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**Motivating  
Behavior Change  
*Boosting Performance by  
Mobilizing Pride Builders***

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Achieving strategic goals and accelerating performance results often requires that employees at multiple levels of the organization change certain critical behaviors. Many companies do not succeed at helping those employees change despite investing heavily in formal initiatives such as financial incentives or training programs. The problem is that they neglect an essential aspect of what motivates employees—the emotional commitments that they must bring to the organization and their jobs in order to do well and to exceed expectations. By mobilizing those emotional commitments, companies can accelerate the behavior changes required to elevate business performance. “Pride Builders”—employees who instinctively know how to connect what makes individuals “feel good” with their day-to-day activities and thereby instill in those people pride in the work they do—can play a substantial role in mobilizing the kind of emotional commitment that makes behavior change happen.*

*Pride Builders are often overlooked and underutilized, though their potential is enormous. Organizations should follow a rigorous approach to determine who the Pride Builders are and then build on their insights and capabilities to influence behaviors. Pride Builders can be helpful allies in spreading both motivational behaviors and performance behaviors. In practice, an eight-step tactic we call a performance pilot is often valuable in gaining insights and demonstrating impact. Ultimately, companies can grow a robust community of Pride Builders and develop the institutional capability to observe, capture, and spread critical behavior changes throughout the organization.*

# FOCUS ON THE CRITICAL FEW BEHAVIORS

The ever-increasing pace and magnitude of change in highly competitive business environments has created an unprecedented need for organizational agility. Driving behavior change rapidly throughout the organization is more important than ever. By *behaviors*, we mean the usual, repeated way in which employees spend their time, make decisions, conduct relationships, handle conflicts and truths, and perform their job. But behavior change is hard to achieve. To illustrate that point: Think back to when you first met your spouse. How many real behavior changes have you been able to make (or motivate your spouse to make) since then? One? Two?

Organizations are no different. That's why leaders have to pick their battles carefully and identify those few critical behaviors essential to achieving explicitly stated business objectives. Typically, addressing a set of three to five key behaviors is doable. Behavior change is not equally important for all employees. Consequently, it is imperative to identify the employee groups whose behavior change will have the most impact. In our experience, those groups are often leaders or frontline employees who either interact with customers or shape the company's product and service offerings. But what exactly are the appropriate

critical behaviors to target? Deciding which of the potential behavior changes you should focus on is often tough. There are a number of dimensions to consider in selecting the critical few:

- Business impact: Will the new behavior make a difference in achieving the key priorities and objectives of the organization?
- Senior leadership support: Does management fully support this behavior change?
- Momentum: Does the behavior change create motivation and momentum for follow-up efforts?
- Measurability: Can we measure and track the targeted behavior change?
- Ease of implementation: Can the targeted behavior change be implemented with reasonable resources and appropriate support from the organization?
- Timing: Will the targeted behavior change happen within the required time frame?

In many cases, the critical behaviors that must change flow directly from a reassessment of strategic and operating priorities or a new strategy itself. For example, a telecommunications company adopted a new customer-centric strategy, then identified the few critical behavior changes required in its call centers for that new strategy to come to life (*see Exhibit 1*).

It's one thing to determine the critical few behaviors, but quite another to get your employees to adopt them. In most cases this cannot be done by decree, however desirable that might be. If behavior change is to become permanent and viable, it needs to be *motivated*, not just *mandated*. It must be anchored in the organizational culture, in the patterns of how people think, feel, and believe.

To motivate employees in this way, appealing to both their rational and emotional sides is necessary. Just look at the employees of such extraordinary organizations as Southwest Airlines, Apple, or the U.S. Marine Corps. Emotional commitment—not logical compliance—is what determines employees' exceptional service, innovation, and dedication to the organization. Unprompted, these workers go the extra mile for the good of their units and their organizations. For instance, at Southwest Airlines, it is not uncommon for pilots to help baggage handlers, and for flight attendants to interact with passengers before they get on the plane. At Apple, employees extensively network and communicate directly with customers and other Apple devotees who care as much about the company and its products as they do. And there are countless examples of battlegrounds where Marines have brought out more members—alive, wounded, and dead—than any other military unit operating in the same theater, as well as more trivial evidence of emotional commitment, such as the letters sent by readers to the *Marine Corps Gazette* magazine in which they show in words their devotion to the values of the Marine Corps.

