.

Exhibit 4.6 Strategies for Behavioral Change (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

In order for a positive reinforcement to be effective in facilitating the repetition of desired behavior, several conditions must be met. First, the reinforcer itself (praise) must be valued by the employee. It would prove ineffective in shaping behavior if employees were indifferent to it. Second, the reinforcer must be strongly tied to the desired behavior. Receipt of the reinforcer by the employee must be directly contingent upon performing the desired behavior. “Rewards must result from performance, and the greater the degree of performance by an employee, the greater should be his reward.”

It is important to keep in mind here that “desired behavior” represents behavior defined by the supervisor, not the employee. Thus, for praise to be a reinforcer, not only must it be valued by the employee, but it must directly follow the desired behavior and should be more intense as the behavior is closer to the ideal the supervisor has in mind. Praise thrown out at random is unlikely to reinforce the desired behavior. Third, there must be ample occasion for the reinforcer to be administered following desired behavior. If the reinforcer is tied to certain behavior that seldom occurs, then individuals will seldom be reinforced and will probably not associate this behavior with a reward. For example, if praise is only provided for truly exceptional performance, then it is unlikely to have a powerful impact on the desired behavior. It is important that the performance-reward contingencies be structured so that they are easily attainable.

Avoidance Learning. A second method of reinforcement is avoidance learning, or negative reinforcement. Avoidance learning refers to seeking to avoid an unpleasant condition or outcome by following a desired behavior. Employees learn to avoid unpleasant situations by behaving in certain ways. If an employee correctly performs a task or is continually prompt in coming to work (see Exhibit 4.6), the supervisor may refrain from harassing, reprimanding, or otherwise embarrassing the employee. Presumably, the employee learns over time that engaging in correct behavior diminishes admonition from the supervisor. In order to maintain this
condition, the employee continues to behave as desired.

**Extinction.** The principle of extinction suggests that undesired behavior will decline as a result of a lack of positive reinforcement. If the perpetually tardy employee in the example in Exhibit 4.6 consistently fails to receive supervisory praise and is not recommended for a pay raise, we would expect this nonreinforcement to lead to an “extinction” of the tardiness. The employee may realize, albeit subtly, that being late is not leading to desired outcomes, and she may try coming to work on time.

**Punishment.** Finally, a fourth strategy for behavior change used by managers and supervisors is punishment. Punishment is the administration of unpleasant or adverse outcomes as a result of undesired behavior. An example of the application of punishment is for a supervisor to publicly reprimand or fine an employee who is habitually tardy (see Exhibit 4.6). Presumably, the employee would refrain from being tardy in the future in order to avoid such an undesirable outcome. The most frequently used punishments (along with the most frequently used rewards) are shown in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently Used Rewards and Punishments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rewards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay raise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise and recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time off</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)*

The use of punishment is indeed one of the most controversial issues of behavior change strategies. Although punishment can have positive work outcomes—especially if it is administered in an impersonal way and as soon as possible after the transgression—negative repercussions can also result when employees either resent the action or feel they are being treated unfairly. These negative outcomes from punishment are shown in Exhibit 4.7. Thus, although punishment represents a potent force in corrective learning, its use must be carefully considered and implemented. In general, for punishment to be effective the punishment should “fit the crime” in severity, should be given in private, and should be explained to the employee.
Detracting a Workplace Bully

Studies showcase that nearly 50 percent of employees in the U.S. workforce face bullying at one point in time. All types of bullying, not just discrimination or harassment, are important to consider.

Angela Anderson was working for a law school administration council and experienced bullying firsthand. Often her manager would yell at her in front of other coworkers, and it was clear to Angela that she was not well-liked. Unfortunately it was not just Angela who felt the wrath of this manager, who often handled interactions with other employees the same way. Many of the employees, including Angela, attempted to appease their bullying manager, but nothing would help. One day Angela was threatened by her manager, and before Angela could reach the HR department, she was fired. This example is an extreme case, but being able to take recourse against unwanted and disruptive employee behavior is an important action for any workplace manager.

Questions:
1. What steps can you take to ensure that your company can detract from employees’ bullying behavior?
2. What actions should an employee take if they are experiencing unwanted behaviors from another employee or manager?
3. What other departments should be involved when developing a plan and policies for how to handle unacceptable workplace behavior?

