

## Workforce Effectiveness

### Industry

Telecommunications

### Organization

Southwestern Bell  
Dallas, Texas

### Need

Engineers within the Network Operations and Network Maintenance groups of Southwestern Bell (SBC) work in tandem to forecast, install, and maintain phone line capacity for business customers in and around the Dallas metropolitan area. In seeking to improve the efficiency of this integrated process and to improve customer satisfaction, the Network Operations and Network Maintenance groups contacted the SBC Center for Learning to help identify areas for improvement.

As part of their efforts to diagnose the problem and develop a solution, a performance consultant within the SBC Center for Learning sought the assistance of DDI. Working together, the SBC performance consultant and the DDI consultants met with the engineers to identify the types of behaviors needed to increase efficiencies and enhance customer satisfaction.

The behaviors identified as critical were as follows:

1. Demonstrate a marked commitment to solving problems with appropriate levels of involvement.
2. Determine and state desired outcomes prior to starting tasks.
3. Formulate appropriate plans based on desired outcomes.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the customer's perspective.
5. Demonstrate collaboration and teamwork skills by proactively offering expertise to colleagues.
6. Proactively report problems and manage the process to create a solution.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the big picture.

DDI and Southwestern Bell decided that Breakthrough: High-Performance Strategies for Knowledge Workers<sup>SM</sup> was the solution to meet the engineers' needs. Each of the critical behaviors is addressed by one or more of the specific high-performance strategies targeted in Breakthrough<sup>SM</sup>.

### Research

Breakthrough was implemented in six sessions, preceded by a half-day orientation session. A total of 20 engineers from across the two Network groups participated in the program. Participants and their managers each completed survey measures before and after the Breakthrough program.

To learn more, call your local DDI office or contact:

The Americas .....412.257.0600	Southeast Asia .....65.339.5255	France .....33.1.41.96.86.86	United Kingdom ....44.1628.810800
Toll-free Canada ....800.668.7971	Australia.....61.2.9466.0300	Germany.....49.2159.91680	E-mail .....info@ddiworld.com
Toll-free U.S.....800.933.4463	Greater China .....852.2526.1188	New Zealand .....64.9.377.6742	Web.....www.ddiworld.com

These measures were:

### Behaviors

Participating engineers were presented with a detailed list of 35 behaviors related to the desired behavioral changes described earlier; five specific behaviors were presented for each of the seven overall behaviors. The engineers rated themselves on each specific behavior, along a seven-point scale, in two ways:

- How **often** they perform each behavior in their work, given opportunities to do so.  
(7 = Nearly Always; 1 = Almost Never)
- How **effectively** they perform each of the behaviors in their work.  
(7 = Extremely Effective; 1 = Not at all Effective)

The participating engineers rated themselves on these behaviors two weeks prior to the Breakthrough orientation session. A second set of ratings was collected approximately 45-60 days after the

completion of the final Breakthrough session.

In addition, managers rated **how often** the participants performed this same set of behaviors prior to and following the Breakthrough program.

