A recipe for change

Cooking up behaviour change in the workplace

A talk by Les Robinson
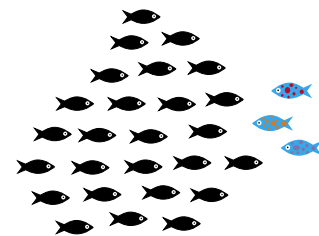
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CHANGE
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Resistance and denial

"In most cases, people hate change because they don't like to suddenly become stupid."

- Jared Spool, User Interface Engineering blog, 16/7/2012

When faced with imposed change, people may actively resist the perceived threat to their self-esteem, certainty, autonomy, and identity.

Instead of attempting to impose new practices or trying to persuade people to adopt them (both of which cause resistance) aim to expand people's comfort zones with the following approaches.

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A recipe for change

These approaches expand people's comfort zones. How many can you tick for your next project?

Autonomy

Inspiring purpose

Familiarity

Executive support

Being part of a purposeful group

Enjoyment

Social proof

Convenience

Ingredient: autonomy

Can staff contribute to significant decisions or make their own autonomous decisions? This implies being asked to contribute ideas and respectfully listened to.

Royal Freemasons Benevolent Institution

Steve Elliott, Assets and Contracts Manager, explained how he got staff buy-in to an innovative Rox eWater* system in aged care laundries. Instead of imposing the technology, he asked the cleaners in one facility to test it out and report back. Within a few weeks they reported back that they couldn't find any reason not to adopt it.

*Rox eWater is a radical innovation that replaces cleaning chemicals with on-tap alkali and acid water.

Autonomy (and just facilitating a conversation)

Marianne facilitated a cascade of innovations in a council works department:
- a "tyre fairy" (an apprentice who identified vehicles in need of servicing by simply testing their tyre pressure);
- cheap LED headlamps in dim areas under vehicle hoists;
- hotel-style card-activated door locks, that automatically turned off lights in storage areas;
- recycling water for the MIG welder simply using an aquarium pump and an Otto bin.

These and other staff-generated ideas reduced energy by 30%. For the success she credits the manager of the depot and his support for the training.

In her words, the process was "essentially a conversation where people could identify and articulate problems and collectively come up with solutions. The staff were great. All I did was turn up and help start the conversation and help them structure their sustainability action plans... I know bugger all about being a mechanic and what their workflow was like. *They knew what they wanted improved and had the opportunity to see it happen.*"

Autonomy example:

"I worked with a business client whose office waste system of choice was replacing individual desk bins with communal recycling and waste stations. They were predicting resistance for this because people would have to walk to the communal stations. We realised that without buy-in there'd be misuse and contamination. We called together reps from various departments along one corridor of the organisation, including the senior management team, HR and IT. We discussed the waste issue with them, what we would like to do (remove desk bins, install communal facilities), and left them to debate it. They decided on a month pilot of their corridor to test out removing desk bins. We reviewed this with them every week. Sorted out the little niggles (communal facilities not quite in right place), shared 'coping stories' with each other (i.e. different ways different people have set up systems to deal with the change). They had the option at the end of the month to have their desk bins back. They were adamant, "no way", and determined to make it work. Plus they were already extending this to their own 'take home' compost- ing in some offices! Communal waste stations are now rolled out across the whole organisation to great success."

- Kirsty Norris, Action for Sustainability.

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Example: autonomy plus inspiring purpose

Lend Lease employees can nominate which charity they want to help and as long as they can organise three or more staff members, Lend Lease will accept it as a project for Community Day.

"Staff see Community Day as something for them and it's important to them that they have a choice in what they do." They can choose something that "strikes a chord, and is meaningful for them".

The engagement of CSR, Human Resources Magazine, Jan 2005 http://www.humanresourcesmagazine. com.au/articles/de/0c02a0de.asp

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Ingredient: an inspiring purpose

Being given an opportunity to step up to interesting, challenging or worthwhile work; praise for a job well done; being trusted and listened to; working towards a noble purpose or cause (such as a charitable project); or improving own health or skills.

When the lights are turned off at Weiden and Kennedy, London, a child reads at night at Cheryl's Children's Home, Nairobi.

