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## The KASH Box

This isn't the first time that I have written about the importance of paying more attention to attitudes, both your's and your employee's, than to skills and knowledge... and it certainly won't be the last!

During a corporate career that was successful by any measure, I routinely helped improve business performance exponentially, often by hundreds of millions of dollars within a matter of months. Certainly, skills and knowledge played a role, but the overwhelming reason was because of attitudes. In fact, some of the most dramatic improvements were achieved by taking people that other managers wanted to get rid of, aka, 'the troublemakers', and turning them into top performers.

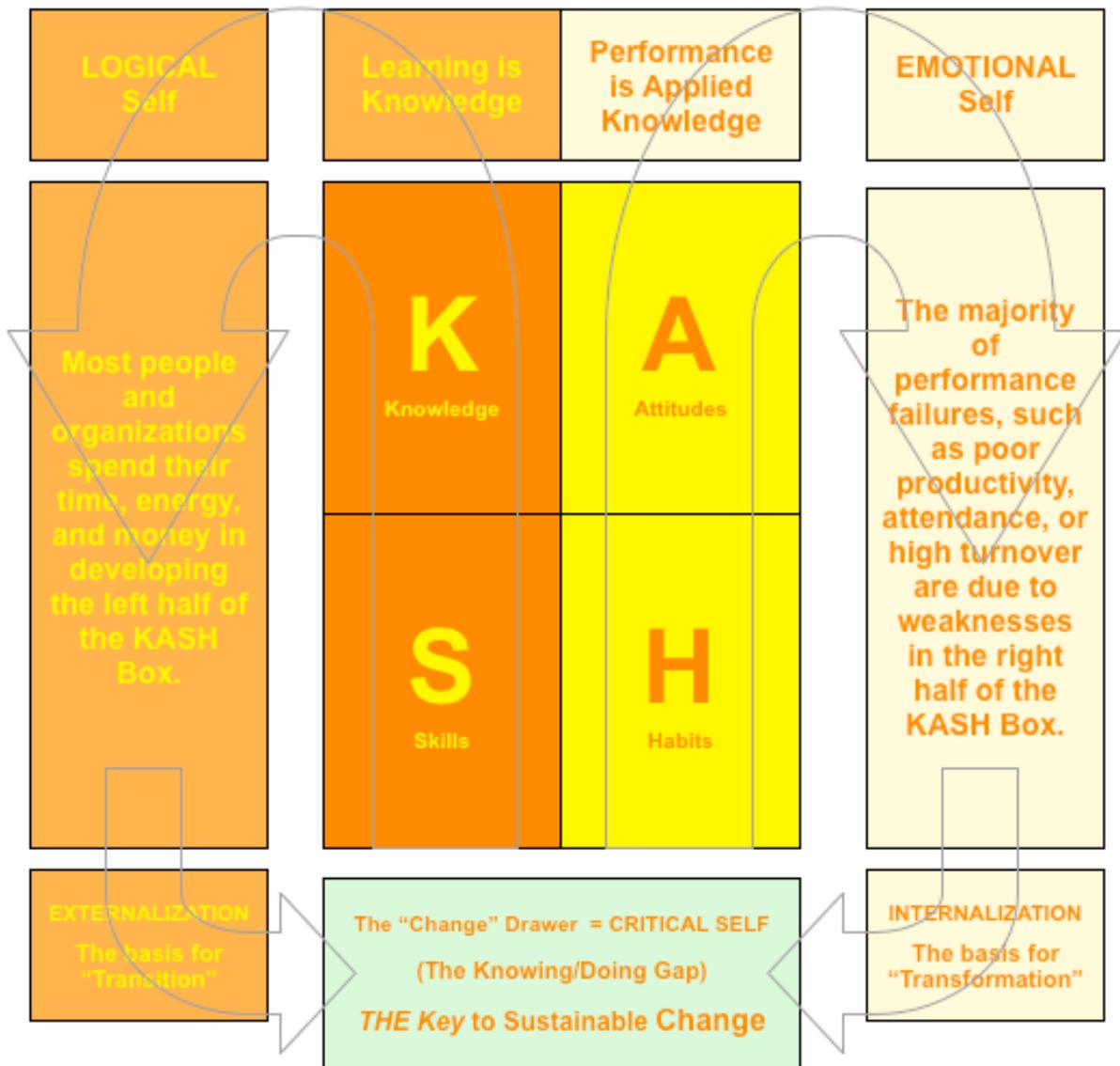
What I found, in all but less than a handful of those situations, is that those so called malcontents were actually very bright, talented, and skilled people. Their biggest performance issue was often grounded in frustration, boredom, or being under-challenged... their attitudes. You have surely run across people in your career that had all kinds of talent and skills... and performed poorly. Likewise you have known people that have moderate skill levels at best, yet outperform their peers by a wide margin.

Admittedly, I have never been a big fan of academic theory because it is just that, theory. In business, and in life, I have found little practical value in pursuing theories, or knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Show me something that works, and I'll apply it to get the results we want or need. So, while I have done lots of learning and research to understand what works in the real world to improve individual and organizational results, like many people that lead organizations, I haven't spend a lot of time collecting and cataloging reams of data on the subject. But, from years of experience and practical application, I know that most organizations do a reasonable job of training their people in what and how to do their jobs. The solutions to the problems that keep



organizations from exponential improvements are already in the hearts and minds of its people. The key, then, is not to do more training, the key is getting people to do what they already know needs to be done to make things work better, faster, and more profitably.

For years, I must admit, I struggled with illustrating this idea visually rather than verbally. Describing this concept verbally often resulted in that glazed eyes look that indicates you're not getting anywhere. Thankfully, as has happened so often, Dave Herdinger, one of my colleagues came up with the KASH Box diagram, with Knowledge and Skills on one side, and Attitudes and Habits on the other (see figure below).



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Over the years we have fleshed the model out to describe what has to happen in order to strengthen an organization in ways that are sustainable.

Notice that I am not saying that skills and knowledge are unimportant. Certainly they are. What I am saying is if you are only focused on the left half of the KASH Box you are selling your organization far short of its true potential. In fact, a study completed by Cox Surveys several years ago asked 2000 top executives across the U.S. what percentage of their success was directly related to their knowledge and education, and how much was directly related to their attitudes. 97% of the executives responded that attitudes were responsible for at least 85% of their success, with only 15% attributed to skills and education!

Education and training (left side of the KASH Box) can get the organization started on the road to change... it begins the transition... and, again, is very important. But if you want to achieve true transformation, you must focus much more time, effort, and resources on helping your people develop the attitudes and habits (right side of the KASH Box) necessary to sustain profitable improvements. The left side of the KASH Box is easy... that's why everyone does it. The left side of the KASH Box, on the other hand, is simple... but difficult... and that's why only the bravest and most determined leaders take that path.

So, what have you done lately to developed the right side of your KASH Box? What are you going to do in the future? If the answer is nothing, what are you waiting for? Doesn't your organization deserve the opportunity to be the best they can be?

