

# Ben Tiggelaars

## 5/95 breakthrough!

Five fundamental focuspoints for change



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## Why?

- Why don't people follow through on agreements?
- Why does the 'hype of the day' have so much effect on our work?
- Why do most processes of change fail in businesses?
- Why don't most good plans get anywhere?

The answer to these questions is as simple as it is astounding: the concepts that by far most people believe about human behavior are not correct. Not even a little bit. Even worse: even the concepts you read in most management books about behavior are unfounded. Most management literature is over twenty years behind what is known in behavioral sciences, neurology and psychology. By far most people believe that they do most things, at home and at work, because they 'want to'. They believe that their intentions lead to the behavior they display. They believe that conscious choices and free will are the most important motivators of human behavior.

On the other hand we know that people display all sorts of behavior 'on automatic pilot'. We drive to work without being aware of it. We respond intuitively to a proposal from a colleague. We decide automatically - within seconds - if a customer's complaint is valid. And any job-applicant who makes a wrong first impression is doomed.

But unintentional behavior goes much further. For example we think sub-consciously about business matters which need a creative solution. Not until your brain is finished with lots of unconscious labor does the answer 'come to you'. It can even happen in your sleep. Some people put a notebook next to their beds because they often wake up with a good idea they have unconsciously developed while sleeping.



The fact that we act automatically 95 % of the time is handy when it is 'business as usual' But when it is time for change our automatisms can be a huge hindrance.

## The 5/95 - breakthrough

Prominent psychologists like John Bargh and Roy Baumeister agree that the majority of our behavior comes about unconsciously and automatically. An estimate of the proportions: 5% conscious, planned behavior opposite 95% unconscious, automatic behavior.

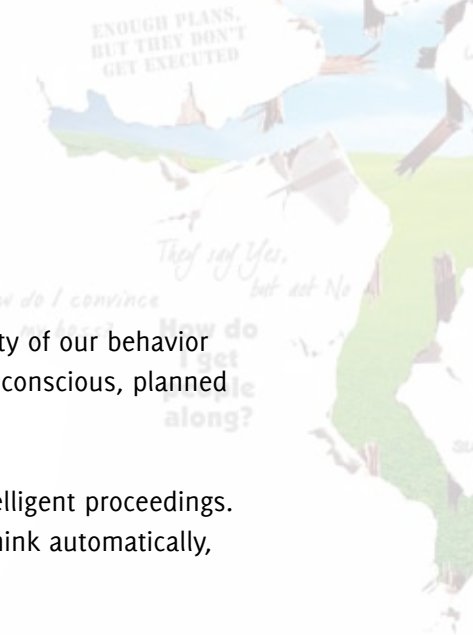
This does not count only for 'simple' automatic behavior but also for complex, intelligent proceedings. We read automatically, we respond automatically to e-mails and phone calls, we think automatically, and we even automatically learn new automatisms.

Only new, unexpected, special cases, for which our brain has not developed an automatic response, require our conscious attention. And that is a good thing because new conscious, planned behavior requires a lot of energy. Much more energy than repeating unconscious automatic patterns that have proven successful in the past.

In most cases we respond without realizing it to stimuli in our environment. Messages on our computer, questions from the boss and glances from colleagues automatically stimulate all sorts of standard thinking, feeling, talking and doing patterns. Next our brain automatically gauges whether or not the behavior is working. Behavior which produces a good feeling will automatically be repeated. Along with behavior that remedies a bad feeling. And so we continue to expand, step-by-step, our repertoire of automated behavior.

The fact that we act automatically 95% of the time is handy when things are 'business as usual' but when change is needed our automatisms can be an enormous hindrance.

Especially when we continue to attempt to manage the 95% as if it is conscious, planned behavior.



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## 5/95 in practice

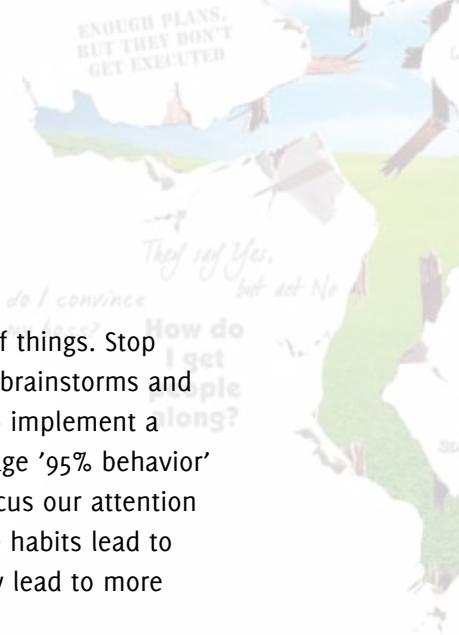
Anyone who wants to manage '95% behavior' in a '95% way' must stop a number of things. Stop thinking in terms of discussions, meetings, memos, campaigns, soap box sessions, brainstorm and reports. These office rituals might be useful for developing and writing plans, but to implement a plan, to change behavior, you need very different tools. Anyone who wants to manage '95% behavior' in a '95% way' must start doing a number of other things. First it is important to focus our attention on the consequences people experience directly. For example do current, ineffective habits lead to silent consent and approval from direct colleagues? And would new actions possibly lead to more insecurity, exertion and silent disapproval from colleagues?