(The power savings go to Solar Aid, an NGO, to set up solar cells in poor institutions in Nairobi.)

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Ingredient: executive support

Executive support is a "gateway" requirement for most staff engagement projects.

Clear evidence of executive support gives staff confidence their efforts are more likely to be successful.

South East Water, Victoria This sign, prominently displayed at the entrance to the staff cafeteria of South East Water, Victoria, shows the progress of staff-driven innovations.
It demonstrates that innovation has strong executive support in this organisation.

Ingredient: executive support

Oak Flats Bowling Club
Oak Flats Bowling & Recreation Club spends $5000 on sustainability training for employees each year.

A further $6000 is available to implement worthwhile ideas. The Club also maintains a separate annual sustainability fund of over $35,000.

The Club spent $5000 to establish a community garden. Its fresh produce is used in the Club's brasserie and the chef is creating a low food miles menu.

Ingredient: being part of a group

Social connection and group membership tremendously reduce the risks of change.

- A green team
- An action group
- A green cc-list
- An innovation network
- A team of two
- Mentoring
- Executives adopt-a-team
- Ride to work groups

Pillar Administration responded to staff needs by implementing a Bicycle User Group (BUG) which encourages staff to ride to work together, provides bike maintenance workshops and additional facilities for bike storage and showering.

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Ingredient: enjoyment

Being in a good mood makes participants less fearful and more likely to have a go at unfamiliar activities.

Happy people:
- tend to rely more on emotional factors when making decisions
- are more likely to leap into situations that feel right
- are more likely to take risks and less likely to regret failures.

Enjoyment examples

St John of God Hospital, Subiaco, organised an Amazing Race to Work by four employees, including the Director of Finance, who competed using one of the four modes – walking, cycling, public transport and driving. At a launch BBQ staff were asked to 'bet' on who would win.

Baptist Community Services, Newcastle, run an annual "Great Work Day", a paid BBQ picnic day, where all staff are praised for their efforts. This is memorable and highly motivating for staff.

RMB Lawyers held a Green (mufti) Day to celebrate their sustainability initiatives. All staff were invited to view Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth", eat mint leaf lollies, call each other "hippie, greenie or tree hugger", take an extra long lunch break and purchase a special RMB coffee mug to avoid take-away cups.

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Ingredient: familiarity

The fear of the unknown is one of the biggest causes of resistance, so acquainting people with new practices especially through hands-on experience, makes a big difference.

- **Woodside** encourages staff to join in Bike Week and Walk Week. Staff participated in a trial of cycle commuting training run by the City of Perth and the TravelSmart Workplace program to encourage less confident riders to take the next step and begin cycling to work.

- **Parsons Brinckerhoff** teams take part in the Global Corporate Challenge to promote walking for commuting and business trips. Perth office staff participate in National Ride to Work day, and staff costs are covered for participation in the Santos Great Bike Ride.

Ingredient: social proof

Social proof means evidence that plenty of similar people have adopted the practice and are enjoying the benefits.

Examples:
"70% of guests reuse their towels"
"90% of our staff now use their own cup"
"80% of our Executive participated in 'Ride to Work Day'"

