



## MODULE 8:

# ENCOURAGING CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR



# Encouraging Changes in Behaviour

By the end of this module you will: →

- 👍 Understand why behaviour change is sometimes required.
- 👍 Understand what behaviour change involves.
- 👍 Learn how to change the behaviour of employees.

## Behaviour Change

Behaviours are routine habits and attitudes that can lead to certain outcomes; **bad habits can lead to bad outcomes**. For example, an employee who sits at a desk all day may only bring their own unhealthy food to work every day. This kind of behaviour can have seriously negative effects on their health. Therefore, it may be necessary for an employer to try and adjust the behaviour of their employees. By doing so it can help improve the overall health and wellbeing of the workforce.

When attempting to change behaviour, it is important to know what the behaviour is and the underlying motivation – **behavioural insight**. Analyse the behaviour that is being repeated and try to understand what is causing it by looking at the bigger picture; there is likely to be a variety of factors that cause the behaviour from environmental causes to individual attitudes. Furthermore, identify the barriers that can stop behavioural change from happening. For example, maybe the employee brings their own unhealthy food because they think healthier food is too expensive.

Knowing what you want to change, identifying the causes, and recognising the barriers can help inform the behaviour change strategy.

Behaviour change cannot be forced. People generally do not respond well to being forcefully made to alter deep-rooted behaviours. If an employee feels as though they are being micro-managed, then most of the time this will result in animosity. Therefore, try to encourage voluntary change using methods such as nudging. Do not restrict their options but instead present employees with opportunities to change and encourage them to take that route. They will react in a much more positive way and are much more likely to engage in the desired behaviour.

Lorem ipsum

# Behaviour Change

When developing initiatives, consider using the **EAST (Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely)** model developed by the Behaviour Insights team:

## Easy

Make engaging in the methods required for the behaviour change easy and manageable to achieve. If the employees must spend a lot of time and energy just to get to the right place in order to change their behaviour, then there is likely to be poor uptake.

## Attractive

Consider how to attract positive attention to the initiatives. Market them in a way that will make employees want to take part.

## Social

Help engaging in wellbeing initiatives to become the social norm. Encourage open and frequent dialogue between employees and management about wellbeing and the level of support available.

## Timely

Keep employees constantly informed on what's available and how it can benefit them. Moreover, choosing the right time to prompt an employee to engage in an initiative can increase the chances of uptake.

# Practical Solutions

Solutions grouped using the **EAST** method:

	Practice	Benefits
Easy	Use opt-out options	By using an opt-out option as oppose to an opt-in option it can dramatically increase the number of people who are in the right starting position for positive behaviour change. For example, using an opt-out option for receiving a weekly newsletter about health and wellbeing will result in a much larger number of people seeing it than if they had to sign up for it.
Attractive	Encourage competition	Using healthy competition between teams with the incentive of a prize can make an initiative seem much more attractive. For example, to encourage more activity a weekly inter-team competition can be put in place where the team with the most combined steps at the end of the week is rewarded. This can help sustain a desired behaviour in the long-run.
Social	'Wellbeing Champions'	'Wellbeing Champions' can help in turning wellbeing into a social norm. They are able to implement and encourage the uptake of wellbeing initiatives amongst their colleagues, and so avoiding the risk of employees feeling micro-managed or as though they are being forced to by their employers.
Timely	Team Huddles	Team huddles are a useful way of keeping employees consistently informed of the available wellbeing initiatives and the benefits of them. Having them regularly can also allow for each huddle to address any recent issues or relevant topics within the team and suggest wellbeing initiatives that may be relevant.

## Case Studies



Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust appointed a new health and wellbeing manager to address the issues it was having with occupational health. In order to do this, they studied their workforce to inform a new health and wellbeing strategy. To assess the causes of sickness absence they observed the behaviour of the staff and the environment in which they worked. They found many causes of sickness absence, including: a tendency to return to work too early after being ill, a high use of computers leading to headaches, a high-stress environment and more. Using these findings, they were able to create initiatives that tackled these problems directly such as guidance on dealing with gastrointestinal illness, free eye tests, and stress awareness days.



