

Establish The Next Target Condition A “People Aspect”

BRIEF

Re Target Conditions I had an “aha moment” with a packing line operator about 9 months ago, considered this for some time, and eventually emailed Mike Rother with a question. Mike emailed me back suggesting I ask a group of Kata People their thoughts.

Following is my email and their replies.

OSCAR’S EMAIL, 31 AUGUST 2017

Based on what I’ve seen and experienced my belief is that Target Conditions can be a key driver / motivator but conversely are often just another humdrum target, and thus even a demotivator.

Mike mentions several criteria for Target Conditions in his studies of Toyota , one being “meaningful to those working on them”. He indicates the key word is Condition, the way something is operating/performing from which the desired outcome (often a target) is derived.

I guess I use these two primary thoughts in coaching identification of a Target Condition, a “meaningful condition” – what do you NEED this to look, sound and smell like when you get there? I always ensure there is a very clear measurable, but not necessarily a “metric”. I found with this approach that the “doers” become “tuned” and interested a lot quicker.

In our training, with reference to Target Conditions, we discuss creating a picture in people’s minds ...

“Numerical goals tend not to be sufficient in motivating people - you need to create a picture, preferably with no numbers.” JFK said in 1961 “we will fly to the moon and back home safely by the end of the decade”. (Admittedly that’s a bit more of a Challenge than a Target Condition, but that’s not the point.)

Further to this I’ve never seen improvement in results sustained when the work has become harder, and seldom sustained when the process/system becomes more complex. So I also think it helps if the Target Condition “picture in people’s minds” illustrates life will be easier when we get to where we NEED to be. Numbers reduction (or increase) often communicates the first thought of “you want me to work harder?”

JEFF LIKER’S REPLY

I agree completely. I like the picture in people’s mind. I believe this is one of the hardest things for people to learn - how to define a target condition beyond simply setting a result number. Doing it requires pushing them to think about what they want the process to look like - which is very hard - requiring real thinking about the drivers behind moving the metrics. But it provides a concrete image of the process which in my experience is more motivating than a simple outcome number. It does require good coaching - the coach has to be able to do it to coach it.

BETH CARRINGTON’S REPLY

Let me show you my thinking regarding the development of a Target Condition (Target Pattern is my favorite term.)

I coach to a desired pattern of work, which the learner predicts will move them closer to the Challenge, first then the metrics. A picture of the desired pattern of work is my default, block diagram, illustration of some sort works for most people with some coaching. Process characteristics come next. Things like new capabilities, forms, equipment, required in the desired pattern of work.

Then I work with them to add 2 metrics. 1 = a Process Metric - this is an "In the moment/process metric", measurable within the pattern of work. Then 2 = the Outcome metric which, mathematically or logically, the learner predicts will be achieved if the desired pattern of work is achieved as measured by the process metric.

All that being said the target condition must be relevant to the team members, learner, coach, 2nd coach and advanced group (leadership) or else why do it. But the relevancy starts with the Challenge. What do we need to achieve?

I agree with Jeff - defining a great target pattern of work is one of the hardest aspects of IK. A couple of approaches I recommend coaches to use is; to ask the learner what they need to learn to do to move them forward to the challenge or to list perceived obstacles to their Challenge then pick one and build a target condition around it. Once the desired pattern is defined most folks can determine an in the moment, process metric, then with a bit of math and/or critical thinking determine an outcome metric or two.

MARK ROSENTHAL'S REPLY

I strongly concur with everything Jeff and Beth have said.

I'll add that sometimes people tend to default to talking about "goals" in terms of metrics, because we have been teaching and practicing that for decades in most companies. It can be hard to move them off starting with metrics, it feels wrong to them not to go there first. Rather than trying to fight that, sometimes it helps to just run with it. "What would have to be happening to reach that goal?"

You're likely (with a beginner) to hear the things they don't want to happen. "OK, so what would be happening if those things weren't?" Ultimately I want to try to get them to pick up a pen and sketch out a block diagram, or some picture. That's MY target condition. :)

As everyone above has said, if the learner doesn't have a picture in her mind of how it needs to work, they are unlikely to "own" getting there. Sometimes, as they think about it more, it becomes daunting to them. That is time to maybe reel in the "achieve by" date a bit to get them to reduce the scope of the change they are trying to make.

I also think it is important to understand that, sometimes, there are target conditions which might *not* change the outcome metrics very much, but are laying critical foundations for the things that will. For example, if a process is so unstable that the learner (or anyone) can't even see an underlying pattern, then initial steps toward stability might be more appropriate so the signal-to-noise ratio is improved to the point where the effect of actual process changes can be seen.

And, again, piling on a bit to Beth's key point - I absolutely want them to define a clear "how will you know you have achieved the target?" This is a process metric which may be a classic measurement, or could be something like counting instances of out-of-cycle work. In any case, there needs to be an objective "cross the plane of the goal line" point, not a judgement like "better" "improved" or "reduced."

Just adding a little more, another thing I've learned is to help the learner distinguish between a target condition that establishes that a capability is possible, with a potentially follow-on target condition of making that process more robust in the face of external factors such as substitute workers because someone called in sick, etc. "Don't try to fix it all at once." There is no need to do that. Again, that makes it less daunting by reducing the size of the obstacle list.

If I have learned nothing else in the last couple of years, it has been the balance between dogma and keeping the learner "in the game." The latter is FAR more important.