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## CHOICE: KEY TO AVOIDING THE 'HAVE TRAP'

By John P. Foppe

People are like concrete – all mixed up and permanently set. We often perceive situations in a set way, whether they involve others, our jobs or ourselves. Consider these examples: Bill *is* rude; the situation is *always* complex; I *am* a perfectionist; or, she'll *never* do it. These fixed viewpoints close our minds from other possibilities.

When it comes to executing a change initiative, employees' set perceptions often fixate on obvious, tangible obstacles. Consequently, organizations frequently "re-arrange the furniture" rather than dealing with the root of a problem and creating real change. There is a better way.

### The 'Have Trap'

Motivational speakers have long proclaimed, "you have to be before you can do, and do before you can have." Some might dismiss this as a platitude. That's because the business world has mixed up the maxim and people fall into the "Have Trap."

The Have Trap is a common motivational mistake of confusing incentives for the goal itself. The trap occurs when tangible incentives in the form of "more, better, different" lure workers down an external path trying to change exterior circumstances and tackling obstacles head-on.

HAVE Incentive	DO Effort	BE Purpose
More	Dig Deeper	Be the Largest
Better	Go Faster	Be First
Different	Get Smarter	Be the Best

Employees begin with the perception that they must have things like more money, better tools or different methods in order to do a job. Once more money, better tools or different methods are in place, workers are encouraged to dig deeper, go faster and get sharper under the assumption their efforts will lead to being the largest, being first or

being the best. Like a hamster wheel, the faster an employee goes, the better he or she gets, but better probably isn't enough. The worker then has to go even faster, which is an exhausting cycle.

Take, for example, a healthcare system that instituted total quality management practices. In an effort to continuously improve patient satisfaction, nurses were expected to increase the amount of successful pre-registrations they completed each month. Initially, the nurses were excited to see how their efforts improved the department's patient satisfaction scores. But, no matter how many pre-registrations they did, the numbers were never high enough for the supervisor.

Like nurses, other employees become exasperated when put in similar situations. Eventually, employees expect others to do the job, people protect themselves, red tape abounds, turnover increases, innovation dies and initiatives are slowly killed.

Even if a company can get the right resources and right people together at the right time, employees often find themselves stuck on a draining performance treadmill. Digging deeper simply gives people more of something. Going faster makes something better, and getting smarter usually makes a different version of something. Often, nothing truly new is created. This becomes a trap within a trap.

### Not So Smart

Some clever employees think they are following an easier, softer path by practicing the old "work smarter – not harder" philosophy. In an attempt to work smarter, they try to assess all potential obstacles beforehand and search for deeper insights or better methods. More teambuilding exercises, better communication techniques and different customer service training sessions are brought in.

In no time at all, a lot of money, energy and brain-power have been exhausted trying to work smarter. These measures often yield few results because employees feel like they have been down this road before. In truth, no one

has worked smarter because the problems have not gone away – they have just been avoided.

### BEING AN EXECUTOR

For change to occur in a way that creates something new, employees must first let go of their set perceptions. When workers release their set perceptions of needing to have something in a certain way, they become receptive to what else is available and possible. They can reverse the Have Trap and take the internal path of an executor.

As an executor, employees consciously internalize the vision and buy in to executing outcomes. Visions cannot consistently translate into outcomes unless employees internalize the idea and commit to the goal. Internalizing a vision means being the vision – living, eating, breathing, sleeping and sharing the dream. When employees embody the vision, they make things happen.

When people become executors, the source of encouragement and motivation is internal and not dependent on an outside source. Being an executor doesn't cost any money or take any time. Fundamentally, being an executor digs down to one's identity – living the vision with one's whole heart, mind, body and spirit.

### CURIOSITY COUNTS

When employees avoid the Have Trap and follow the path of the executor, they are inwardly focused on being curious, committed and clear. Their set perceptions are released, allowing workers to be executors in the realm of unlimited possibility, creating more, better and different outcomes.

When employees are curious, they naturally dig deeper. Digging deeper usually translates into having more. When employees are clear, they tend to go faster, which leads to having something better. When employees are committed, they focus on getting smarter. Smarter paves the way to having something different. If employees hit an obstacle, like not having certain resources, they will find a way because they are internally motivated and focused.

### THE PATH OF THE EXECUTOR

BE Purpose	DO Effort	HAVE Incentive
Be Curious	Dig Deeper	More
Be Clear	Go Faster	Better
Be Committed	Get Smarter	Different

Consider the example of an administrative coordinator in an athletic department of a large university, who's committed to her job by seeing clearly her role for the athletes. She sometimes works 10 to 12 hours a day doing whatever needs to be done to keep the teams' support strong.

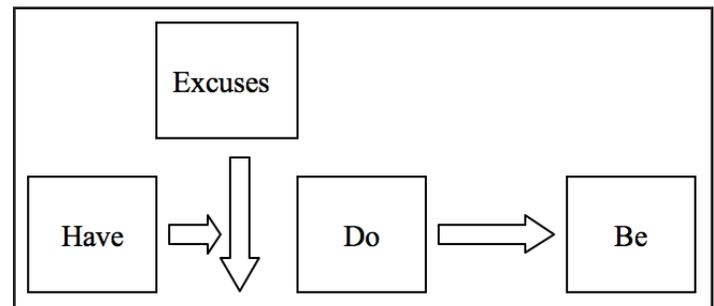
Like the coordinator, employees still have to work hard, fast and smart. Efforts remain central on the executor's path. The incentives remain the same, but they are no longer an external lure guiding out efforts. The coordinator does her duties with endless energy and enthusiasm. The coordinator works long and hard because she wants the players to know they are all winners.

However, choosing to be an executor is more than being passionate about one's work. In the case of the coordinator, being drives her efforts. Dubbed the university's No. 1 fan, other coaches and player's parents recognize how fortunate the athletic department is to have her.

### SELF-STARTING EXECUTORS

Here's the catch: You can't make employees executors. The very nature of motivation, persistence, commitment and initiative are intrinsic. Real change comes from within. People can only choose to develop these strengths for themselves. But you can show employees how they are stuck in the Have Trap. Excuses exist between the realms of having and doing.

Essentially, when employees believe they must have something to execute an initiative, they will never have enough. The big outcome remains unattainable – the trap is set.



This line of thinking gives birth to excuses. When an employee believes he doesn't have a choice, he automatically has an excuse.

You can remind employees that they do have a choice. When employees truly understand they can choose who they want to be, they will see they can do something about the obstacle.

When companies have mixed up incentives for the goal itself, exasperation sets in. Helping people be clear, committed and curious, however, forms a foundation for real change.

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*Born without arms, John Foppe speaks, coaches and trains on how to maintain momentum when executing initiatives and translate visions into outcomes. He is the CEO of Visionary Velocity Worldwide. For more information, visit [www.visionaryvelocity.com](http://www.visionaryvelocity.com)*