To bring critical behaviors to life and achieve lasting change, organizations need to deploy a well-balanced combination of formal and informal levers. On the formal side, organizations can use financial incentives, official communications, training programs, performance management systems, or operating policies to help align behaviors. On the informal side,

peer-to-peer interactions through ad hoc dialogue and collaboration, and open networks that connect people and groups emotionally, are good approaches.

But in our experience, one informal approach is particularly powerful, though largely overlooked: Tapping into the unique skills of the accom-

plished “Pride Builders” in the organization, who know how to connect the aspirations and drive of individuals to their day-to-day work with the goal of ultimately accelerating behavior change and improving business performance. Mobilizing Pride Builders in conjunction with other formal and informal levers can greatly accelerate change in an organization.

**Exhibit 1**  
*Behavior Change for a Telecommunications Call Center*

**If a customer calls to complain about usage charges...**

Current Behavior	New Behavior	Applying the New Behavior
Explain constraints and limitations and offer standard scripted alternatives	Take ownership of the customer's problem, focus on what you can do, and don't stop until the problem is solved	Instead of laying out in detail the terms and rules behind overtime charges, recognize the issue and come up with a creative and satisfactory resolution
Give a detailed explanation of services and internal processes	Make explanations simple and relevant to the customer; problem-solve with the customer and modify organizational processes to fit her needs	Ask the customer what she wants; concisely offer solutions and do not burden the customer with internal obstacles
Dive straight into addressing the issue	Earn the customer's confidence by listening, clearing up confusion, and reassuring her that you understand her concerns; build rapport by learning something personal about the customer's situation	Find out why the customer's minute usage increased and, in the process, perhaps learn that she now has to join a lot of conference calls; tell her you will do your best to address her situation
Focus on current promotions and list available options in response to the customer's request	Identify opportunities that match the customer's current situation	Proactively suggest a plan upgrade to avoid future charges, but don't "push" the promotion for unlimited weekend calling, which this customer doesn't need
Address only the customer's stated request	Anticipate the customer's future needs; check in with her in a few weeks to see how it's going	Once the issue of past charges is resolved, recognize that the customer makes a lot of international calls and propose an additional global calling program

Source: Booz & Company

## THE POWER OF PRIDE BUILDERS

Instilling among employees pride in the work they do and in the organization for which they do it is one of the most efficacious ways to motivate employees to adopt the effective behaviors that lead to greater commitment and enhanced performance. Nearly all organizations have Pride Builders, although many companies are not aware of them or don't know

how to capitalize on their potential value. Simply put, Pride Builders are employees who excel at motivating colleagues to achieve stellar results by building a strong connection between individuals and their day-to-day work.

Pride Builders are not always the most charismatic or the highest potential individuals in the organization. But their motivational capabilities go well beyond what most good managers or "people persons" do (*see Exhibit 2*), and they can help influence behaviors through informal interactions. For example, whereas most good managers link an individual's productivity

and output to the larger mission of the company, Pride Builders appeal to the emotional side of individuals. Whereas good managers create momentum by focusing on periodic results, Pride Builders target the behaviors required for results; in other words, they get people to take pride in the journey as well as in the destination. Whereas good managers help individuals with the strongest potential achieve their best, Pride Builders concentrate on the development of the entire team. In essence, Pride Builders enable people to be the best they can be. This translates into consistently delivering superior business results.

**Exhibit 2**  
*How Pride Builders Differ*

	Good Manager	People Person	Pride Builder
Primary Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exceed business goals</li> <li>Make group's work efficient</li> <li>Leverage own time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create meaningful relationships</li> <li>Ensure that all have a good time</li> <li>Meet business goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivate and enable people to achieve their personal best</li> <li>Exceed business goals through people's performance, as well as process execution</li> </ul>
Core Passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal and individualized meaning in own and staff's work</li> </ul>
Believes Key Motivators Are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion</li> <li>Compensation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaningful relationships</li> <li>Fun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pride in individual work as well as the company as a whole</li> <li>Expanded personal growth and responsibility</li> </ul>
What Staff Says About Her/Him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"We get things done because of him."</li> <li>"He's a solid manager."</li> <li>"I'm confident with him at the helm."</li> <li>"He gives me the tools I need to get the job done."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"He's fun to work with. I always look forward to seeing him."</li> <li>"I know he likes us to enjoy one another."</li> <li>"He realizes that people are much more important than numbers."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"She's the most motivating manager I've worked for."</li> <li>"I don't want to let her down."</li> <li>"She's a role model whose passion and energy are contagious."</li> </ul>

Source: Booz & Company

# ACCELERATING BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Because Pride Builders excel at motivating others, one of the most powerful ways an organization can use them is for accelerating behavior change. It is important to recognize that there are two different kinds of behaviors that Pride Builders can effectively influence: motivational behaviors among their peers, and performance behaviors among their subordinates.