No one wastes energy here any more

We're greening the company

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Social proof works

Schultz, P. W. (1999). Changing behavior with normative feedback interventions: A field experiment of curbside recycling. Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 21, 25-36
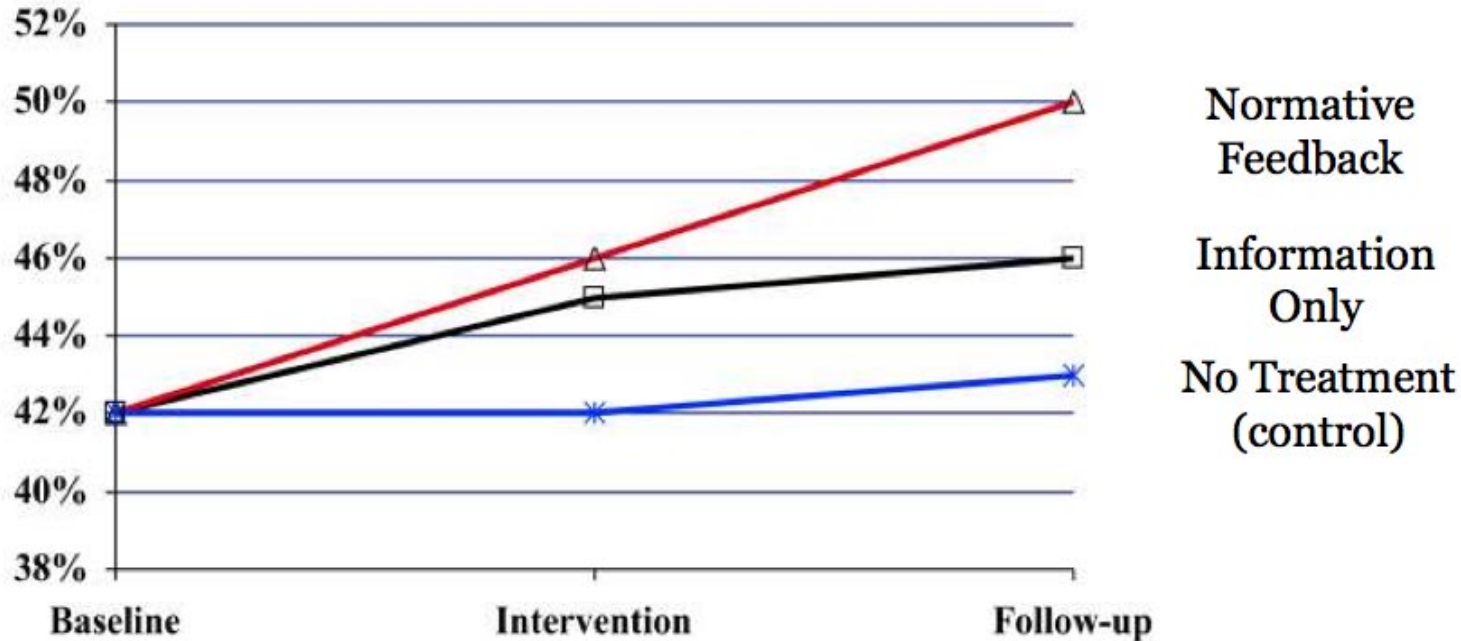
Note: Change from baseline to follow-up for the normative feedback condition is significant (p<.05), and corresponds to a 19% increase in recycling rates!