### 'How We Nudged Employees to Embrace Flexible Work' by Cindy Wiryakusuma, Hui Yih Chai, Alex King, and Graham Pointer

Despite the known benefits of flexible working, there is still a problem with employees travelling to work during peak hours. Looking at data from 8 organisations with over 1000 employees that commuted to central Sydney, they were able to identify three behaviour barriers to embracing flexible working:

- **Social norms:** there is still a prevalent 9-to-5 culture despite the introduction of flexible hours
- **Perceptions of managers' acceptance:** employees are worried that managers will hold a negative view if they ask for flexible hours even though managers have encouraged it
- **Individual lifestyles and habits:** employee's non-work obligations often influence when people arrive and leave work

**To tackle this, three interventions were introduced:**

1. Changing default settings in Microsoft Outlook calendars: to avoid people booking early or late meetings, they condensed the default available times.
2. Prompting managers to discuss and model flexible working: managers are encouraged to lead by example as well as having conversations with their team about the benefits.
3. Using competition to disrupt habits: Teams would win points for commuting out of peak hours, working part-time, or working from home with a leaderboard and prizes encouraging participation.

Initially, intervention 1 and 2 were implemented leading to increase in off-peak commuting by 3.3%. Then, with the introduction of intervention 3 for nine weeks, off peak commuting was 7.1% higher even two months after the competition ended. This shows that nudging can not only cause changes in behaviour but also sustain it.

## Expert Opinions

“

Behaviour change is difficult to do independently. Organisations need to support their people to understand what they need to improve and help them develop new habits. To achieve lasting change, individuals need to address the core attitudes that underpin their behaviours and develop their emotional awareness.

”

Dan Hughes, Product Director at JCA Global

“

Organisations wishing to institute change will find no shortage of (sometimes expensive) advice on how to do this. However, we've shown that even low-cost behavioural interventions can result in real shifts in workplace norms and culture. Using behavioural insights, and methodologies borrowed from behavioural sciences, you and your organisation can test out simple behavioural tools to find what works for you.

”

Wiryakusuma, C., Chai, H. Y., King, A., & Pointer, G. (2017). How We Nudged Employees to Embrace Flexible Working. Harvard Business Review.

## Ask Yourself...



- What behaviours that result in negative outcomes are prevalent in your organisation?
- Is behaviour change being encouraged to voluntarily engage in or forced upon employees?
- Is behavioural insight being used to inform wellbeing initiatives?
- Which of the current wellbeing initiatives in your organisation can benefit from an EAST update?

## Exercise

An exercise where the reader is given a behaviour that needs changing and they have to use EAST to develop an initiative.

Behaviour Change	Easy	Attractive	Social	Timely
A business has found that the majority of its employees drive themselves to work every day and wish to change this.				
The workforce of an organisation has been found to be susceptible to high levels of stress and this results in high levels of sickness absence.				

## Exercise Continued:

Using the EAST model, populate the table below:

Behaviour Change	Easy	Attractive	Social	Timely
A company discovered that their employees are spending their breaks at their desk and continuing with work and wishes to do something about this.				
An organisation has been having issues with high levels of burnout as a result of employees still viewing and acting-on emails over the weekend and during other out-of-hours periods.				

## Useful Links/Resources

A study reported in the Harvard Business Review highlights perfectly how behavioural insight and nudging can be used to inform initiatives to change behaviour:

**<https://hbr.org/2017/11/how-we-nudged-employees-to-embrace-flexible-work>**

The Stress Management Society report on how people are being nudged to engage in physical exercise by making it a game:

**<http://www.stress.org.uk/gamification-physical-activity/>**

An article in HR Magazine about nudge theory, its place in a work environment, and tips on how to use it:

**<http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/to-nudge-or-not-to-nudge>**



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## Exercise Two:

An exercise where readers are prompted to think about the best ways to communicate with different types of workers and why, e.g.:

Job	Communication	Why?
<p><b>Sedentary occupation</b> (Spend most of the time sitting e.g. an office)</p>		
<p><b>Standing occupation</b> (Spend most of the time standing or walking but no intense physical effort is required e.g. a shop assistant)</p>		
<p><b>Physical work</b> (The work involves some physical effort e.g. plumber, cleaner)</p>		
<p><b>Heavy manual work</b> (The work involves vigorous physical activity e.g. bricklayer)</p>		