Pride Builders exhibit *motivational behaviors* naturally. For example, they are especially adept at maintaining rich personal connections and

knowing team members as individuals; they also know how to connect individuals' day-to-day work to an organization's bigger strategic goals. Some Pride Builder behaviors are common across most Pride Builders (*see Exhibit 3*); others are specific to the individual and company environment. Accomplished Pride Builders and their peers have mutual respect. As a result, leaders in the organization would be well advised to solicit the help of Pride Builders in spreading their motivational insights and methods by sharing them with their peers.

**Exhibit 3**  
**What Sets Pride Builders Apart**

Pride-Building Behavior	What It Looks Like in Practice
Maintain rich personal connections and get to know team members as individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create sincere "human moments" of face-to-face contact</li> <li>• Hold social events to celebrate collective success and facilitate bonding</li> </ul>
Connect individuals' day-to-day work to the bigger picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold informal meetings to explain what enterprise-level decisions mean to the team and how individuals' work contributes to the goals of the company</li> <li>• Communicate strategic priorities in a personalized way that makes sense to the people doing the work</li> </ul>
Make team members stakeholders in the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give everyone a voice in the problem-solving process in a collegial yet competitive atmosphere</li> <li>• Encourage and enable team members to think through problems themselves and build their own list of solutions</li> </ul>
Communicate clear, actionable goals that the team can relate to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize a couple of simple metrics on which team members can directly act</li> <li>• Set clear expectations for all team members and give them autonomy to achieve them</li> </ul>
Broaden the scope of work and support individuals' development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have regular one-on-one development and goal-setting conversations to identify stretch opportunities</li> <li>• Organize formal and informal training programs to support team members in taking on stretch opportunities</li> </ul>
Recognize people immediately for both large and small achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate small achievements for each person along the way to meeting a goal</li> <li>• Maintain a Wall of Fame featuring pictures of teammates and lists of their accomplishments</li> </ul>
Provide and seek constructive feedback frequently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have frequent formal or informal one-on-one meetings with team members in addition to annual performance reviews</li> <li>• Be up-front about where each individual stands and carefully compile the evidence to back up the assessment</li> </ul>
Use an inclusive, transparent communication style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver hard messages up front in team meetings and explain them in clear-cut terms</li> <li>• Gather the team to openly discuss trends in performance (positive or negative) and what drives them</li> </ul>

Source: Booz & Company

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*Performance behaviors* differ from motivational behaviors. Performance behaviors are those that pertain to the work itself and that the organization needs to instill in order to address critical business challenges. For example, in the midst of a turnaround, a manufacturing company may need to emphasize behaviors in its operations and maintenance teams that drive lower costs. Pride Builders can use their motivational behaviors to accelerate the adoption of performance behaviors—in this case, behaviors that drive lower costs.

Beyond behavior change, Pride Builders can be helpful in a couple of other ways:

- *Providing insights from the front line:* Pride Builders can effectively advise senior leadership by piercing the “executive bubble,” particularly during periods of transformation. They can help connect the executive team to the realities in the trenches and provide unique insights on communications, programs, and policies directed to the front line and middle management. They also can find creative ways to work around roadblocks in formal systems and processes to enable breakthrough performance.
- *Institutionalizing a Pride Builder capability:* As exemplars of the best motivating behaviors, Pride Builders can provide insights

into and be role models for what all managers should do. Their methods and means can be built into key talent processes such as recruitment, training, performance assessment, and succession planning to help reinforce pride-building skills in the organization. For example, organizations can adjust the criteria used for employee performance appraisal to encourage individuals to adopt the most powerful motivating tactics observed in Pride Builders.

Because Pride Builders can be extremely versatile—and valuable—organizations should carefully consider the precise ways that they can help the business.