In summary, positive reinforcement and avoidance learning focus on bringing about the *desired* response from the employee. With positive reinforcement the employee behaves in a certain way in order to gain desired rewards, whereas with avoidance learning the employee behaves in order to avoid certain unpleasant outcomes. In both cases, however, the behavior desired by the supervisor is enhanced. In contrast, extinction and punishment focus on supervisory attempts to reduce the incidence of *undesired* behavior. That is, extinction and punishment are typically used to get someone to stop doing something the supervisor doesn’t like. It does not necessarily follow that the individual will begin acting in the most desired, or correct, manner. Often students have difficulty seeing the distinction between avoidance and extinction or in understanding how either could have a significant impact on behavior. Two factors are important to keep in mind. The first we will simply call the “history effect.” Not being harassed could reinforce an employee’s prompt arrival at work if in the past the employee had been harassed for being late. Arriving on time and thereby avoiding the past harassment would reinforce arriving on time. This same dynamic would hold true for extinction. If the employee had been praised in the past for arriving on time, then arrived late and was not praised, this would serve to weaken the tendency to arrive late. The second factor we will call the “social effect.” For example, if you see others harassed when they arrive late and then you are not harassed when you arrive on time, this could reinforce your arriving at work on time. Again, this same dynamic would hold true for extinction. If you had observed others being praised for arriving on time, then not receiving praise when you arrived late would serve to weaken the tendency to arrive late.

From a managerial perspective, questions arise about which strategy of behavioral change is most effective. Advocates of behavioral change strategies, such as Skinner, answer that positive reinforcement combined with extinction is the most suitable way to bring about desired behavior. There are several reasons for this focus on the positive approach to reinforcement. First, although punishment can inhibit or eliminate undesired behavior, it often does not provide information to the individual about how or in which direction to change. Also, the application of punishment may cause the individual to become alienated from the work situation, thereby reducing the chances that useful change can be effected. Similarly, avoidance learning tends to emphasize the negative; that is, people are taught to stay clear of certain behaviors, such as tardiness, for fear of repercussions. In contrast, it is felt that combining positive reinforcement with the use of extinction has the fewest undesirable side effects and allows individuals to receive the rewards they desire. A positive approach to reinforcement is believed by some to be the most effective tool management has to bring about favorable changes in organizations.

### Schedules of Reinforcement

Having examined four distinct strategies for behavioral change, we now turn to an examination of the various ways, or *schedules*, of administering these techniques. As noted by Costello and Zalkind, “The speed with which learning takes place and also how lasting its effects will be is determined by the timing of reinforcement.”

Thus, a knowledge of the types of schedules of reinforcement is essential to managers if they are to know how to choose rewards that will have maximum impact on employee performance. Although there are a variety of ways in which rewards can be administered, most approaches can be categorized into two groups: continuous and partial (or intermittent) reinforcement schedules. A **continuous reinforcement** schedule rewards desired behavior every time it occurs. For example, a manager could praise (or pay) employees every time they perform properly. With the time and resource constraints most managers work under, this is often difficult, if
not impossible. So, most managerial reward strategies operate on a partial schedule. A partial reinforcement schedule rewards desired behavior at specific intervals, not every time desired behavior is exhibited. Compared to continuous schedules, partial reinforcement schedules lead to slower learning but stronger retention. Thus, learning is generally more permanent. Four kinds of partial reinforcement schedules can be identified: (1) fixed interval, (2) fixed ratio, (3) variable interval, and (4) variable ratio (see Table 4.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule of Reinforcement</th>
<th>Nature of Reinforcement</th>
<th>Effects on Behavior When Applied</th>
<th>Effects on Behavior When Terminated</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed interval</td>
<td>Reward on fixed time basis</td>
<td>Leads to average and irregular performance</td>
<td>Quick extinction of behavior</td>
<td>Weekly paycheck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed ratio</td>
<td>Reward consistently tied to output</td>
<td>Leads quickly to very high and stable performance</td>
<td>Quick extinction of behavior</td>
<td>Piece-rate pay system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable interval</td>
<td>Reward given at variable intervals around some average time</td>
<td>Leads to moderately high and stable performance</td>
<td>Slow extinction of behavior</td>
<td>Monthly performance appraisal and reward at random times each month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable ratio</td>
<td>Reward given at variable output levels around some average output</td>
<td>Leads to very high performance</td>
<td>Slow extinction of behavior</td>
<td>Sales bonus tied to selling X accounts, but X constantly changes around some mean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

**Fixed-Interval Schedule.** A fixed-interval reinforcement schedule rewards individuals at specified intervals for their performance, as with a biweekly paycheck. If employees perform even minimally, they are paid. This technique generally does not result in high or sustained levels of performance because employees know that marginal performance usually leads to the same level of reward as high performance. Thus, there is little incentive for high effort and performance. Also, when rewards are withheld or suspended, extinction of desired behavior occurs quickly. Many of the recent job redesign efforts in organizations were prompted by recognition of the need for alternate strategies of motivation rather than paying people on fixed-interval schedules.

**Fixed-Ratio Schedule.** The second fixed schedule is the fixed-ratio schedule. Here the reward is administered only upon the completion of a given number of desired responses. In other words, rewards are tied to performance in a ratio of rewards to results. A common example of the fixed-ratio schedule is a piece-rate pay
system, whereby employees are paid for each unit of output they produce. Under this system, performance rapidly reaches high levels. In fact, according to Hamner, “The response level here is significantly higher than that obtained under any of the interval (time-based) schedules.” On the negative side, however, performance declines sharply when the rewards are withheld, as with fixed-interval schedules.

