ASTRID GROENEWEGEN

THE ART OF DESIGNING BEHAVIOUR

Mastering a practical method to influence decisions and shape desired behaviours

Boom

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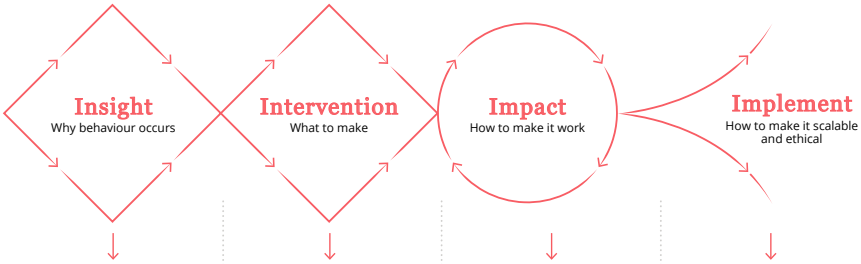
How to turn ideas into a success

SUE | Behavioural Design Method©



1. THINKING

Understand how people come to decisions.

2. BEHAVIOUR

Identify the forces that drive human behaviour.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

Unlock opportunities for behavioural change and adding psychological value.

4. IDEATION

Come up with ideas that will shape behaviour.

5. CONCEPTING

Turn ideas into interventions and influence strategies.

6. SELECTION

Spot the interventions with the most potential to test proof.

7. PROTOTYPING

Learn by running lean experiments at real people.

8. INFLUENCE

Maximise the impact of your ideas and yourself.

9. ETHICS

Make the right considerations to safeguard the ethics of your interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Let me guess. At this point, you have probably read the book blurb and have quickly flipped through the pages to scan whether this is a book worth buying and reading - which means I have only a few paragraphs left to convince you to do so. Let me cut to the chase then, as the selling pitch of this book boils down to one simple thing. We all want to experience success in our lives. It could be that you want to raise your children to become great human beings. Or it could be that you desire to get your business to expand. Or perhaps you will experience success when people embrace your ideas, plans or policies. Triumph to you might be if your company teams perform far above average. Victoriously transforming an organisation could also be your definition of success. Yet it may also be more personal. Perhaps you want to stick to some sporting activity or healthy eating habit. Perhaps it's even more 'philanthropic', and you would like to contribute to a better world.

The bottom line is that all of these things have to do with behaviour. Just think about it for a minute. If you want your children to be the best versions of themselves. They need to behave politely, do their homework, be explorers, show curiosity. If you want your business to thrive, then people will have to buy your products, recommend you, and come back for repeat sales. If you want your plans to happen, then you need someone to approve or back them up. If you're going to set up successful teams, you will need your talent to develop more innovative ideas or act more agile. If you want to bring organisational change to a successful end, you need people to stop resisting and start moving in the right direction. If you're going to live more healthily, you will need to start exercising and buy different food. If you want to make the world just a bit more beautiful, you need people to recycle, eat less meat and make donations.

The key to success is understanding how behaviour is shaped (or isn't)

I am not saying behavioural change is easy. In fact, it is very hard. There's no magical recipe to change people's opinions or behaviours overnight with one formula. We, as humans, are far too complex for that. But the fact is also that we have potentially far more influence on successful outcomes than we realise. The key is to grasp some basic (but fundamental) science on how our brain works. How we as people make decisions. How we are triggered to do things, or what the things are that hold us back. Suppose we start to understand how human psychology and human decision-making works. In that case, we can begin to understand what interventions we have to develop, or what techniques or mechanisms we can implement in order to influence behaviour successfully. With that, you gain a far stronger position to make both your personal and business goals a success. The powerful realisation is that behaviour can be designed, and this book will teach you a method to do so based on behavioural science. Or, as I like to call it: *the science of influence*.

The Missing Layer: Why even brilliant ideas fail

Although there isn't one clear-cut formula that applies to everyone, the science of influence provides a clear insight into how humans arrive at decisions, and how you can influence their minds to shape desired behaviours. The know-how is out there, but not many people have mastered it. When you think of it, this is crazy: we all spend so much time, energy, money, and shed sweat – and sometimes tears (and I hope not too much blood) as to our ideas, without very little know-how about human decision-making. This is crucial knowledge if you want to turn your ideas into a success. You need to know how you can make people choose for you. You need to understand how you can move people in the direction in which you want them to move. You need to know how to get people to start (or stop) doing things. Or to get yourself to do so.

The truth is, we all roll the dice and hope that things will turn out for the best. I don't mean this in a demeaning way. Most of us simply weren't taught how human decision-making works, or how behaviour is shaped. Behavioural economics wasn't part of our education, or integrated into our daily work practice. Some of us may have read or heard about the theory, but it got lost in the practical translation. And there we are: we all tend to put our expertise and experience

into everything we do, but we haven't got the one crucial – though so essential! – part of the puzzle that will help us to make better decisions: *behavioural science*. This book adds a 'Missing Layer' to your existing expertise. It will provide you with an extra tool in your mental toolbox. It is all about giving you the method to uncover that hidden, irrational logic in human decision-making which is the key to moving people into the right direction. And it will show you the evidence-based principles from behavioural science to reinforce your ideas. This book is your guide to help you unlock the power of the science of influencing, which is crucial in getting more control over your successful outcomes.