*Pride Builders can use their motivational behaviors to accelerate the adoption of performance behaviors*

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## IDENTIFYING PRIDE BUILDERS

Mobilizing Pride Builders to accelerate change and improve performance begins with choosing the right group of respected motivating employees to work with. The initial cohort of Pride Builders should be individuals close to the front line who are widely recognized as being able to both motivate their teams and achieve superior results. Starting with a small group of high-quality, well-respected individuals is important. Typically, the process of identifying Pride Builders involves three steps:

*Step 1: Clarify the Criteria.*

Articulating the characteristics that uniquely define Pride Builders in a way that is tailored to the organization and in a language that resonates with the organization's culture is essential and often more difficult than one would assume. However, once managers do understand these criteria, they can typically identify poten-

tial Pride Builders quickly and with relative accuracy. Determining which of the identified Pride Builders to mobilize will depend on the way the organization is planning to use them and on the behavior change priorities that must be addressed. Relevant roles, levels, experience, or locations should be defined clearly and carefully to ensure appropriate representation of key populations—particularly when the performance issue being targeted affects multiple functions or business units.

*Step 2: Develop a Short List of Nominees.*

With the criteria firmly in place, ask a handful of senior leaders—for example, the head of a business unit or function—to identify individuals in their organizations who fit the bill. Often they will be frontline, customer-facing employees, but they don't have to be. Encourage these leaders

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to consult their direct reports, who may also have ideas about potential Pride Builders. Nominators should provide specific examples of how the team's extraordinary level of intrinsic motivation manifests itself and include quotes from team members about the Pride Builders as well as actions the Pride Builders have taken.

*Step 3: Conduct Targeted Interviews and Focus Groups.*

In-depth interviews with identified individuals are an excellent way to confirm that they really are Pride Builders. These discussions should bring out in more detail the behaviors that determine the unique, tangible, even measurable differences in the

way the Pride Builders' teams operate. But even more revealing are the interviews with the team members of potential Pride Builders. Whereas the Pride Builders themselves are often unaware of what is "different" about them, people on their teams recognize their unique talents and will use telling phrases like "role model," "contagious passion and energy," or "best supervisor I have ever worked with" to describe them. Group discussions with direct reports or colleagues invariably deliver the clearest picture of whether the individuals identified are real Pride Builders and, if so, how they motivate the people they work with. In some more structurally regimented settings,

such as call centers or distribution outlets, workplace observation may also be appropriate.

Generally, after Pride Builders are chosen, it is best not to be too public about their names—although it is good not to be secretive about them either. Mainly, the goal is to avoid any sense that certain people in the organization are "especially gifted" and are thus in the "in crowd." In fact, it is important to cultivate the idea that many managers, perhaps even most, have the potential to become Pride Builders, if they are willing to learn and hone the skills that exemplify these talented motivators.

*It is important to cultivate the idea that many managers, perhaps even most, have the potential to become Pride Builders.*

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## PRIDE BUILDER PERFORMANCE PILOTS

Once the Pride Builders have been identified, the organization can immediately begin leveraging their unique motivational skills to address its most pressing challenges. In most situations, we recommend starting with a performance pilot because it provides quantitative validation that is very important in convincing a broad base of potential Pride Builders. Pilots are also valuable because they help the organization learn how to best deploy Pride Builders.

With this pilot approach, the organization selects a distinct area (business unit, function, country, region) and deploys its Pride Builders. At the same time, a “control group” is defined—a similar unit where Pride Builders are not utilized. By measuring the results of the pilot Pride Builder group and comparing them to the performance of the control group, it is possible to demonstrate the impact of Pride Builders almost immediately.

To develop a pilot, organizations should:

### *1. Define the challenge.*

Identify a specific business challenge that is pivotal to achieving performance goals and that requires broad-scale behavior changes in key populations of the company.

### *2. Select one or two units for the pilot.*

Initial pilots should be established in areas where success depends on the performance of a large number of people with similar jobs, such as call centers, shared-services organizations, or manufacturing teams, and where it is possible to work directly with Pride Builders to improve performance quickly—typically within two to five months. The units chosen for the pilot should have a robust group of current and potential Pride Builders to support the initiative. At this point, the control unit should also be identified.

### *3. Design the pilot.*

Select a small implementation team to lead the pilot launch and eventually manage it. This group should be small enough to work as a real team; that is, distinguished by shared leadership and mutual accountability. In practice, the group may draw from additional people as needed for specific pieces of work. The core team should carefully select the Pride Builders it will work closely with, taking into account the performance challenge at hand. Just because Pride Builders display a certain set of motivating behaviors does not mean they should necessarily all immediately be brought into the initiative. Two or three accomplished Pride Builders along with a

few potential Pride Builders is often a good combination.