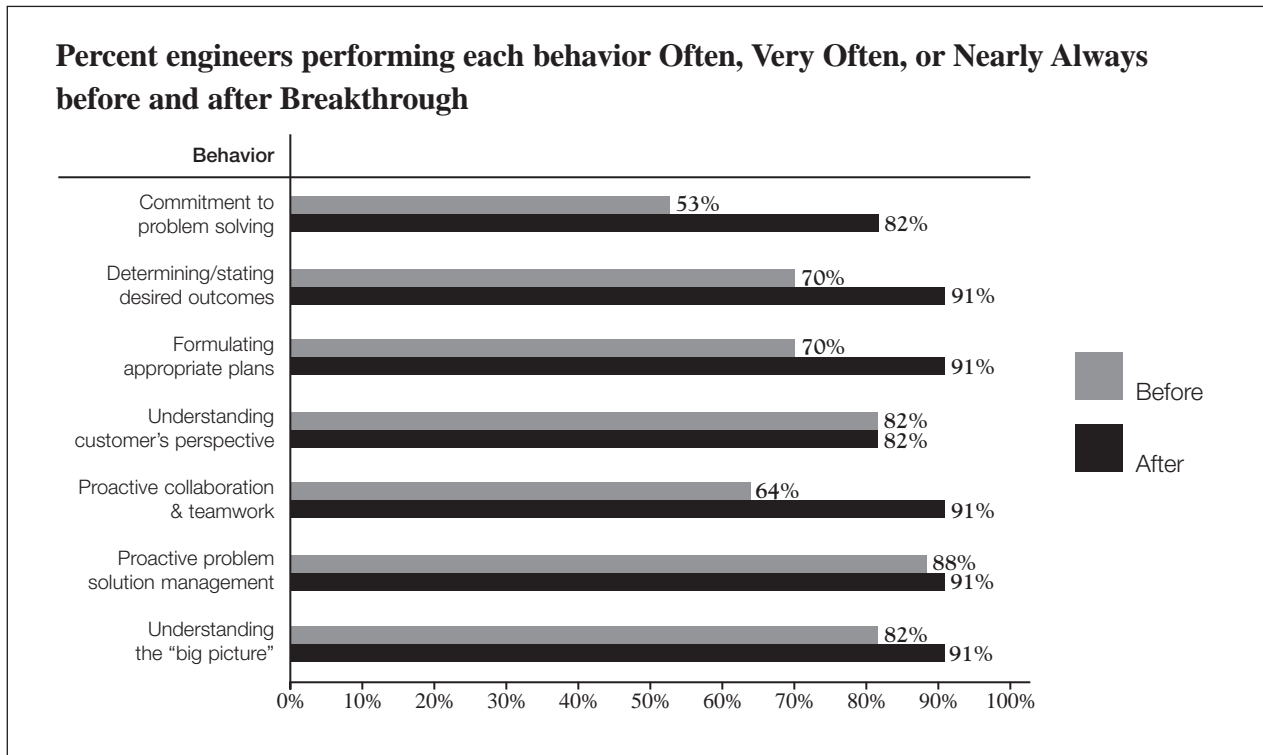
### Organizational Commitment

Participants also completed a brief survey designed to measure their level of commitment to the overall organization. This survey focused on the organization as a whole and measured the degree to which participants were proud of and committed to Southwestern Bell. Responses were measured along a six-point scale (6 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). This brief survey was administered before and after the program, along with the behavior surveys.

### Results

*Participants are performing the critical behaviors more often following the completion of Breakthrough.*

Figure 1.



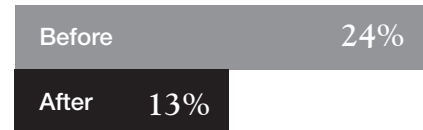
As Figure 1 illustrates, engineers reported a significant increase (as much as 27 percent) in the frequency of performing the critical behaviors that had been targeted by the program. This increase was seen across all but one of the behaviors (which the engineers were already performing quite frequently). Participants were likely to have identified more opportunities to perform these behaviors after having completed the program. Helping knowledge workers more readily identify situations where these high-performance strategies may be applied is one of the primary goals of the Breakthrough program.

*Participants saw an increase in opportunities to perform the critical behaviors following completion of the Breakthrough program.*

The engineers were given the option to respond "Does Not Apply to Me" to behaviors on the survey which they felt they had no opportunity to perform in their

work. The following figure presents the frequency with which this option was selected before and after the program survey.

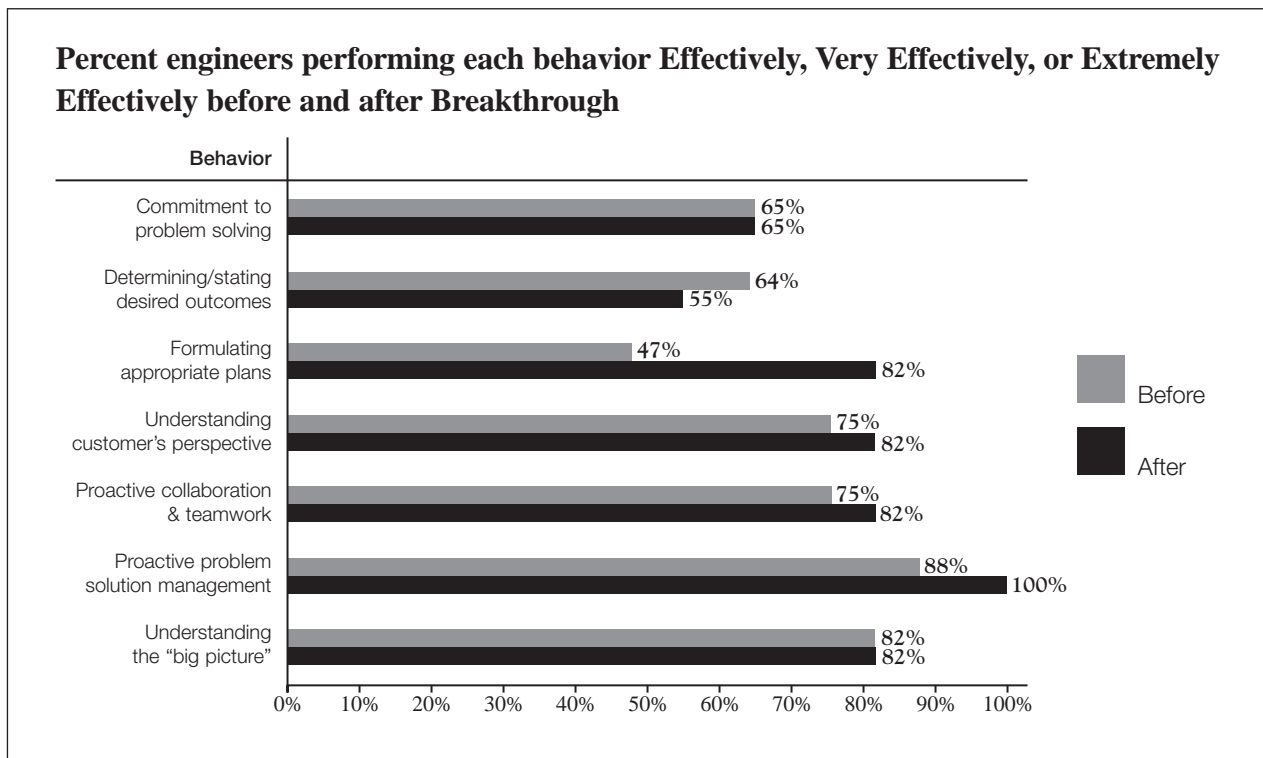
Percent engineers selecting "Does Not Apply to Me" for behavior frequency of performance items



