The creative tension exercise shows that when an organization strives to improve its leadership performance, there will be anxiety. This exercise demonstrates that outside of the already high performers, the vast majority of people are not meeting the new desired performance. It is evident the majority of individuals will need to make changes to some degree, some much more than others. But how much anxiety can people stand?

Senior teams want to raise the bar to a level where it becomes evident that staying the same is not an option, yet not so much as to paralyze people. High-performing organizations move their behavior to reach the goal. Others move the goal to meet the behavior. The following graphic shows how people move.