**Variable-Interval Schedule.** Using variable reinforcement schedules, both variable-interval and variable-ratio reinforcements are administered at random times that cannot be predicted by the employee. The employee is generally not aware of when the next evaluation and reward period will be. Under a variable-interval schedule, rewards are administered at intervals of time that are based on an average. For example, an employee may know that on the average her performance is evaluated and rewarded about once a month, but she does not know when this event will occur. She does know, however, that it will occur sometime during the interval of a month. Under this schedule, effort and performance will generally be high and fairly stable over time because employees never know when the evaluation will take place.

**Variable-Ratio Schedule.** Finally, a variable-ratio schedule is one in which rewards are administered only after an employee has performed the desired behavior a number of times, with the number changing from the administration of one reward to the next but averaging over time to a certain ratio of number of performances to rewards. For example, a manager may determine that a salesperson will receive a bonus for every 15th new account sold. However, instead of administering the bonus every 15th sale (as in a fixed-interval schedule), the manager may vary the number of sales that is necessary for the bonus, from perhaps 10 sales for the first bonus to 20 for the second. On the average, however, the 15:1 ratio prevails. If the employee understands the parameters, then the “safe” level of sales, or the level of sales most likely to result in a bonus, is in excess of 15. Consequently, the variable-ratio schedule typically leads to high and stable performance. Moreover, extinction of desired behavior is slow.

Which of these four schedules of reinforcement is superior? In a review of several studies comparing the various techniques, Hamner concludes:

The necessity for arranging appropriate reinforcement contingencies is dramatically illustrated by several studies in which rewards were shifted from a response-contingent (ratio) to a time-contingent (interval) basis. During the period in which rewards were made conditional upon occurrence of the desired behavior, the appropriate response patterns were exhibited at a consistently high level. When the same rewards were given based on time and independent of the worker’s behavior, there was a marked drop in the desired behavior. The reinstatements of the performance-contingent reward schedule promptly restored the high level of responsiveness.

In other words, the performance-contingent (or ratio) reward schedules generally lead to better performance than the time-contingent (or interval) schedules, regardless of whether such schedules are fixed or variable. We will return to this point in a subsequent chapter on performance appraisal and reward systems.

Two additional approaches to learning are found in the work of David Kolb and Mel Silberman. Kolb’s experiential learning style theory is typically represented by a four-stage learning cycle in which the learner ‘touches all the bases’. The Four stages are achieved when a person progresses through a cycle of four stages: of (1) having a concrete experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions) which are then (4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences. Silberman in his book *Active Training*, identified eight qualities of an effective and active learning experience. The eight qualities are: a moderate level of content; a balance between affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning, a variety of learning approaches, opportunities for group participation, encouraging participants to share their expertise, recycling
MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

Shaping a Salesperson’s Behavior

Sharon Johnson worked for a publishing company based in Nashville, Tennessee, that sold a line of children’s books directly to the public through a door-to-door sales force. Sharon had been a very successful salesperson and was promoted first to district and then to regional sales manager after just four years with the company. Sales bonuses were fixed, and a fixed-dollar bonus was tied to every $1,000 in sales over a specific minimum quota. However, there was a wide variety of rewards, from praise to gift certificates, that were left to Sharon’s discretion.

Sharon knew from her organizational behavior class that giving out praise to those who liked it and gifts to those who preferred them was an important means of reinforcing desired behavior, and she had been quite successful in implementing this principle. She also knew that if you reinforced a behavior that was “on the right track” to the ideal behavior you wanted out of a salesperson, eventually you could shape their behavior, almost without their realizing it.

Sharon had one particular salesperson, Lyle, that she thought had great potential, yet his weekly sales were somewhat inconsistent and often lower than she thought possible. When Lyle was questioned about his performance, he indicated that sometimes he felt that the families he approached could not afford the books he was selling and so he did not think it was right to push the sale too hard. Although Sharon argued that it was not Lyle’s place to decide for others what they could or could not afford, Lyle still felt uncomfortable about utilizing his normal sales approach with these families.

Sharon believed that through subtle reinforcement of certain behaviors she could shape Lyle’s behavior and that over time he would increasingly use his typical sales approach with the families he thought could not afford the books. For example, she knew that in the cases of families Lyle thought could not afford the books, he spent only 3.5 minutes in the house compared to 12.7 minutes in homes of families he judged able to afford the books. Sharon believed that if she praised Lyle when the average time he spent in each family’s home was quite similar that Lyle would increase the time he spent in the homes of families he judged unable to afford the books. She believed that the longer he spent in these homes, the more likely Lyle was to utilize his typical sales approach. This was just one of several ways Sharon thought she could shape Lyle’s behavior without trying to change his mind about pushing books onto people he thought could not afford them.

Sharon saw no ethical issues in this case until she told a friend about it and the friend questioned whether it was ethical to utilize learning and reinforcement techniques to change people’s behavior “against their will” even if they did not realize that this was happening.