Obviously, the engineers were much less likely to report that one of the target behaviors did not apply to them in their job after having completed Breakthrough. This change is likely to be due to the awareness that Breakthrough instills with regard to finding and, when necessary, creating opportunities to demonstrate high performance behaviors.

*Participants are performing the critical behaviors more effectively following the completion of the Breakthrough program.*

Figure 2.

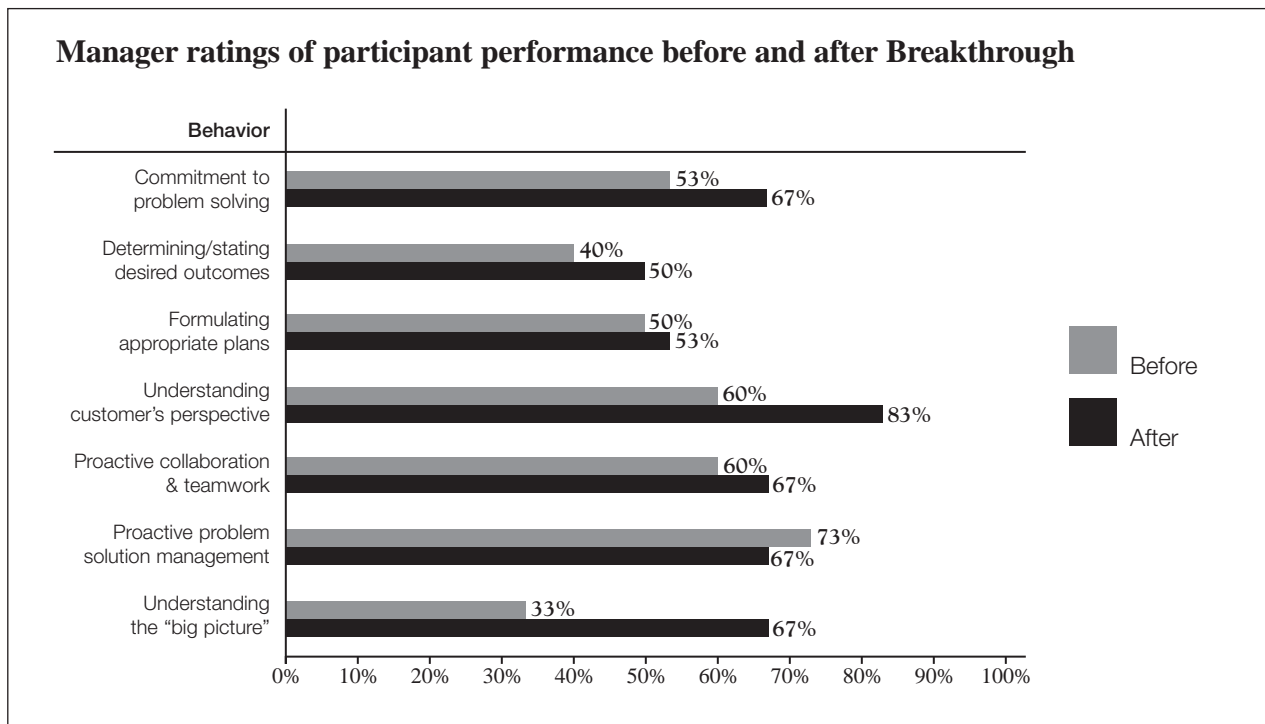


Engineers also reported significant increases (as much as 35 percent) in effectively performing four of the seven behaviors. (See Figure 2.) Participants were particularly more effective at “formulating appropriate plans based on desired outcomes” following the program. Less than half of the engineers reported performing this type of behavior effectively before the program. After the program more than 80% of the participating engineers reported effective performance

