

The Tetanus Experiment

Leaders are always faced with the task of directing the performance behaviors of associates to achieve the right outcomes. It is true in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, just as it is in other organizations.

Morten T. Hansen, writing in *Harvard Business Press*, tells of a study in the 1960s in which a group of students at Yale University were given information on the disease tetanus, while others were shown pictures of convulsing patients suffering from it. Vaccinations for the disease were not common at that time, and all of the students were asked whether or not they thought it was important to receive a vaccination for tetanus.



Most of the group who had viewed the photographs answered positively to the question. Then a portion of those students were given information on – and a map to – a medical clinic where the vaccine was being administered. They were asked to review their schedules for a convenient time.

When the researchers tracked the number of students who actually got the vaccine, they found that of the students who viewed the pictures and answered that they thought the vaccine was important, only 3 percent went to the clinic. But of the group who had received the additional information that included a map to the clinic, 28 percent followed up with the vaccination.

The researchers concluded that the greatest impact occurs when you can change a person's behaviors along with their attitudes.

The leadership lesson: Explaining the benefits of change is not enough. Empower your staff with the tools that will allow them to achieve the desired behavior you want.

– Beecher Hunter