Source: This ethical challenge is based on a true but disguised case observed by author J. Stewart Black.
Behavior Modification in Organizations

3. How do managers and organizations reduce undesirable employee behavior while reinforcing desirable behavior?

When the above principles and techniques are applied to the workplace, we generally see one of two approaches: behavior modification or behavioral self-management. Both approaches rest firmly on the principles of learning described above. Because both of these techniques have wide followings in corporations, we shall review them here. First, we look at the positive and negative sides of behavior modification.

Behavior modification is the use of operant conditioning principles to shape human behavior to conform to desired standards defined by superiors. In recent years, behavior modification has been applied in a wide variety of organizations. In most cases, positive results are claimed. There is interest in the technique as a management tool to improve performance and reduce costs.

Because of its emphasis on shaping behavior, it is more appropriate to think of behavior modification as a technique for motivating employees rather than as a theory of work motivation. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive model of the various personal and job-related variables that contribute to motivation. Instead, its managerial thrust is how to motivate, and it is probably this emphasis that has led to its current popularity among some managers. Even so, we should be cautioned against the unquestioned acceptance of any technique until we understand the assumptions underlying the model. If the underlying assumptions of a model appear to be uncertain or inappropriate in a particular situation or organization, its use is clearly questionable.

EXPANDING AROUND THE GLOBE

In Japan’s Hell Camp

There is a saying in Japan that “the nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” This means that in corporate Japan employees are supposed to act together and move in unison. Individuality is not encouraged. Although Japanese companies use many techniques to train their employees to work hard and overcome adversity as a group, one rather notable approach that is used by many companies is known as Hell Camp.

The purpose of Hell Camp is to develop employees so they can “concentrate under difficulty.”
Representing something of a blend of Outward Bound and assertiveness training, Hell Camp is designed to toughen employees by putting them through numerous humiliating exercises (e.g., making them shout their company song outside the local train station). If they pass each exercise (for example, if they shout loud enough and with sufficient emotion), they are allowed to remove one of several “badges of shame.” Criteria for removing a badge are left vague, so, in essence, the program uses a variable-ratio reinforcement system. The employee never quite knows when the trainer will say she has succeeded; therefore, the most likely level of performance that will result in the removal of shame badges is that at the higher end of the spectrum of performance. If the employee succeeds during the week-long program in removing all of the badges and shows her sincerity and commitment, she graduates. If not, she must repeat the program.

Far from the trust-building exercises and fun runs of modern corporate retreats, Japan’s executive Hell Camps were run with the discipline and intensity of military basic training. The goal was to whip into shape underperforming middle-management types, as well as give them the assertiveness the Japanese felt they lacked in dealing with Western competitors.

It is estimated that over 50,000 Japanese managers have gone through the program. Companies like it because they see it as a way to keep managers from getting soft. As one executive notes, “Companies have been getting very soft, very weak in their way of demanding excellence.” It is thought that the harassment received during Hell Camp and the reinforcement following satisfactory task accomplishment instill character, and Japanese companies show no sign of losing interest in the program.


Assumptions of Behavior Modification

The foundation of behavior modification as a technique of management rests on three ideas. First, advocates of behavior modification believe that individuals are basically passive and reactive (instead of proactive). They tend to respond to stimuli in their environment rather than assuming personal responsibility in initiating behavior. This assertion is in direct contrast to cognitive theories of motivation (such as expectancy/valence theory), which hold that individuals make conscious decisions about their present and future behaviors and take an active role in shaping their environment.

Second, advocates of behavior modification focus on observable and measurable behavior instead of on unobservable needs, attitudes, goals, or motivational levels. In contrast, cognitive theories focus on both observable and unobservable factors as they relate to motivation. Social learning theory, in particular, argues that individuals can change their behavior simply by observing others and noticing the punishments or rewards that the observed behaviors produce.

Third, behavior modification stresses that permanent changes can be brought about only as a result of reinforcement. Behaviors that are positively reinforced will be repeated (that is, learned), whereas behaviors not so reinforced will diminish (according to the law of effect, discussed earlier).
Designing a Behavior Modification Program

If behavior modification techniques are to work, their application must be well-designed and systematically applied. Systematic attempts to implement these programs typically go through five phases (see Exhibit 4.8).

Exhibit 4.8  Steps in Implementing a Behavior Modification Program  [Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license]

Establishing Clear Behavioral Criteria. First, management attempts to define and clearly specify the behavioral aspects of acceptable performance. Management must be able to designate what constitutes acceptable behavior in terms that employees can understand, and this specification must be in objective, measurable terms. Examples of behavioral criteria include good attendance, promptness in arriving for work, and completing tasks on schedule. Sometimes it is difficult to determine suitable objective indicators of successful performance. For instance, as a training director of a major airline asked, “How do you quantify what a flight attendant does?” Even so, there are many situations and work behaviors that do lend themselves to clear specification.