It is all about influence

I know that some of you are immediately put off by the word *influence*. However, this is a book about influence. But think about it for a moment. Influence is not a bad word or verb. Or influencing behaviour isn't evil. Influencing is something that we as people are constantly doing. We are trying to shape people's behaviour all the time. If you have kids, you try to teach them socially accepted behaviours. If you want your manager to sign a budget, you are trying to influence his or her approval behaviour. If the government puts recycling containers in your street, then they are trying to influence your recycling behaviour. If you get flirty with that nice-looking person at the other side of the bar, you are trying to influence someone with a sweet *Barry White*-style love-making act. The way supermarkets position the products upon their shelves, is an attempt to influence your buying behaviour. When you give someone a gift or a compliment, you influence his or her 'liking behaviour'. Well, you get my point. Influence isn't a bad thing; it is a natural human condition. Every request we have, every cooperation or connection we seek, requires influencing someone's behaviour. Even if you want to invite a friend to a movie, or want friends to come over to your dinner party. Influencing behaviour is everywhere. We are just not that good at it. Or to put it better: we are not very well-equipped for it.

Although influencing behaviour is our daily mechanism to cope, learn, progress and connect in life, we have a blind spot for how influence works

'Why is not everybody using it right now, then?', I can almost hear you think. Well, there is more than one answer to that. First of all, more people and organisations are already using behavioural science on you, than you might realise. Therefore, it is intriguing and relevant to know more about Behavioural Design, as we are all continuously surrounded and influenced by it. Most of the time, we don't realise it. We all tend to think that we make our own decisions based on our own free will every day. However, most of our behaviour is thoughtfully triggered, and our choices are carefully designed.

Do you check your phone or email when you see the red notification light up? Do you go for the mid-priced wine on a restaurant menu? Do you follow the route in an Ikea store? Eat a whole bag of potato chips, instead of having just a few crisps? Buy something while you didn't have the budget for it? The way you buy, vote, walk, eat, work, interact, shop, react, look, is often discreetly designed and carefully crafted, using the science of influence. You might think you are calling the shots, but you usually have less control over your own decisions and behaviour than you assume. In this book, I will give you examples, so you'll see it happening in the future, and so that you'll come prepared then. Therefore, knowing more about behavioural science will be a very important eye-opener. Next to that, many people are fascinated by behavioural psychology. Many are reading about it, but few have adopted it in practice. This is your chance to become a frontrunner in this field and outsmart the competition, whether that is your competitor, boss, colleague (or your significant 'other half').

Behavioural science made practical

However, a lot of the knowledge from behavioural science is quite theoretical, and is arrived at in academic research settings. That doesn't make it very easy to apply for us 'hands-on mortals'. We have a strategic innovation company called SUE | Behavioural Design, which specialises in using behavioural science to influence minds and shape desired behaviours. It took its name from the Johnny Cash-song *A boy named SUE.*[1] We started out as a creative agency; however, we noticed that the most exciting progress wasn't in creative industry but in behavioural science. We also noticed that in Silicon Valley, the winning companies were those that took humans and their behaviour as a starting point. At that

time, there were a lot of fascinating insights about human behaviour and decision-making, but they felt like pieces of a puzzle that didn't fall into place. There was no easy method to apply them in practice, yet this was what we desperately needed. We, as SUE, had clients looking for ways to develop next-generation, people-centred products, services, campaigns, or policies that people would embrace. We needed a way to leverage all the exciting know-how on human behaviour and the psychology of decision-making in practice.

We've studied the academic books and articles that gave us the latest insights into human psychology and behavioural science over the last few years. We've read hundreds of research papers, submerged ourselves in psychological experiments, visited conferences and talked to experts – all this with one goal: to make that powerful know-how actionable, helping our clients solve complex challenges with tangible results. That's why (and how) we developed our *SUE | Behavioural Design Method*©. It is built upon the groundbreaking insights from behavioural science that are most frequently replicated and acknowledged. These insights have been translated into a method with three easy-to-apply steps. The word *method* is essential. It's not magic; it's not alchemy, it's a structured process revealing how people (often unawarely) arrive at decisions, and turn this deep human understanding into validated ideas that will trigger behaviour. It's a method that you can master. This book will take you through all these steps of the Behavioural Design Method and will help you to apply the method yourself.

Principles of persuasion alone won't do the trick, aka 'what this book is not'

Before you decide to read on, you need to understand what this book is not. There is a common misunderstanding that Behavioural Design is about applying a set of persuasion principles.[2] You probably know the principles from hotel-booking websites, such as *social proof* ('this room was already booked 235 times, and had an 8.7 rating') and *scarcity* ('only three bedrooms left'). These are powerful principles, but sometimes they are mere 'tricks' up a designer's sleeve in order to boost sales. If you want to be successful, you need to realise that just adding some principles won't do the trick of turning your ideas into a success. You first need to know *why* people do things, and why they don't. Successful

influence begins with a deep understanding of the human decision-making that shapes behaviours.

Every behaviour starts with a decision. People must make the decision to start or to stop doing things

Just let me give you an example. I am a Berlin lover. And I regularly go there (as a matter of fact, I am writing these words in Berlin as we speak). I flew in here. But I must admit that, from an ecological perspective, I feel rather guilty about taking the plane. There is a train going from Amsterdam to Berlin – the ICE. You can throw social proof, scarcity and authority at me. Telling me that it runs 90% on time, transports 2,000 happy passengers a day, including many business travellers who give it a 9.7 rating. But I just won't get onto that train. As long as you don't dispel my irrational beliefs that the train will be crowded with noisy travellers, the Wi-Fi will suck, and that I won't have a decent place to work during the seven hours of having to sit on that train. Every idea or intervention will simply bounce off me. To get me on the ICE, you need to understand my (irrational) decision-making, and understand which forces hold me back from or move me onto the train. And then you can start coming up with ideas. So, if we are talking about Behavioural Design, we are talking about understanding what people genuinely need, and what is going to help them to progress in life. For this, you need to have three elements:

1. Insight into the psychology of human decision-making
2. Understanding the forces that shape people's behaviour
3. The ability to turn deep human understanding into the ideas and strategies that can shape the desired behaviours

The SUE | Behavioural Design Method

The question remains: How does one do this? How do you influence decisions and shape desired behaviours? Scientific knowledge can be overwhelming, and difficult to translate into daily life. It often lacks all creativity, making it hard to fit it in with your brand or personality. The good news is: you are holding the answer. This isn't just a book; it's a masterclass with an extensive toolbox. It's

a 'very hands-on', practical guide that will help you to start using Behavioural Design right away – to develop strategies and ideas that are going to change your behaviour. It will help you to *power up* your existing ideas with the science of influence step-by-step, from start to finish. In order to make this book work for you, it isn't packed with fancy, complicated theories or eloquent wording. It consists of short, easy to read chapters, with examples, tools and tips for you to skip through, and to use as a quick reference. You don't need to have a sales, marketing or advertising background. You don't need any technological skills. You'll be just okay if you want to learn how to influence people positively, and if you are a curious, forward thinker. This book will show you how to apply behavioural science systematically and pragmatically. You'll learn the SUE | Behavioural Design Method that will help you to influence minds and shape behaviour predictably. So, Lady Luck can take a break. Or at least you don't need to depend too much on her anymore – though she's always welcome to the party, of course.

The beauty of it is: the SUE | Behavioural Design Method works! It is not just a concept I manufactured for this book. At our Behavioural Design-consultancy,[3] we have been applying this method for over ten years now, in order to help national and international organisations to improve their design choices, and to aid them in shaping positive behaviours. The Behavioural Design Method has allowed us to develop validated solutions for financial institutions, NGOs, start-ups, FMCGs, healthcare organisations, public governments, service providers, retailers, hotels, and leadership teams. The method has been applied to a wide range of challenges. To give you some examples: We have helped youngsters to get out of debt and banks like ABN Amro and ING to make sure that people take steps now to secure financial safety for the future. People drive more safely by not using their phones in traffic. People with diabetes use the new medical technology of Medtronic to help them live a more carefree life. Mortgage owners are aided to avoid future financial problems. UNHCR to gain more support and donations for refugees. We have helped a Dutch political party design as to voting behaviour, in order to fight the rise of the extreme right. And have aided nurses in developing their ambitions within their present workplace. We have helped to build strong company cultures that attract talent and retain it. And co-workers to accept organisational change. We have assisted organisations, such as eBay, Roche and Orange, to transform their teams in order to

become genuinely human-centred, and helped them to embrace the habits of high-performance teams. We have helped SportCity to aid people in creating a lasting exercise regime. Dutch municipalities to boost the recycling behaviour of citizens, and Heineken to design for sustainability by developing behaviours that result in zero plastic waste at festivals. Besides assisting multi-disciplinary teams to become more creative, and organisations to create future proof positioning and propositions – to name but a few things.

We have taught exactly the same Behavioural Design Method to over 1,500 people from more than 45 countries by way of our *SUE | Behavioural Design Academy*© – an officially accredited educational institution. In short, what you'll read and learn in this book has been test-proofed in practice on real cases. Our work has helped us to test, validate and optimise the Behavioural Design Method in real-life situations. You might ask yourself: 'What kind of people use the SUE | Behavioural Design Method?' So far, we have worked with leadership teams, politicians, business owners, marketeers, policymakers, innovation managers, UX-designers, architects, hotel owners, HR consultants, physical fitness-trainers, health care-professionals, CMOs, researchers, copywriters, fundraisers, finance experts, innovators, product owners, strategic planners, CEOs, and many more. So, your motivation to pick up this book could be to learn what your competitors may already be using, or in order to stay ahead in the game. But to put it simply: if you want to know more about human decision-making, and learn the skills to influence minds and change behaviour positively, you're holding the right book.

This isn't so much a book, as a masterclass and a toolbox

This book comes with downloads and videos to further boost your ability to apply behavioural science. It comes with easy-to-use tools, cheat sheets, and my guidance. To give you hands-on directions and instructions in order to apply what you've learnt right away. This isn't so much a book – as a masterclass and toolbox that will help you to start practising Behavioural Design. Therefore, by purchasing this book you are actually not buying just a book but a genuine learning experience. That will give you a 24/7-online access to an exclusive website, where you can find downloads and videos which you may use at will.

From a Behavioural Design perspective, this was not just a cute gimmick or add-on to this book – it has been essential. In psychology, there's a well-known phenomenon called the *use-it-or-lose-it* principle. One thing that happens in all of our brains is called *pruning*.[4] Our brain clears out the grey matter we do not use, which simply gets eliminated. That sounds scary, but it is hopeful. Whereas we used to think that we all face the decline of our cognitive ability as we age, that is in fact not always the case.[5] If you keep using your brain, it can stay in good health for a long time. And learning new things makes for a perfect brain training. However, if you want the learnings from this book to stick, you must keep using them in order to avoid getting pruned. But that is again great news from a Behavioural Design-perspective: If you do things repeatedly, it turns them into habit through automatic behaviour, in other words: by using the tools and templates from this book, you not only keep your brain healthy, but you will also turn using this newly acquired know-how into a habit – helping you to apply Behavioural Design effortlessly. So, how's that for a pitch in order to use the downloads and tools in this book?