If that is the case then as supervisors we must provide strong new stimuli that will motivate the desired, new behavior.

Three initial suggestions:

1. Take daily measurements of the new behavior and make these result visible as soon as possible.
2. Daily presence of supervisor during the first weeks of an important change. The goal is to offer continued guidance and to motivate the implementation of the desired new behavior.
3. Rigorous new design of the daily context in which people work. New processes, new software, new teams. A government institution decided a while back to divide their employees by alphabet instead of by job description. The immediate result was that people from different departments had more contact with each other which benefited the service.

There are five fundamental areas of interest for change in the 5/95 way....



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## 1: First people then content

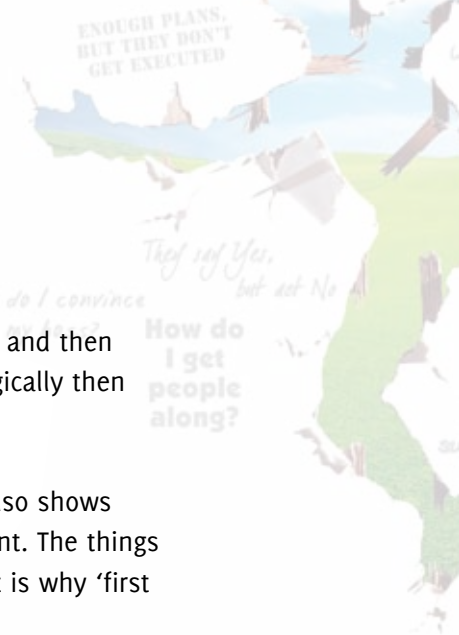
In by far most situations company management first decide *what* needs to be done and then *who* needs to do it. If you assume that people act consciously, methodically and logically then this would seem like the right approach. First the content and then the people.

But people do not act logically and rationally. Research on innovation and change also shows that we are social beings, primarily driven by stimuli from our direct environment. The things other people do have a great impact on our unconscious, automatic processes. That is why 'first the people and then the plan' is a more effective sequence.

Some people obviously have more impact on their environment than others. They possess more authority, are perceived as being more likable or have invested more in relationships with the people around them over the years.

The secret is involve the people who have the most influence in a team or organization as early as possible in your plans. Even if they don't possess the right expertise. Get these people on board even before you formulated your plan, preferably. When you have a problem but haven't found the solution.

Fanatical reformers are downright dangerous. People who have pleaded for years for a certain technological investment or who are always caught up with the latest theories or gadgets. Even if they are right they have often lost their credibility with the majority of people because of their eccentric behavior. Consequently: seek their advice as experts but don't include them in the core team responsible for implementing change.



When no stress is felt  
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## 2: Stress and euphoria. Now!

“The atom bomb was built within 18 months. We have been talking about the environment for over 40 years.” This rather cynical statement was made recently in a current events show by a researcher to point out how quickly people get things done when they feel like it is *really* necessary *now*.

The opposite is also true: when there is no sense of urgency change has no chance at succeeding. The mistake most often made in organizations when it comes to change is persevering with a plan when those involved do not feel it is absolutely necessary. These bloodless projects almost always get stuck.

What is urgency? Urgency is ‘pressing necessity’. The feeling that something needs to happen now. In fact urgency is about the right amount of stress. When no stress is felt within a company the danger of self-complacency is right around the corner. When too much stress is felt panicky decision making is a threat. At the right amount of stress we want to act immediately but still have the ability to think constructively about the best solution.

Urgency has everything to do with our 95%-processes. The secret is to bring future threats and opportunities so close that we experience them at gut level. Effective leaders help us experience the stress of future problems and the euphoria of future victories right now.

Techniques that lend themselves to this process are: stimulation, visualization, bringing in the outside world (customers, shareholders, advisors) and daily proving, by your own behavior, that you mean business. One video recording of an angry customer can bring about more than any spreadsheet with the latest customer satisfaction measurements.