Conducting a Performance Audit. Once acceptable behavioral criteria have been specified, a performance audit can be done. Because management is concerned about the extent to which employees are successfully meeting the behavioral criteria, the audit is aimed at pinpointing trouble spots where desired behaviors are not being carried out. For instance, a review of attendance records of various departments may reveal a department in which absenteeism or tardiness is unusually high. Action can then be taken to focus on the problem area. In short, the performance audit aims to identify discrepancies between what management sees as desired or acceptable behavior and actual behavior.

Setting Specific Behavioral Goals. Third, specific behavioral goals must be set for each employee. Failure to specify concrete behavioral goals is a primary reason for the failure of many behavior modification programs. Examples of such goals are decreasing absenteeism or tardiness, reducing product defects on an assembly line, and meeting production schedules. The goals should be both realistic (that is, reasonably achievable by the employees) and acceptable to the employee. Otherwise, the goals lack relevance, and resulting effort will diminish.

Evaluating Results. Next, employees and supervisors keep track of the employee’s performance record as compared to the preset behavioral criteria and goals. Discrepancies are noted and discussed. For example, the record could provide employees with continuous feedback concerning the extent to which they are on target in meeting their defect reduction goals.

Administering Feedback and Rewards. Finally, on the basis of the assessment of the employee’s performance record, the supervisor administers feedback and, where warranted, praise. For example, praise could strengthen the employees’ efforts to reduce defects (positive reinforcement). The withholding of praise for defect levels deemed less than adequate or below established goals could cause employees to stop behavior that was contributing to defects or work harder to reduce defects (extinction).

Central to this phase of the process is the notion of shaping. Shaping is the process of improving performance incrementally, step by step. Suppose that an employee is absent 30 percent of the time during one month. To improve attendance, we would set a goal of being absent only 5 percent of the time. After implementing the
above procedure, we find that absenteeism falls to 20 percent in the second month. Although this is not at goal level, it is clearly an improvement and, as such, is rewarded. The next month, absenteeism falls to 15 percent, and, again, we reward the incremental improvement. Hence, by this incremental approach, the employee gets ever closer to the desired level of behavior. In other words, we have “shaped” her behavior.

Behavior Modification in Practice

There are many ways to see how the principles of behavior modification can be applied in organizational settings. Perhaps one of the best examples can be found in a classic study carried out by Luthans and Kreitner. These researchers carried out a field experiment in a medium-sized light manufacturing plant. Two separate groups of supervisors were used in the study. In one group (the experimental group—see Appendix A), the supervisors were trained in the techniques of behavior modification. This program was called “behavioral contingency management,” or BCM. Included here were ten 90-minute lectures conducted over 10 weeks on behavioral change strategies. The second group of supervisors (the control group) received no such training. Following this, the trained supervisors were asked to implement what they had learned among their groups; obviously, the control group supervisors were given no such instructions.

After 10 weeks, group performance was examined for all groups. Two types of data were collected. First, the researchers were interested in any possible behavioral changes among the various workers in the experimental groups (compared to the control groups) as a result of the behavior modification efforts. Significantly, the following changes were noted for these groups in areas that were targeted for change: (1) the frequency of complaints among group members declined, (2) the scrap rates declined, (3) group quality indicators increased, and (4) the frequency of individual performance problems declined. No such changes were recorded for the control groups not exposed to behavior modification. The second measure taken focused on the overall performance rates for the various groups. This was calculated as a measure of direct labor effectiveness for each group. Again, overall group performance—that is, labor effectiveness ratings—improved significantly in the experimental groups but remained unchanged in the control groups. This can be seen in Exhibit 4.9. The researchers concluded that the introduction of the behavioral modification program led to substantive improvements in factory performance.
4.4 Behavioral Self-Management

4. How can employees be trained to assume more responsibility for self-improvement and job performance with the goal of creating a work environment characterized by continual self-learning and employee development?

The second managerial technique for shaping learned behavior in the workplace is behavioral self-management (or BSM). Behavioral self-management is the process of modifying one’s own behavior by systematically managing cues, cognitive processes, and contingent consequences. BSM is an approach to learning and behavioral change that relies on the individual to take the initiative in controlling the change process. The emphasis here is on “behavior” (because our focus is on changing behaviors), not attitudes, values, or personality. Although similar to behavior modification, BSM differs in one important respect: there is a heavy emphasis on cognitive processes, reflecting the influence of Bandura’s social learning theory.
The Self-Regulation Process

Underlying BSM is a firm belief that individuals are capable of self-control; if they want to change their behavior (whether it is to come to work on time, quit smoking, lose weight, etc.), it is possible through a process called self-regulation, as depicted in Exhibit 4.10. According to the model, people tend to go about their day’s activities fairly routinely until something unusual or unexpected occurs. At this point, the individual initiates the self-regulation process by entering into self-monitoring (Stage 1). In this stage, the individual tries to identify the problem. For example, if your supervisor told you that your choice of clothing was unsuitable for the office, you would more than likely focus your attention on your clothes.