I therefore sincerely hope that this book will become your guide to the fascinating world of applied behavioural science. Earmark your pages, highlight your sentences, scribble your findings on the side-lines, and instead of reading it from beginning to end, occasionally skip ahead or come back to read some parts again. I hope you will put in 'sticky notes' to add your cases and learnings. Making it not just another book on your bookshelf, but your own *Behavioural Design-playbook* that will be your trusted companion in designing for behavioural change. So, there you go. If you're looking to gain more control as to successful outcomes by unlocking the power of Behavioural Design in practice, this book and everything that comes with it is a definite 'keeper'.

Astrid Groenewegen

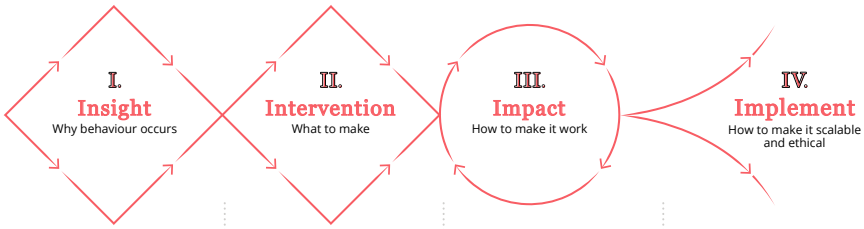
PS.: Did I use Behavioural Design on you in this introduction? Yes, I most certainly did. I have connected with your job-to-be-done. I have highlighted pains, taken away anxieties, and used authority and other persuasive principles. Do you want to know what all this means and how it works? Please, read on, and you'll find out soon enough.

STEP I

INSIGHT

How to turn ideas into a success

SUE | Behavioural Design Method©



1. THINKING
Understand how people come to decisions.

2. BEHAVIOUR
Identify the forces that drive human behaviour.

3. OPPORTUNITIES
Unlock opportunities for behaviour change.

4. IDEATION
Come up with ideas that will shape behaviour.

5. CONCEPTING
Turn ideas into interventions and influence strategies.

6. SELECTION
Spot the interventions with the most potential to test proof.

7. PROTOTYPING
Learn by running lean experiments at real people.

8. INFLUENCE
Maximise the impact of your ideas and yourself.

9. ETHICS
Make the right considerations to safeguard the ethics of your interventions.

BUILDING BLOCK 1

THINKING

– Understanding how people think and arrive at decisions

Introduction

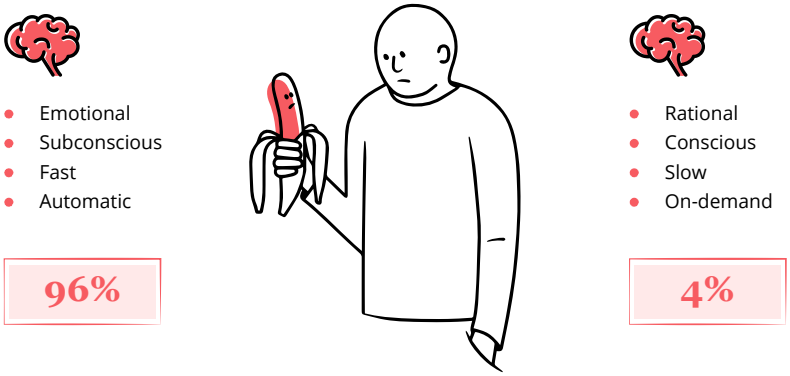
To give it to you straight away: if you know how people make decisions, you are able to shape their behaviour. Behaviour is all about decisions. Should I go left or right? Do I decide to buy this or not? Do I act kindly to this person because I've made up my mind that I like him? Do I choose to hire this person or not? Do I decide to eat more healthily, go to the gym, or recycle? Do I choose to vote for the right-wing or rather for the socialists? Do I decide to have my children vaccinated, give them a proper education, or is getting them to eat fresh food the right thing to do? Do I choose to be actively involved in my community or not? Do I decide whether protecting the environment and acting on the climate change are essential or aren't they? Do I choose to admit that I need help with my finances? Do I decide to invest time or money in this new idea or business? Decisions, decisions, decisions – it is estimated that we all must make more than 35,000 decisions per day.[30] Ranging from important decisions to minor ones. How on earth can we manage this?

That's where professor Daniel Kahneman, the Eugene Higgins Professor of Psychology Emeritus at Princeton University, and his long-time collaborator, the late mathematical psychologist Amos Tversky have provided us with profound scientific answers. They did groundbreaking work on human decision-making. They discovered we engage in fast and slow thinking, and revealed the importance of our subconscious mind in making decisions and performing a behav-

iour. Maybe you've already heard of system 1 and system 2. Or you've heard that Kahneman was the first psychologist to win the Nobel Prize for economics in 2002 (Tversky had already deceased at the time). It might be that you've heard about cognitive biases and heuristics. Enough to be intrigued. Kahneman is one of our heroes, and the godfather of behavioural economics. I'll show you the highlights of Kahneman's and Tversky's thinking that they published in their best-selling book *Thinking Fast and Slow*. It gives you a solid basis to understand human thinking and decision-making.

The two operating systems of our brain: system 1 and system 2

The revolutionary research of Kahneman and Tversky showed that our brain has two operating systems, which they called system 1 and system 2. These are the differences between the two systems of our brain:



Just look at the percentages for a moment. Our conscious brain only makes up 4% of all our thinking. This indicates that a staggering 96% of all our decisions are made completely subconsciously. Discovering not only the two operating systems of our brain, but especially the bandwidth of each system, was what made this research so significant. Some discussion has been raised about the exact percentages. Is it 96%? 98%? Did our rational thinking capacity become

worse, now that we're distracted by multiple interfaces and notifications? Another authority in this field, Dr Gazzaniga, professor of psychology at the University of California, tells us in his book *Who's in charge? Free will and the science of the brain*[31] that it is, in fact, a staggering 98%. The truth is, 2% or 4% doesn't matter. Don't start nit-picking the numbers; it is a waste of your energy (unless you want to write a PhD thesis on this subject). We are interested in how we can use breakthrough scientific research in practice. When observing human decision-making in real-life situations, the most respected behavioural researchers and scientists have proven that our decision-making is overwhelmingly influenced by our system 1.