*4. Determine the specific behaviors that need to change.*

Initial sets of behaviors identified by senior leaders to be the focus of the pilot can be refined through working sessions with both Pride Builders and other high-performing individuals. Sometimes, the core team is asked to determine the critical few behaviors and in the process conducts interviews and prepares analyses, surveys, and observational reports. Successful pilots typically earmark three to five behaviors—but no more. Pride Builders tend to be particularly good at identifying behaviors critical to the customer experience, but additional input is often required to address other levers of performance. The more direct the involvement of accomplished and well-respected Pride Builders in helping to determine these behaviors, the more credible they will be to others. Target behaviors should be defined as specifically as possible and captured in a model clearly establishing the current behaviors and how they must change.

*5. Develop metrics and reminder mechanisms.*

Measuring success is key to creating organizational momentum around using Pride Builders to motivate behavior change and boost performance. Moreover, the mere act of repeatedly measuring performance and concomitant behavior shifts can act as a powerful driver of change and a reminder of target behaviors. Having a clear set of metrics for assessing both behavior change and resulting increases in performance is a critical component of the pilot. Performance metrics should be specific, compelling, and directly related to business priorities. In addition, it is often valuable to track overall employee engagement and pride in day-to-day work. Where available, trends in employee culture survey results can be a valuable indicator.

*6. Define specific approaches to mobilizing Pride Builders.*

The specific ways in which Pride Builders are expected to help achieve critical behavior changes should be clearly established. Typical channels of engagement include working sessions with their teams, peer-to-peer

interactions, and feedback loops with management to capture suggested improvements in how behaviors are defined or how the pilot is conducted. The active guidance and engagement of senior managers is also critical to building the pilot's momentum.

*7. Launch and monitor progress.*

The pilot team must monitor progress closely and debrief participants frequently, especially when the pilot is in its initial stages. It is often necessary to continue refining the pilot behaviors, in some cases significantly, after the effort is launched in order to meet various demands and roadblocks that arise.

*8. Measure impact and launch rollout.*

As the pilot demonstrates a measurable impact in terms of both behaviors and performance, the lessons learned about motivating behavior change can be codified to drive similar improvements across the organization. Knowledge about critical behaviors can be built into key talent management processes and spread virally from the initial set of Pride Builders to a broader range of frontline and midline employees.

*Performance metrics should be specific, compelling, and directly related to business priorities.*

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## CREATING A MOVEMENT

From the start, the small group of Pride Builders is meant to grow virally and expand to support broad-scale behavior changes. Organizations can mobilize their initial set of Pride Builders to identify other Pride Builders who can grow the group. Furthermore, Pride Builders can identify other *potential* Pride Builders and spread their motivational skills—because their skills are teachable.

For example, at a major telecom company, the team started out with only 14 Pride Builders. Those 14 nominated 40 more, and the group eventually grew to 150 Pride Builders identified by internal nominations alone. This Pride Building team formed a community of practice to share ideas, methods, and techniques; it eventually had more than 1,500 members.

A community of practice can be a powerful incubator for new Pride

Builders, because it is typically made up of both proven motivational leaders and other managers aspiring to build their abilities in that area. Specific activities of this group may include sharing pride-building stories and insights with managers from across the organization, updating best practices regularly, or creating community tools and methods of reinforcement. If appropriately structured, the community of practice can be a tremendous way to capitalize on peer-to-peer interactions to spread pride-building abilities beyond formal training and development programs. In addition, it can be an invaluable forum for senior leadership; they can both mine insights from the motivational leaders of the organization and recruit Pride Builders to support strategic initiatives. It is often useful to consider the Pride Builder community of practice to be an ongoing element of the organization that can sustain pride-building capability over time.

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## CONCLUSION

Changes in critical behaviors required to meet performance goals can be dramatically accelerated by capitalizing on a unique group of people who can instill pride in day-to-day work among the individuals they work with and motivate them to strive for their personal best. A systematic approach to developing and building on the unique capabilities of motivational managers can be a powerful “viral complement” to more traditional programmatic approaches to driving change and increasing performance.

Establishing a robust pride-building capability has benefits for the organization that stretch far beyond employee motivation. Organizations that have embarked on a pride-building initiative often find that in the process they have forged the capability, infrastructure, and leadership skills needed to routinely achieve and scale the behavior changes required for competitive advantage.

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