Next, in Stage 2, or self-evaluation, you would consider what you should be wearing. Here, you would compare what you have on to acceptable standards that you learned from colleagues, other relevant role models, and advertising, for example. Finally, after evaluating the situation and taking corrective action if necessary, you would assure yourself that the disruptive influence had passed and everything was now fine. This phase (Stage 3) is called self-reinforcement. You are now able to return to your normal routine. This self-regulation process forms the foundation for BSM.

Self-Management in Practice

When we combine the above self-regulation model with social learning theory (discussed earlier), we can see how the self-management process works. As shown in Exhibit 4.11, four interactive factors must be considered. These are situational cues, the person, behaviors, and consequences. (Note that the arrows in this diagram go in both directions to reflect the two-way process among these four factors.)

Situational Cues. In attempting to change any behavior, people respond to the cues surrounding them. One reason it is so hard for some people to give up smoking is the constant barrage of advertisements on
billboards, in magazines, and so forth. There are too many cues reminding people to smoke. However, situational cues can be turned to our advantage when using BSM. That is, through the use of six kinds of cue (shown in Exhibit 4.11, column 1), people can set forth a series of positive reminders and goals concerning the desired behaviors. These reminders serve to focus our attention on what we are trying to accomplish. Hence, a person who is trying to quit smoking would (1) avoid any contact with smokers or smoking ads, (2) seek information on the hazards of smoking, (3) set a personal goal of quitting, and (4) keep track of cigarette consumption. These activities are aimed at providing the right situational cues to guide behavior.

Cognitive Supports. Next, the person makes use of three types of cognitive support to assist with the self-management process. Cognitive supports represent psychological (as opposed to environmental) cues. Three such supports can be identified:

1. **Symbolic Coding.** First, people may use symbolic coding, whereby they try to associate verbal or visual stimuli with the problem. For example, we may create a picture in our mind of a smoker who is coughing and obviously sick. Thus, every time we think of cigarettes, we would associate it with illness.

2. **Rehearsal.** Second, people may mentally rehearse the solution to the problem. For example, we may imagine how we would behave in a social situation without cigarettes. By doing so, we develop a self-image of how it would be under the desired condition.

3. **Self-Talk.** Finally, people can give themselves “pep talks” to continue their positive behavior. We know from behavioral research that people who take a negative view of things (“I can’t do this”) tend to fail more than people who take a more positive view (“Yes, I can do this”). Thus, through self-talk, we can help convince ourselves that the desired outcome is indeed possible.

Behavioral Dilemmas. Obviously, self-management is used almost exclusively to get people to do things that may be unappealing; we need little incentive to do things that are fun. Hence, we use self-management to get individuals to stop procrastinating on a job, attend to a job that may lack challenge, assert themselves, and so forth. These are the “behavioral dilemmas” referred to in the model (Exhibit 4.11). In short, the challenge is to get people to substitute what have been called low-probability behaviors (e.g., adhering to a schedule or forgoing the immediate gratification from one cigarette) for high-probability behaviors (e.g., procrastinating or contracting lung cancer). In the long run, it is better for the individual—and her career—to shift behaviors, because failure to do so may lead to punishment or worse. As a result, people often use self-management to change their short-term dysfunctional behaviors into long-range beneficial ones. This short-term versus long-term conflict is referred to as a behavioral dilemma.

Self-Reinforcement. Finally, the individual can provide self-reinforcement. People can, in effect, pat themselves on the back and recognize that they accomplished what they set out to do. According to Bandura, self-reinforcement requires three conditions if it is to be effective: (1) clear performance standards must be set to establish both the quantity and quality of the targeted behavior, (2) the person must have control over the desired reinforcers, and (3) the reinforcers must be administered only on a conditional basis—that is, failure to meet the performance standard must lead to denial of the reward.21 Thus, through a process of working to change one’s environment and taking charge of one’s own behavior, self-management techniques allow individuals to improve their behavior in a way that can help them and those around them.

Reducing Absenteeism through Self-Management

In a recent study, efforts were made to reduce employee absenteeism using some of the techniques found in behavioral self-management. The employees were unionized state government workers with a history of absenteeism. Self-management training was given to these workers. Training was carried out over eight one-
hour sessions for each group, along with eight 30-minute one-on-one sessions with each participant. Included in these sessions were efforts to (1) teach the participants how to describe problem behaviors (e.g., disagreements with coworkers) that led to absences, (2) identify the causes creating and maintaining the behaviors, and (3) develop coping strategies. Participants set both short-term and long-term goals with respect to modifying their behaviors. In addition, they were shown how to record their own absences in reports including their frequency and the reasons for and consequences of them. Finally, participants identified potential reinforcers and punishments that could be self-administered contingent upon goal attainment or failure.