We are not 'lean-mean-rational-thinking-machines' that always make decisions in our best self-interest. You don't even have to be a researcher to know this. You probably have experienced it yourself sometime, or maybe even more than once. When you did or didn't do something merely to fit in with a group of people. Or when you decided to go for instant gratification instead of thinking about future consequences, to be more lazy than healthy, or to spend more money than you knew you should. Maybe that was not rational, perhaps it was not in your best interest either, but it was the choice you made at that given time. And that's okay. That is called 'being human'. And it is because of your system 1. So, if we want to understand how to influence choice and behaviour, what we have to learn from the research of Kahneman and Tversky is that it gave us a breakthrough insight into the power of the subconscious mind. And foremost the fact that:

Behavioural science has revealed the lack of reasoning in human decision-making

How your brain works is what your system 1 is primarily doing: rapidly sifting through information and ideas without you even noticing it. Prioritising whatever seems relevant – and filtering out the rest by taking shortcuts. These shortcuts are also called 'heuristics'. Our system 1 sends suggestions to our system 2. Which then turns them into beliefs. To summarise, you could say that our system 2 is a slave to our system 1.

I'll give you an everyday example that will bring this interaction between the two systems in our brain to life immediately. Think about the first time you met

a random person. You instantly liked someone or not: the famous 'first impression'. And you might even feel you are quite a good judge of character, as your first impression often turns out to be correct. What happens in your brain is this. Within milliseconds, your system 1 has decided whether you like a person based on subconscious, automatic short-cuts, like that person's facial expression, the fact that they wear glasses, the colours of their clothes, their walk, their talk and so on. This all happens quickly and without you even being aware of it. What you do knowingly experience is that sensation of a first impression. That's the suggestion your system 1 has sent to your system 2. Your system 2 then actively looks for affirmations of this suggestion, which turns the suggestion into a belief. It becomes true in your mind as you then selectively process all the following information consistent with that first impression. Hence, this evokes your feeling that your first impressions are often so right.

As Kahneman put it: 'Very quickly you form an impression, and then you spend most of your time confirming it instead of collecting evidence. So, if accidentally your impression was in the wrong direction, you're going to confirm it. You don't give yourself a chance to correct it.'[32] I found the following quote of Caroline Webb[33] which I liked, and summed up why system 1- and system 2-thinking is so essential to grasp: 'The startling truth is that we don't experience the world as it is; we're always experiencing an edited, simplified version.' And to add to this, it implies that we don't see an objective version of the world or people: we get to see our version of the world or people. Your personal system 1 decides how you see and judge things. So, the truth isn't only edited and simplified; it is also diversified. Or as Kahneman showed us:

Our two thought systems can arrive at different results even when given the same inputs

I have read about this funny example of how the human brain can interpret information entirely differently, depending on the context. What happened? During the COVID-19 social distancing-restriction, a Hungarian member of parliament was arrested in Brussels when caught breaking lockdown rules at an illegal all-male gay party. Okay, this is not funny yet, I know. This is very irresponsible behaviour. The funny part was when the police entered the party; the partygoers thought these were part of the entertainment of the evening.

In this context, their system 1 picked up those men in uniform as cues for a YMCA-stripper act. It was reported that 30 male guests tried to unzip the police officers' pants, because they didn't realise (at first) that these were genuine officers.[34] It is undeniable that, if those same policemen had stopped the same partygoers during a weekday out on the street for speeding, they would not have shown the same inappropriate behaviour. That would have been another context in which their system 1 would have picked up different cues. Instead of unzipping pants, they would have shown their IDs. This is an exceptional example, but this system 1- and 2-thinking isn't a detail, as it can significantly impact everyday life. Let me build upon that relatively small example of the first impression. It does not seem to be a very big deal. Someone's job can depend on it. Research[35] has shown that, in hiring someone for a new position, roughly 5% of the decisions were made within the first minute of the interview, and nearly 30% within five minutes. The largest block, 52% of interviewers, decides about a candidate within between five and fifteen minutes of the interview. It could be that it's an interview that lasts for an hour, but it's the first five to fifteen minutes that count.

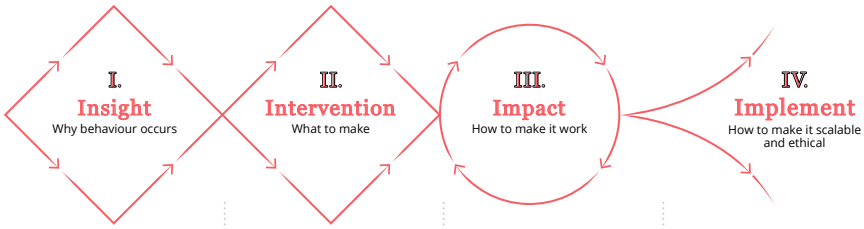
That's why the know-how you're now acquiring about human thinking is essential. If you know how the human brain works, you can be prepared for it. Or you can alter your misconceptions to make sure you take better decisions. This can make a significant difference as to the result or impact of things. Grasping the power of the subconscious mind is a key to human freedom. Or as George Lakoff puts it: 'Cognitive science has something of enormous importance to contribute to human freedom: the ability to learn what our unconscious conceptual systems are like, and how our unconscious cognitive functions. If we do not realise that most of our thought is unconscious and that we think metaphorically, we will indeed be slaves to the cognitive unconscious.'[36] In the case of the job interview, it is said that the best way to handle the interviewer's system 1 is to build rapport. Make sure you arrive early at an interview, and try to create a personal connection (in behavioural psychology, also indicated as activating *the liking principle*) before the interview starts to feed the interviewer's system 1 with positive cues. In the following chapters, I will return to the different techniques for influencing system 1 regarding the people you're trying to influence extensively. Still, you've already got a taste of it. My point is:

STEP II

INTERVENTION

How to turn ideas into a success

SUE | Behavioural Design Method©



1. THINKING

Understand how people come to decisions.