in this area. Increases in effectiveness were also reported for “demonstrating an understanding of the customer’s perspective” and “demonstrating collaboration and teamwork skills by proactively offering expertise to colleagues.”

*Managers also reported an increase in the frequency with which participants are performing the behaviors following Breakthrough.*

Figure 3.

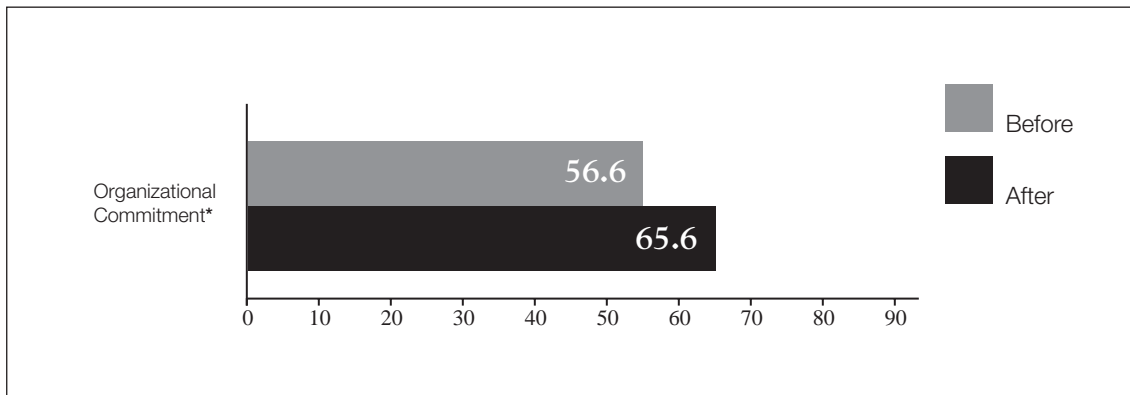


**Note:** Percent managers rating participant frequency of behavior performance as Often, Very Often, or Nearly Always.

Managers reported an increase in participants' frequency of performance for six of the seven behaviors. (See Figure 3.) These increases were particularly noteworthy for "understanding the big picture" (34% increase) and "demonstrating an understanding of the customer's perspective" (23% increase). Increases of greater than 10% were also reported for "demonstrating a marked commitment to solving problems with appropriate levels of involvement" and "determining/stating desired outcomes prior to starting tasks."

The ratings reported by the participants themselves consistently indicated increases in performance frequency and effectiveness. The participants recognized that they were performing these behaviors more often and that their performance was having a positive impact. Further, the managers consistently reported increases in the frequency of participants' behavior performance.

Figure 4.



\*Possible range of organizational commitment scores is 10 to 90

*Participants reported higher organizational commitment following Breakthrough.*

The increase in organizational commitment is another encouraging illustration of the success of Breakthrough at Southwestern Bell. The organizational commitment survey measures facets such as loyalty to the organization, pride in the organization, and willingness to go beyond normal expectations to ensure organizational success. The Breakthrough experience quite likely had a positive impact on the increases reported following the program. (See Figure 4.)

## Conclusions

Specific behaviors that were crucial to the effective coordination of the two Network groups were measured before and after the Breakthrough implementation. Clearly, engineers from both groups reported that they were not only performing these critical behaviors more often, but were much more effective in their performance following completion of the program. Participating engineers were also much more aware of opportunities to perform critical behaviors after completing the Breakthrough program. Finally, participants reported much higher levels of organizational commitment following the program

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than they had prior to the program. In addition to performing the critical behaviors, engineers also reported that they are now better able to recognize unproductive behavior and take responsibility to provide feedback for improvement when the opportunity arises.

Managers also recognized the increase in the engineers' frequency of behavior performance following Breakthrough. In addition to the day-to-day

behavior changes instilled by the Breakthrough program, the engineers have implemented a new forecasting strategy to alleviate the problem of customers exceeding capacity too quickly. Although the long-term impact of this strategy is not yet apparent, overloads and blocks on installed networks have decreased significantly in the first two months of implementation.



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