



Stanford eCorner

Live a Mindset; Don't Talk About It

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Stanford Professor Bob Sutton explains the importance of action and behavior when trying to scale a mindset among members of a team. Using research done with teams at JetBlue, Sutton, co-author of *Scaling Up Excellence*, articulates how a team's beliefs will change as long as you keep them moving forward.



Transcript

There is a large body of psychological research which essentially says that if you want to change people's beliefs, and you want to sort of cement a mindset, what they say or what you say to them, well that's just fine. But what really changes the deep seated beliefs we have is what our behavior is. So you go to Facebook, which I have already talked about, this is a quote from Chris Cox, we don't talk about our mindset much, they kind of get introductory lecture from Chris, who still does it from most people at Facebook. Maybe they give them a computer and get them going. But the idea is to live the mindset not to talk about it and it turns out and there is good research to support this that even if people don't like the direction you want them to go and don't believe you, your job is to keep them marching in the direction you want them to go. And there is a lot of evidence that their beliefs will change as a result as long as you keep them going. And by the way every major religion and every - and every major military uses this technique to brainwash people. But to give you an - so actually I lost Bonny Simi, but I'm going to tell this story anyway, so I took out one slide too many. So there is this amazing Stanford graduate Bonny Simi. Bonny is a three time Olympian in the luge and for you undergraduates you will love this, I sort of love this too.

There was one point, Bonny is in her 50s now. She got a letter from the provost putting around academic probation in the same day she got a letter also from the provost congratulating her for making the U.S teams. So she had an interesting sort of career. Well Bonny in addition to doing all these Olympic efforts, she became a pilot and eventually became a pilot at Jet Blue and Bonny has since done all sorts of stuff at the D.school along the way she got an MBA and a degree from Management Science and Engineer just in the last five or six years, because she loves school so much. And one of the reasons she got a degree from MS&E is she wanted to learn about operations because some of us will remember in 2007 there was a terrible incident where there were 1000s of people stuck on planes at Kennedy and Bonny believed that that was a completely preventable problem caused by the fact that Jet Blue had outgrown its culture, its process and its IT system as it had gotten too big. It needed to go to a more systemic approach and after several top down attempts to stop it, to fix it they were so desperate they let Bonny sort of try her trick which was initially to bring 40 and then in groups of as much as 80 people together and what they would do is out of the D.school since she was very influenced by the D.school is so imagine a storm hits Kennedy, I flew to Kennedy last week and all the planes - 4,000 flights cancelled. A storm hits Kennedy what's the process of closing it and then reopening it and doing it effectively as possible and they'd map that with post-it notes and wherever there was a pink post-it note that meant that there was a problem they have to fix. Very inter-disciplinary teams and so she did this, she describes and she talked about this in my class MS&E280 at one point and she has all these folks doing this for her and its like the first day she's got almost no budget and she says to them, it was about 40 of them how many of you think this is going to be effective? Not a single one of them raised their hands but they liked Bonny so they kept sort of moving forward and if you fast forward a few years, this process actually seems to have largely fixed their operations during difficult weather. And the message here is no matter what people are saying, keep them moving forward.