2. BEHAVIOUR

Identify the forces that drive human behaviour.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

Unlock opportunities for behaviour change.

4. IDEATION

Come up with ideas that will shape behaviour.

5. CONCEPTING

Turn ideas into interventions and influence strategies.

6. SELECTION

Spot the interventions with the most potential to test proof.

7. PROTOTYPING

Learn by running lean experiments at real people.

8. INFLUENCE

Maximise the impact of your ideas and yourself.

9. ETHICS

Make the right considerations to safeguard the ethics of your interventions.

BUILDING BLOCK 4

IDEATION

– Coming up with ideas that will shape behaviour

Introduction

We now are moving to the second step of the Behavioural Design Method: Intervention. You have picked the opportunities you think are most promising. You have translated them even into HMW-questions or Behavioural Statements. In a traditional process, this is where the insights get handed over to the creative people. But not this time. I know a lot has been said about creativity being a talent. And of course some people are very talented, but that doesn't mean you have to be an educated, creative professional in order to develop ideas that work. Especially when we're talking about the kind of ideas that we are looking for. These are not just the witty, creative ideas, but ideas that will potentially influence minds and change behaviour – and are built up out of behavioural science. Those ideas can still be very creative, but effectiveness is their foundation. I know it's a common belief that creativity itself is a very intangible, abstract, almost magical process. Still, our experience is that anyone can come up with ideas if one approaches creativity in a truly structured way. For this, one needs a model. This chapter will introduce you to the second mental model in your Behavioural Design toolbox: the *SUE | SWAC Tool*. It explains which buttons to push in order to develop ideas that will influence behaviour. It is partnered with a list of proven concepts from behavioural science, that will spark off your creative thinking, and will help you to find multiple solutions to your behavioural challenge. We will go through a step-by-step process; I believe (and

have repeatedly experienced myself) that taking the methodological approach will consistently deliver great ideas.

Designing for behaviour change

Now that you have translated your opportunities into HMW questions, it's time to turn them into ideas that influence minds and change behaviour. And to make it even more ambitious – here we are at ideas that change behaviour over time. Or in other words: our real challenge here is to design new behaviours that will stick. Still, we do have to be realistic at this point. Behavioural change is hard. We as humans would rather stick to less effective behaviours than break through our inertia. Some old behaviours simply feel as comfortable as an old, ragged bathrobe. Instead of getting a new one, you prefer wearing the old rag as it feels so snug and good to you. Even you know it is worn and torn, giving you the sex appeal of a grey pebble stone. We all have very sticky comforts that are very hard to change. Add this to anxieties, and you know you are in for a tough battle in order to change behaviour. Unfortunately, there is no magic formula which is a one-way street towards the ultimate idea that will change all this. We're dealing with humans, which makes it utterly interesting and challenging. Not every idea works for everyone, and even ideas that have worked don't work every time. Change is hard – no doubt about that.

Does this imply that change is impossible? Is it something human beings are simply not willing to do or capable of? For instance, did you know that McKinsey reported that 70% of all organisation transformations fail, or don't even meet their original target's impact? Of which an astounding 72% is accounted to the 'people factor'. Either employees are unwilling to embrace change, or managers are not supporting change.[78] Perhaps you yourself recognise this? Have you ever worked in an organisation or on a team that had to move into a different direction? And have you experienced the resistance that comes with that? Or let's make it more personal. Think back at the (new year's) resolutions you yourself made. Were many of them successful? Doubtful – for you are merely human and changing is hard.

But that doesn't mean we as humans can't change. In our lives, we tend to change many times. And we even do so willingly, and most of the time we even enjoy it. Think of going to university. We can't wait to change our living environment, and move out from our mums and dads. Or think about deciding to go to live together with the love of your life – getting married or having children. These are all changes we voluntarily make (I hope) and that bring us joy (this I genuinely hope, especially as to the kids, as they are irreversible). But even some minor changes we happily undertake and even look forward to. Have you ever have wanted to travel or go on a holiday? Every year, we save up to have ourselves transported to a change in surroundings, and we eat new, exotic food (and take 2,000 pictures in order to never to forget it again, and we share these with the rest of the world). Think about fashion, which changes every season. And even if you are not a fashion addict, I bet that when you look back at some of our old pictures, it is a good thing you did change your looks from time to time. Some hair and fashion choices are better left far behind – well, at least mine are. I do admit I had that entire 'eighties look' going, including fluorescent T-shirts and Wham-like outfits. And don't even get me started on Madonna's influence on me. My catholic grandmother, may God have her soul, is still shocked. Anyway, let's get back to the topic of change. The following is what we can conclude:

Change is hard, but it's happening all the time

How to design behaviour: The SUE | SWAC Tool explained

Much fascinating research has been done into the behaviour-change field of expertise. And it can get quite complicated. That's why I've simplified it again. Without further ado, let's look at the SUE | SWAC Tool. It is foremost a very easy-to-use tool. It explains which four puzzle pieces you need to solve in order to create a context that will persuade someone to do something – and have them keep doing it. What makes this tool so easy to use in practice is that anytime you want to design for behaviour change, all you have to do is ask yourself four simple questions:

Adding SWAC to Moments that Matter

1. How can we make sure someone **WANTS** to perform the desired behaviour?
2. How can we make sure someone **CAN** perform the desired behaviour?
3. How can we **SPARK** the desired behaviour at the Moments that Matter?
4. How can we activate the desired behaviour **AGAIN** and again?