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### 3: S.M.A.R.T. is not smart enough

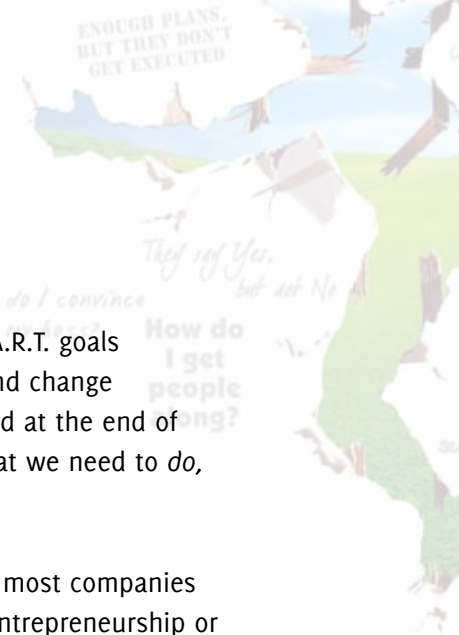
In many companies management are very satisfied if people are working with S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) but when it comes to renewal and change S.M.A.R.T. is not smart enough! S.M.A.R.T. goals only describe what has to be realized at the end of the journey. The tangible behavior necessary to achieve these proposed results, what we need to do, is a mystery for most people involved.

It seems obvious: if you don't define behavior you cannot manage it. But in, by far, most companies people are unable to translate seemingly simple concepts - like customer service, entrepreneurship or shareholders value - into concrete behavior.

Behavior is the weak link between plans and results. Only new and different behavior leads to new and different results. This applies at personal, team and organizational level. And behavior isn't behavior until it's been M.A.P. formulated: Measurable, Active, Personal.

Formulating behavior doesn't need to done by management. It is much better when those who have to implement the behavior formulate it in their own words in dialogue with the management. The management provide the goals (S.M.A.R.T.). The employees define what behavior (M.A.P) they will use to realize these goals.

Now you have already yielded your first profit. Research by psychologist John Norcross has found that just translating goals into behavior increases the chance that these goals will be achieved by 1150%.



What problems will we come across on the way? Who will thwart the changes? What are plausible arguments which could undermine changes?

## 4: Bears in the road.....shoot in advance

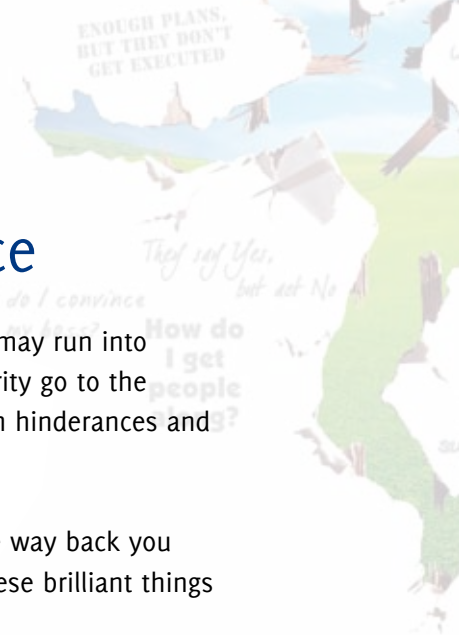
Most people are very capable of determining what hinderances and problems they may run into during a process of change. Effortlessly they produce objections. Only a small minority go to the effort themselves of taking that extra step: coming up with tricks to persevere when hinderances and problems occur.

Everyone knows what it's like when a discussion ends to your disadvantage. On the way back you think: "I should have said that!" It might sound silly but the secret is to think of these brilliant things on the way there instead of on the way back.

When you can formulate the 'moment of truth' and think about adequate counter strikes, the chance you will reach the finish line increases with a factor of three or four according to research by psychologist Peter Gollwitzer. One of the simplest counter strikes for example is taking a short time-out to remind ourselves of our objectives.

This phenomenon also has to do with the 5/95 breakthrough. If we don't spot the bears in the road ahead of time the 95%-system works against us. Unexpected hinderances lead to increased stress and to a higher chance of falling back on old, ineffective patterns of behavior.

But if we are able to inventory possible disasters and establish and practice counter strikes, the 95%-system works to our advantage. We 'condition' ourselves, as it were, to be successful. A bear in the road is no longer a disaster, it becomes a 'trigger' to automatically produce the solutions we came up with ahead of time so as to persevere.



The right proportion is essential. Managers tend to apply too many negative incentives in proportion to positive incentives.

