

Behavioral Mechanisms for Expanding Your Leadership Toolkit

Unlocking Executive Growth: Behavioral Mechanisms to Go to Manual

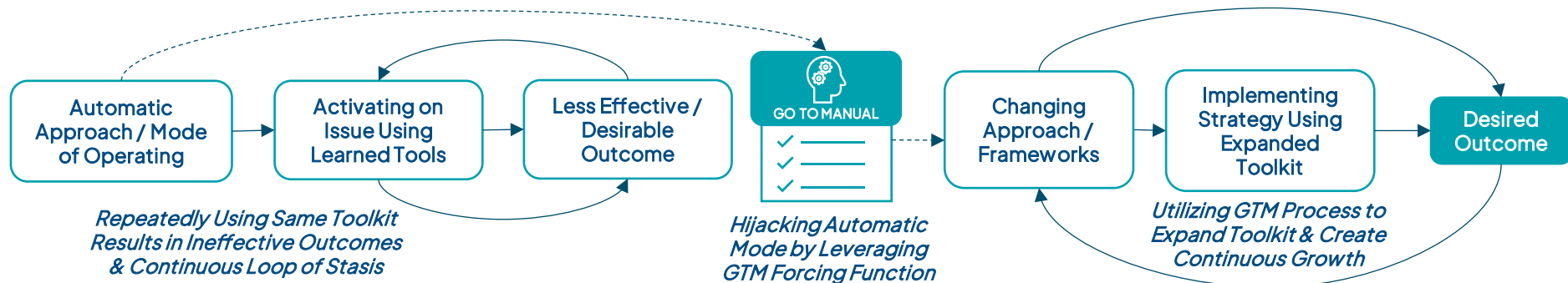
Key Concept

Going to manual means an executive developing their own 'field guide' for the things they would like to go to manual on and using specific cues, like a pilot's checklist, to get out of their automatic mode and ensure the best version of themselves shows up. By doing this, they're teaching themselves how to increase their personal effectiveness and find new ways to interact, which eventually becomes their new automatic.

Impact

One of the goals for most executives is to have the capacity to continually grow and add range to their leadership capabilities. This growth often means continually adding more tools to their executive toolbox and developing a better "antenna" to know when to utilize these tools. The difficult part is that it is hard to continually grow throughout one's career. It's why we observe certain executives show up as highfliers in one context, but then lose altitude in another. There are also those executives that switch companies continuously to 'get a fresh start' with the same set of tools they repeatedly use. Others may have a deep learning orientation and show a high capacity for growth, but this is typically followed by them gaining success and mastery of the content in their specific role, which turns a significant number of people into 'know it alls' who move into a period of stasis, simply utilizing their success and mastery as a playbook.

The notion of trying something new and/or doing something different is taking personal risks to get out of one's comfort zone (which has served most very well up to this point). Now an executive must do new tasks and unlearn or deprioritize other tools that they have relied on to get them to where they are today. 'Going to manual' (GTM) is a 'forcing function' tool to help executives get out of automatic, fixed mode and work through a process that allows them to grow and expand as leaders. An example of a 'forcing function' is the pilot field guide: the pilot could have 9000+ hours in the plane but every single time they get into the cockpit, a field guide forces them into manual mode, increasing the probability that they will catch any issues and prevent a crash. Executives must develop their own 'field guide' for the things they would like to go to manual on and then use specific cues to get out of automatic mode.



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How to Unlock Executive Growth By Adopting GTM Mechanisms

Going Slow to Go Fast (vs Activating)

- Many executives simply activate and go to work on answering the question or solving the problem. Executives then get out in front of key people and start to look like the leader who is too far in front of the troops (which may even look like the enemy).
- Instead of simply activating, go to manual, going slow to go fast to truly think about the issue and develop and implement a plan that will 'best' address the situation, which most of the time should include enrolling and engaging key people from the start.

Meeting Hygiene

- Meetings are where companies spend a massive amount of money and yet many people who lead or attend them are woefully unprepared and will work silently, catching up on their own work instead of participating and adding value.
- The first element is preparing. Take the time to prepare in advance by writing down a few notes and/or questions, and if appropriate, triangulate a few thoughts with relevant stakeholders.
- The second is a reset before entering. Before entering the meeting (whether virtual or physical), take the opportunity to psychologically reset so that what matters is the meeting happening now (versus the one prior, whether it was amazing or the worst ever). This way when you enter the meeting, your process will be to pull up your prep notes in combination with the reset.
- Ensure to consider your leadership approach and/or participation in the meeting by starting with your desired outcome and impact that you would like to make.

Solutions Mindset

- Most executives assume that their counterparty is up to speed and will jump into the content. To ensure they don't look 'lost' or 'unprepared', counterparties track with the person, sending all the right signals that 'they get it' and only start the process of figuring it out when they leave the engagement.
- To be the best in the people business, start every conversation with 'let me set a couple of minutes of context before we begin.' By setting context, you make space for people to say that they may have missed the last meeting and need more context, increasing everyone's productivity and alignment on the topic, as they are all starting from a similar place.