This field experiment increased the frequency of curbside recycling among community residents using feedback interventions that targeted personal and social norms. My team of researchers observed curbside recycling behaviors of 605 residents of single-family dwellings for 17 weeks. Groups of contiguous houses were randomly assigned to 1 of 5 experimental conditions: plea, plea plus information, plea plus neighborhood feedback, plea plus individual household feedback, or the control condition. Interventions were implemented using door hangers delivered to each household over a 4-week period. Results showed significant increases from baseline in the frequency of participation and total amount of recycled material for the individual (i.e., personal norm) and the group feedback (i.e., descriptive norm) interventions. None of the interventions altered the amount of contamination observed. These findings are interpreted as consistent with recent research on personal and social norms and suggest a link between behavior change produced through norm activation and behavior change produced through feedback. Implications for research and public policy are discussed.
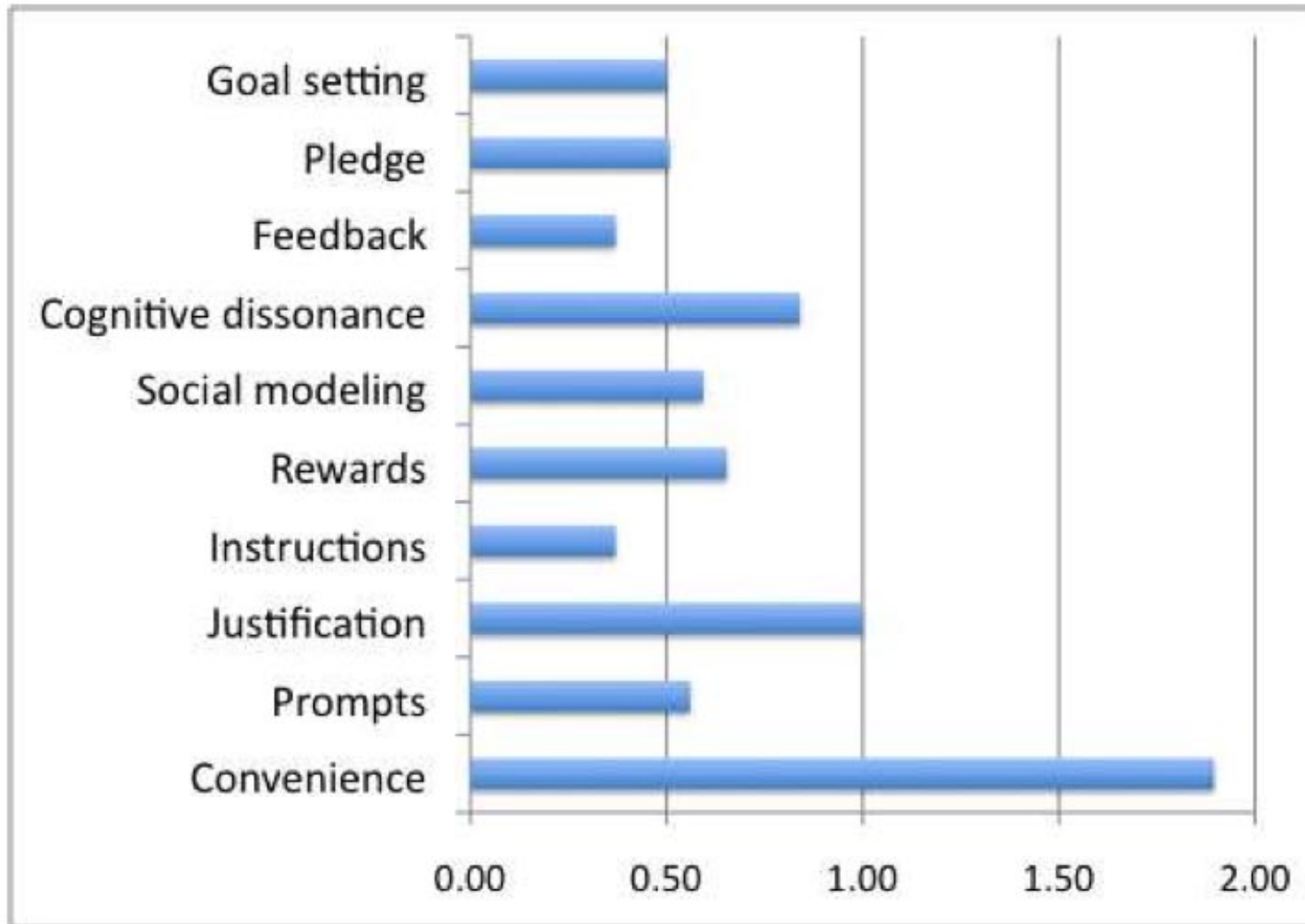
Ingredient: convenience (easiness)

Convenience means reducing the mental and physical effort of an action as close to zero as possible. In practice easiness often includes reducing the number of steps or decisions and making each remaining step or decision as idiot-proof as possible.

Easiness is more than simplicity, it's about fit: carefully matching the action with the realities and rhythms of people's lives, and if necessary, redesigning the action and its context to improve the fit. Creating ease therefore starts with learning about people's lives.

What influences recycling behaviour

Goal setting
Pledge
Feedback
Cognitive dissonance
Social modeling
Rewards
Instructions
Justification
Prompts
Convenience

0.00   0.50   1.00   1.50   2.00

Source: Osbaldiston, R., & Schott, J. (2012). Environmental sustainability and behavioral science: Meta-analysis of pro-environmental behavior. Environment and Behavior, 44, 257-299

Note: Meta analysis of recycling studies, combined across three types of programs. N=41 public, N=52 curbside, N=18 central collection. Osbaldiston & Schott (2012)

Easiness: refining technologies and services

Easiness often means making systems, technologies and environments:

- easier

- simpler

- cheaper

- closer

- safer

- faster

- fewer hassles

- give more certain, predictable results

To find points for improvement, it's vital to LISTEN to staff.

Ease is a fundamental design principle
"You already know how to use it." - first TV ad for the iPad
Also, Amazon's innovation of "one-click shopping".

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