When the new behaviour doesn't happen, at least one of those four elements is missing. The most important implication of this is that, by using the SUE | SWAC Tool as a guide, you can quickly identify what stops people from performing the behaviours you are looking for.

If a sufficient degree of capability (CAN) to perform a behaviour is matched with the willingness (WANT) to engage in that behaviour, then all that is then needed for the behaviour to occur is to get someone going (SPARK) a number of times (AGAIN) at the Moments that Matter

Maybe you notice that in the tool, it says 'moments that matter'. Not just *one* moment, but *moments*. Behaviour change doesn't happen overnight. Most of the time, someone needs to be reminded of the desired behaviour more than once, for it to happen in the first place. Furthermore, behaviour gets easier when it's repeated. Therefore, we have to make sure that we SPARK someone AGAIN and AGAIN in order to activate the desired behaviour. So, it would be best if you designed several interventions at multiple moments that matter.

Moments that Matter are the relevant decision points to engage in the desired behaviour, or not

Let's take a closer look at all the elements of the SWAC Tool. The one cannot live without the other. If you WANT to perform a certain behaviour, but you CAN't, then nothing will happen for sure. If you CAN perform the behaviour, but you don't WANT to, then that too is a tough battle to fight. So, the best chance for any successful outcomes is when CAN and WANT are both SPARKed, more than once (AGAIN). There should always be both willingness (WANT) and ca-

pability (CAN) in order to perform the desired behaviour, but you do not need to always maximise the two. There are two simple guidelines:

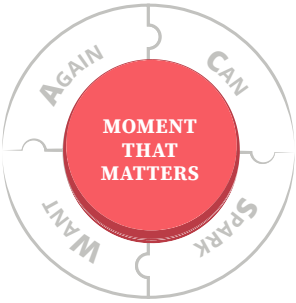
1. When someone's really WANTs to change, then someone CAN even show 'hard behaviour'
2. When someone CAN easily perform the behaviour, someone doesn't have to WANT it so badly

You always need a SPARK and a repetition (AGAIN) for the desired behaviour to occur in the first place. Let's address the elephant in the room: SWAC's order seems weird, right? Indeed you're right. I have called it SWAC because that way, it is a system 1-cue to remember the four elements needed as to behaviour change. It sounds like swag (which is a bonus), but it's supposed to stand for this easy to remember formula:

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE = **S**PARK x **W**ANT x **A**GAIN x **C**AN

If you want to make an impression on someone, you can always tell them that SWAC stands for **S**parking off Willingness **A**gain and **C**apability. Whatever works for you, as long as it helps you to remember what four elements you need to include a lasting behaviour change. However, I have a preferred the order of coming up with ideas. As to this order, I will now explain the four elements of the SWAC Tool to you.

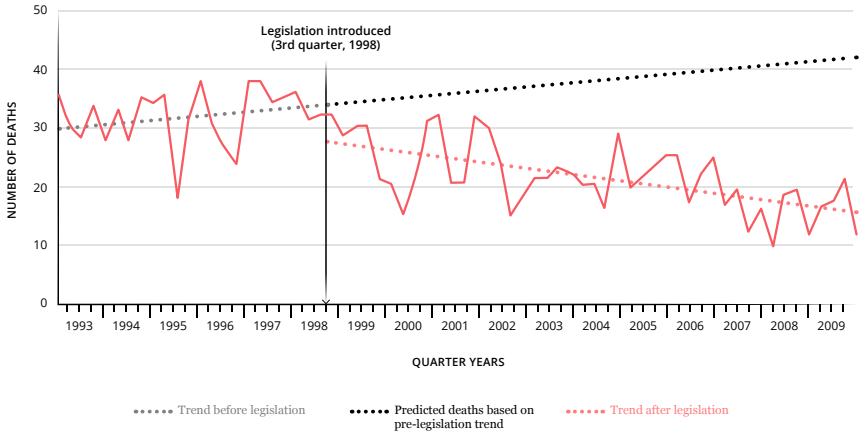
It all starts with the moments that matter and failure



C4. Can we add or take away hurdles? FRICTION

This intervention makes undesired behaviour harder to engage in, decreasing someone's capability by introducing friction.[162] Or to put it more simply: to raise barriers. Let me illustrate this with an example in which adding friction helped to prevent some severe behaviour: like accidental poisoning and even suicide. Maybe you knew it already but overusing paracetamol (a widespread household drug), is a frequent method of suicide and of 'non-fatal self-harm' worldwide.[163] 'Suicidal behaviour is often impulsive, and people tend to use drugs already available in their homes. People are also more likely to consume more than 25 tablets, the amount associated with acute liver dysfunction when they are in a loose pack instead of a blister pack'.[164] In 1998, the British government decided to change the legislation on paracetamol packaging. The drug could no longer be sold 'loose' in big containers and was restricted to blister packs that are far harder to open. Also, the number of tablets in this blister packaging was limited to 32 tablets in pharmacies and 16 tablets elsewhere. But they even put up more friction: you couldn't buy multiple packs at one shop. These seem only relatively small, and that it is easy to get around the frictions that were introduced. Someone could still go to several shops and purchase more than one package, and then spend a night taking out the pills from their packagings, but the numbers showed that these small interventions indeed had a significant impact. Putting up these barriers resulted in 'an estimated 43 per cent reduction in suicides in the 11 years following the legislation – that's 765 fewer deaths: 990 including accidental poisonings. There was also a 61 per cent reduction in registrations for liver transplants caused by paracetamol poisoning.'[165]