When, after nine months, the study was concluded, results showed that the self-management approach had led to a significant reduction in absences (compared to a control group). The researchers concluded that such an approach has important applications to a wide array of behavioral problems in the workplace.22

CONCEPT CHECK

1. Understand Kanfer’s behavioral self-management process.
2. What are things you can do to instill self-management techniques for yourself?
3. What behavioral self-management techniques can you use as a manager?
**Key Terms**

**Avoidance learning** Refers to seeking to avoid an unpleasant condition or outcome by following a desired behavior.

**Behavior modification** The use of operant conditioning principles to shape human behavior to conform to desired standards defined by superiors.

**Behavioral criteria** Defining what constitutes acceptable behavior in terms that employees can understand in objective, measurable terms.

**Behavioral dilemmas** The process of getting people to substitute what have been called low-probability behaviors for high-probability behaviors.

**Behavioral self-management** The use of operant conditioning principles to shape your own behavior to conform to desired standards defined by superiors.

**Classical conditioning** The process whereby a stimulus-response bond is developed between a conditioned stimulus and a conditioned response through the repeated linking of a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus.

**Conditioned response** The process of conditioning through the repeated linking of a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus.

**Continuous reinforcement** Rewards desired behavior every time it occurs.

**Drive** An internal state of disequilibrium; it is a felt need. It is generally believed that drive increases with the strength of deprivation.

**Extinction** The principle that suggests that undesired behavior will decline as a result of a lack of positive reinforcement.

**Habit** The experienced bond or connection between stimulus and response.

**Law of effect** States that of several responses made to the same situation, those that are accompanied or closely followed by satisfaction (reinforcement) will be more likely to occur; those that are accompanied or closely followed by discomfort (punishment) will be less likely to occur.

**Operant conditioning** Measures the effects of reinforcements, or rewards, on desired behaviors.

**Partial reinforcement** Rewards desired behavior at specific intervals, not every time desired behavior is exhibited.

**Performance audit** Aims to identify discrepancies between what management sees as desired or acceptable behavior and actual behavior.

**Positive reinforcement** Consists of presenting someone with an attractive outcome following a desired behavior.

**Punishment** The administration of unpleasant or adverse outcomes as a result of undesired behavior.

**Reciprocal determinism** This concept implies that people control their own environment as much as the environment controls people.

**Reinforcement** Anything that causes a certain behavior to be repeated or inhibited.

**Self-regulation** The belief that individuals are capable of self-control if they want to change their behavior.

**Self-reinforcement** The stage in Kanfer’s model where, by evaluating the situation and taking corrective action if necessary, one would assure themselves that the disruptive influence had passed and everything was now fine.

**Self-talk** The process of convincing ourselves that the desired outcome is indeed possible.

**Shaping** The process of improving performance incrementally, step by step.

**Social learning theory** The process of molding behavior through the reciprocal interaction of a person’s cognitions, behavior, and environment.
**Symbolic coding** When people try to associate verbal or visual stimuli with the problem.

**Unconditioned response** From classical conditioning, a response to an unconditioned stimulus that is naturally evoked by that stimulus.

**Vicarious learning** Learning that takes place through the imitation of other role models.

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**Summary of Learning Outcomes**

### 4.1 Basic Models of Learning

1. **How do organizations offer appropriate rewards in a timely fashion?**

People learn through both direct experience and vicarious experience. What is retained and produced as behavior is a function of the positive and negative consequences either directly experience by individuals or observed as the result of the actions of others. Often, managers and trainers underestimate the power of vicarious learning. Also, keep in mind that reinforcement that has some variability in its application (variable ratio or interval) has the strongest and longest-lasting impact on desired learned behaviors.

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience.

Thorndike’s law of effect notes that behavior that is rewarded is likely to be repeated, whereas behavior that is punished is unlikely to be repeated. Operant conditioning can be distinguished from classical conditioning in two ways: (1) it asserts that changes in behavior result from the consequences of previous behaviors instead of changes in stimuli, and (2) it asserts that desired behaviors result only when rewards are tied to correct responses instead of when unconditioned stimuli are administered after every trial.

Social learning is the process of altering behavior through the reciprocal interaction of a person’s cognitions, previous behavior, and environment. This is done through a process of reciprocal determinism.

Vicarious learning is learning that takes place through observation and imitation of others.

Learning is influenced by (1) a motivation to learn, (2) knowledge of results, (3) prior learning, (4) the extent to which the task to be learned is presented as a whole or in parts, and (5) distribution of practice.

### 4.2 Reinforcement and Behavioral Change

2. **What are the best practices that organizations utilize to train employees in new job skills?**

Reinforcement causes a certain behavior to be repeated or inhibited. Positive reinforcement is the practice of presenting someone with an attractive outcome following a desired behavior.

Avoidance learning occurs when someone attempts to avoid an unpleasant condition or outcome by behaving in a way desired by others.

Punishment is the administration of an unpleasant or adverse outcome following an undesired behavior.

Reinforcement schedules may be continuous or partial. Among the partial reinforcement schedules are (1) fixed interval, (2) fixed ratio, (3) variable interval, and (4) variable ratio.

