



Implementation intentions: closing the gap between intention and action

Implementation intentions explained

Any organisational change can be mapped into three distinct stages

- **First Stage - Preparing for change:** unpack the current ways of doing things and prepare for action
- **Second Stage- Making change:** act and perform in new ways
- **Third Stage - Embedding change:** make the new ways the new standard way

Teams and individuals who have understood, accepted and prioritised the need for change have achieved the first stage. They can then enter the next stage, Making Change, which will require them to apply new behaviours and implement the new initiatives (policies, procedures and tools). It's worth noting that as staff try to implement change, there is a risk at this stage in the change journey that they will go back to old and comfortable ways of doing things. This happens when people have positive intentions to change, but they find it hard to act on them.

In the second stage, Making Change, teams and individuals need steady encouragement and recognition for new behaviours. They also need to be supported when facing challenges that can impact on the change effort such as lack of communication, inconsistent messages and change fatigue. This calls for a planned approach that identifies critical situations that could potentially trigger staff to return to old ways of doing things and how the organisation will respond.

The Implementation Intentions work when people have genuine intention and desire to change their behaviour, and act in the way that is planned. It is important for leaders to help their teams to understand the reasons for behaviour change, and to have motivation to change.

Aim

Implementation Intentions helps staff develop new habits that support a particular change. By using the tool staff can make a conscious effort to change the way they respond to certain situations rather than rely on their automatic responses. Using the Implementation Intentions tool can increase the capability to achieve organisational goals and embed behaviour change.

Implementation intentions are 'if - then' plans that convert goal intentions into automatic actions. The basic structure of an implementation intention is – **If or when a situation arises, then I will respond this way.**

Instructions

Identify a focus area where the organisation needs a clear and consistent response from the team. These scenarios can be based on accidental or deliberate incidents or a systemic issue around Quality and Safeguarding that has occurred in your organisation (see ‘Talking about Safer Services’ presentation for more information about why abuse and neglect happen). You can also create other scenarios with the intent to prevent issues and develop best practice (see ‘Key Conversations’ tool for ideas on scenarios that may be relevant to your teams).

1. In the template identify the situation of concern that you are trying to change in the ‘**If**’ column.
2. Develop a best practice response on how you would like staff to behave and act when this safeguarding scenario occurs and put this in the ‘**Then**’ column.
3. We recommend that change leaders create Implementations Intentions with their teams and other relevant stakeholders including people with disability and families. The awareness and practice of creating Implementations Intentions in a team environment will enable staff to use this for their individual purposes. Managers can also suggest the use of this tools in achieving performance goals during supervision and performance reviews.

An example is provided below:

Focus Area	Reporting Concerns
Situation of Concern	Best Practice Response
If I see that the person I support has unexplained bruises on their arms and legs when I arrive on shift	Then I will make sure they are OK, and immediately notify my supervisor. I will report this in line with my organisation’s incident reporting policy and procedure.
If	Then
If	Then

References

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4. Armitage, C. J., & Arden, M. A. (2010). A volitional help sheet to increase physical activity in people with low socioeconomic status: a randomised exploratory trial. *Psychology and Health*, 25(10), 1129-1145.
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