Figure 3:
Reduction in UK deaths by overdose after change in law relating to paracetamol packaging



Data source: WISH Behavioural Insights Forum[166]

But there is an even more significant upside to all of this. Evidence suggests that people do not find a different route to suicide when faced with these kinds of costs, but rather discontinue the attempt altogether.[167] Therefore, limiting the ease of access to painkillers may be a very effective means to combat suicide rates. Another example of introducing a hurdle is by a 'waste container-garden' intervention. In many cities, people dump their garbage next to the waste containers, causing litter and making neighbourhoods far less pleasant places to live in. Turning the space around a waste container into a small garden does make this behaviour a lot harder to carry out. People are less inclined to dump their waste in a garden, and as a bonus it can also turn the street into a nicer place. Experiments in The Netherlands have shown that littering decreases, and that the municipality needs to spend less money on cleaning up the mess. Next to the fact that these gardens brighten up the streets, there's another side-effect: They act as a drainage for any excess rainwater.[168]

BUILDING BLOCK 7

PROTOTYPING

– Learning by presenting lean experiments to real people

Introduction

So here we are. You have your interventions based on the human insights unlocked by the SUE | Influence Framework, you've used the SWAC Tool to come up with these interventions, and you've designed an influence strategy using the 4C Influence Flow. Now it is time to prototype. Prototyping is so much fun!

Prototyping is all about embracing your eagerness to learn and cultivating your curiosity

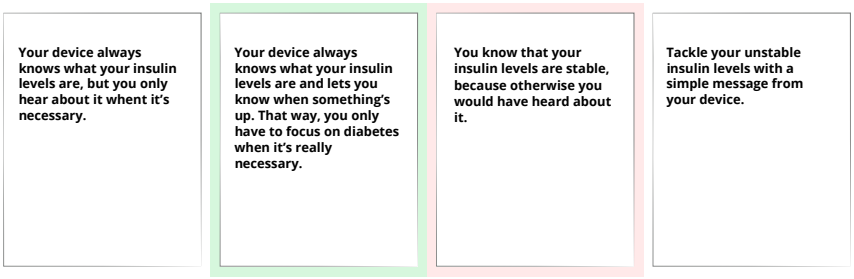
The most important reason you should prototype is that you can use behavioural science to get insights and develop interventions. Still, if there is no evidence that these will trigger the desired behaviour, they are no more than assumptions. Almost anyone can develop interventions, but choosing and implementing the right interventions is where most things go wrong. Implementing to create change is where real innovation lies.

Creativity is thinking about things, innovation is about doing things

We are often surprised by what we expect to test the best, and what is considered most convincing by real people. Also, sometimes small details in our interventions turn out to be true influence gems, having a far more significant impact than we could have imagined beforehand.

The importance of prototyping

To illustrate how vital prototyping can be, and how it can increase the successful outcomes of your interventions, let me start by giving you an example from our practice. We were asked to develop a value proposition for a medical device to help patients with type I diabetes to manage their insulin levels. Most patients must check their insulin levels by drawing blood and measuring, which is both invasive and painful. Our client developed a technology that made blood sampling unnecessary; an app could now warn patients whether their insulin levels needed attention. We tested these four prototypes of value propositions:



Our client expected the third to be the preferred one by the actual target group. It makes sense: it is not too long, and it is quite a reassuring message. However, the prototyping test revealed a completely different result. The message our client thought to have the most positive impact was described by real diabetes patients as 'short and unclear' and 'I don't understand this'. The 'winner' from the prototype test was the second value proposition. Indeed, the most extended message. People described this one as: 'This is nice because it is so clear'. And there you see that we all are used to doing things in a certain way (advertising should be short and snappy), and we all have assumptions – and, most of the time, no evidence. The prototyping practice often proved us wrong or framed us more positively: it sent us in the right direction.

To add on to these findings of the prototype test, we found a big little detail that changed the business success of this device. Our client was used to market this device *b-to-b,* as a medical specialist. This value proposition we created was to market b-to-c, the end-user. Our client used the word *patient* in every commu-

THE ART OF

DESIGNING BEHAVIOUR

People are complex beings and so is behavioural change, but you'll be able to do more than you think possible. And once you understand how people arrive at decisions, you will find yourself with gold in your hands.

Marketeers, policy-makers, HR-professionals, managers – and also even you yourself. Almost all of us are coping with the question how we might influence human behaviour. One thing is clear: changing behaviour is pretty difficult. But why is this so? And how might you in fact manage to do it?

The Art of Designing Behaviour takes you along to the missing link: applied behavioural science. How do we arrive at our choices? What triggers us to undertake an action? And what actually prevents us from doing so? This knowledge is at the basis of the SUE | Behavioural Design Method©, which has already been successfully used for a decade in organisations all over the world.

This book is both a masterclass and a toolbox combined. You are trained in an accessible method, and will learn what principles and mechanisms you may use in order to stimulate desirable behaviour. Before you know it, you'll be bursting with ideas in order to have a pleasant go at tackling your problem and helping people to make better choices.

'I have read many works on behavioural design that helped me understand the theory of influence. This book finally enables me to put it to practice. Brilliant!'

– Klaas Dijkhoff, former Dutch minister and parliamentary leader

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