### 4.3 Behavior Modification in Organizations

3. **How do managers and organizations reduce undesirable employee behavior while reinforcing desirable behavior?**

Behavior modification is the use of operant principles to shape human behavior to conform to desired standards as defined by superiors. A behavior modification program follows five steps: (1) establish clear objectives, (2) conduct a performance audit, (3) set specific goals and remove obstacles, (4) evaluate results against preset criteria, and (5) administer feedback and praise where warranted.
4.4 Behavioral Self-Management

4. How can employees be trained to assume more responsibility for self-improvement and job performance with the goal of creating a work environment characterized by continual self-learning and employee development?

Behavioral self-management is the process of modifying one’s own behavior by systematically managing cues, cognitions, and contingent consequences. BSM makes use of the self-regulation process.

Chapter Review Questions

1. Define learning. Why is an understanding of learning important for managers?
2. Compare and contrast operant conditioning with classical conditioning. Provide examples of each.
3. What is social learning theory? Describe how this process works.
4. What implications of social learning theory for management can you identify?
5. Identify four strategies for reinforcement, and provide an example of each.
6. Describe the four different schedules of reinforcement, and show how their use by managers can vary.
7. How might you design a simple behavior modification program for a group of employees? Explain.
8. What are some problems in trying to implement a behavioral self-management program? How can managers attempt to overcome these problems?

Management Skills Application Exercises

1. In order to better understand how behavioral self-management programs operate, you might want to complete this self-assessment and design your own self-management program. This exercise allows you to see firsthand how these programs can be applied to a wide array of problems. It also highlights the advantages and drawbacks of such programs. Refer to Appendix B when you are finished in order to evaluate your results.

Designing Your Own Behavioral Self-Management Program

Instructions: Think of a personal problem that you would like to overcome. This problem could be to stop smoking, improve your grades, stop a certain habit, and so forth. With this problem in mind, design your own behavioral self-management program using the procedures and principles previously outlined in this chapter. After you have designed and started the program, monitor your performance over time and see how effective you are both in following the program and in meeting your objectives. In light of your experience, how do you feel about the potential of behavioral self-management programs in the industrial setting? (See Appendix B.)

Managerial Decision Exercises

1. You manage the human resources department for a mid-sized retailer. Part of the operations consists of a call center with 100 employees spread over three shifts operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is a main group with 20 people reporting to a shift supervisor on the main daytime shift from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. There are regularly scheduled times for breaks and lunch. Recently senior management reported to you that they were concerned regarding tardiness of some employees. While the customer
relationship management reports signal that there are no service issues, senior managers are concerned that they are overstaffed. You feel that the daytime shift is the most experienced group, and you do not want to lose some of the best employees through termination. You also do not have any budget money to use for incentive payments aimed at reducing tardiness. What ideas from operant conditioning, behavior modification, and social learning theory would you use to reduce the problems of tardiness?

2. Organizations are facing changes in their business environment because of globalization of markets and competition, growth of immediate digital information and communications, growth of the service-based economy, and changes in rules affecting corporate governance and trade relationships. Assume the role of a CEO who needs to change their corporate culture and their standards of operation. The organizational structures in your industry have trended from tall, hierarchical bureaucracies to flat, decentralized operations that encourage innovation. Changes like this do not happen automatically. What theories and techniques would you use to change your organization’s culture?

Critical Thinking Case

Walt Disney World

When it comes to presenting world-class customer experiences, Walt Disney World is at the top of the list. It’s literally called the Most Magical Place on Earth. However, it isn’t just their customers who are receiving rewards for visiting—their cast members and crew are getting rewarded big-time as well.

Incentives go above and beyond a 401(k) program, and they can go a long way in retaining employees and increasing employee satisfaction as well. Disney has over 180 employee recognition programs to give their employees a sense of accomplishment, recognition, and appreciation.

There are over 70,000 cast members at Walt Disney World, each of whom receive extensive training to make sure that they make the customer experience a world-class enjoyment. According to Mike Fox, author of *Hidden Secrets & Stories of Walt Disney World*, “it always impresses me, especially at the cast member level, the training that goes into helping these folks to provide a superior experience and to see it on stage and see it executed.”

Walt Disney exemplifies many ways of recognition, lots of them being physical in-park recognitions. These include names in windows on Main Street tributes, featuring Disney’s best “imagineers” that helped create some of the park’s greatest rides and innovations. One of the most unique is the Lifetime Fred award, which recognizes employees who exhibit the core company values of friendliness and dependability. It is these varying types of recognition that make Walt Disney’s rewards program so robust and versatile and keep employees engaged and willing to work hard to achieve more.

Questions:

1. What key factors are important to consider when creating a rewards program?
2. Why is timing a key component to a rewards program?
3. What can be problematic about the wrong type of reward or the wrong frequency of the reward for employees?

Cain, Áine, “15 insider facts about working at Walt Disney World only cast members know,” Business Insider,