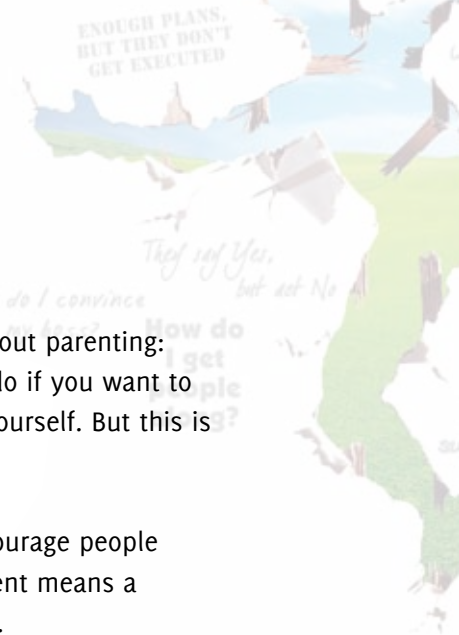
## 5: 'Parenting' on the work floor

Positive confirmation is the mechanism that is central to most popular TV-shows about parenting: ignore bad behavior, reward good behavior. In a nutshell, this is what you need to do if you want to exchange old behavior for new behavior in an organization, in a department or in yourself. But this is easier said than done. Two first tips....

1. Applying positive reinforcement requires great precision. The idea is to encourage people when they show new, desired behavior or shortly after. Positive reinforcement means a manager must be around often and spend a lot of time with his employees.
2. The right proportion is essential. Managers tend to apply too many negative incentives in proportion to positive incentives. This has a pointed effect on employees behavior but only when the boss is around. What's more, the effect is disastrous on the mutual relationship. Behavioral scientists say a proportion of a minimum of three positive impulses for every one negative impulse is required if we want to keep a good relationship with colleagues. And yes, with some colleagues this is quite a feat.

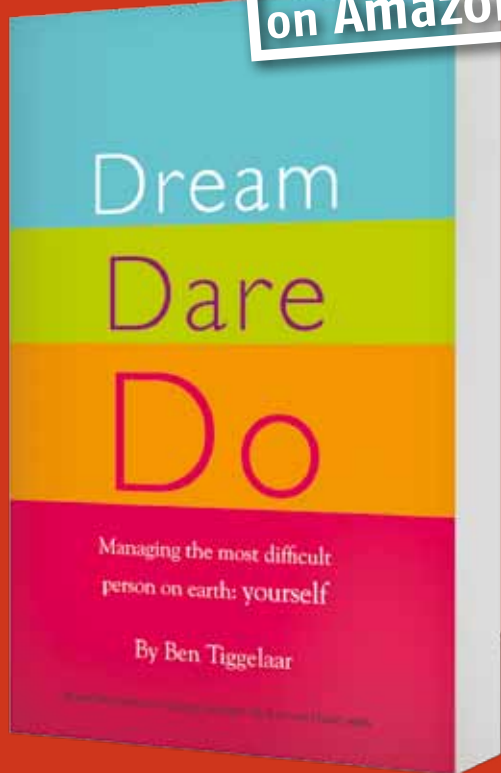
Encouraging yourself or colleagues can take the form of: measuring and noting the desired behavior, giving positive attention to this behavior or rewarding it in some way. Positive reinforcement is a 95% process. Our brain connects the new behavior automatically to the positive emotions we summon this way, so that the tendency to display the new behavior more also increases automatically.

Positive reinforcement costs blood, sweat and tears but it is the only mechanism that leads, in the end, to permanent change.



Ben Tiggelaars  
5/95 breakthrough!

Now available  
on Amazon!



## Want to know more? Read **Dream, Dare, Do**

- Why is it so hard to maintain change?
- What is responsible for 95% of your behavior (that you do not even know about)?
- How can you successfully develop new and effective habits?
- Everybody has dreams regarding work, relationships, health and personal development...
- But what does it take to go from dream to dare and, eventually, do?  
What are the secrets of real and lasting change?

Ben Tiggelaar has some straight answers to these questions. Based on actual psychological insights, practical experience and personal stories of people who have learned, the hard way, to manage themselves.

[Buy this book online at Amazon.](#)

*“Ben Tiggelaar is an inspiring trainer and writer in the field of human behavior and change. You will find his books and ideas extremely practical, very realistic and fun to read!”*

Marshall Goldsmith, author of *What Got You Here, Won't Get You There*



**Ben Tiggelaars**  
5/95 breakthrough!



## About the author

Ben Tiggelaar (1969) is an independent researcher, writer and trainer. His passion: helping people to turn their dreams into action. His approach is based on practical research, entertainment and a professional history in behavioral science. Since 2000 Tiggelaars three books all have reached the number one position in the Dutch management books top 10!

Tiggelaar's latest book is Dream, Dare, Do, helps you to manage the most difficult person on earth: yourself. It is an excellent starting point for realizing your dreams.

Ben's previous book is Can Do! It contains new and practical insights about change and growth. Can Do! is available in Dutch, Japanese and English.

[www.tiggelaar.com](http://www.tiggelaar.com)

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