

The System

A full behaviour change solution

In Brief

The system is a full behaviour change solution that provides you with the tools to change, analyse, and learn from behaviour in your organisation.

Dear Reader

You are currently reading a totally free and very practical guide to changing behaviour. For full disclosure the NEWIDEA system detailed in this report is copyrighted with Bangor University, North Wales where it was developed by myself and a group of other experts. For this reason you cannot republish it with reference to myself and Bangor University nor can you sell it as your own work.

Now. On to the good stuff. This free PDF will give you everything you need to know to start changing behaviour and it's all free of charge. I only ask that if you like what you read please pass it on to others and link them back to this site www.thebehaviourguy.wordpress.com when you do.

I welcome criticism and compliments equally so if you have something to say get in touch, I'd be happy to hear from you.

All the best,

Phil Nelson AKA The Behaviour Guy.

Why Change

If you run a business, or manage a group of people, then at some point you will have had to make a change. You might have had to change a process, such as the way reports are filed, or change the layout of a form, or the way complaints are processed. These changes are always essential. Unfortunately, even the smallest change can result in a massive upset.

Conversely you might face the problem of needing to make a change, but you don't know where to start. Perhaps some of your staff repeatedly come in late, reports are never submitted, productivity is low, morale is plummeting and so on. You know a change is needed but you don't want to just crack down on bad behaviour.

Internal change is often essential to keep pace with changes in the outside world. Moving to Email, banning smoking, safety training, communication training; these are just a fraction of the changes we have to make both in and out of business. The rise of Facebook concurrent with near ubiquitous internet access and computer use makes for one big on-the-job distraction. "Google it" has become the default answer to most questions. The capacity to work "off site" has massively increased. Staff are now connected, all the time, everywhere they go. Expectations for a positive work environment have been set absurdly high by Google, and social activity is seen as a human right.

These are situations that have risen in only the last few years and we are still grappling with them. Most workplaces lag behind these developments, offering sometimes draconian responses to these emergent issues; Facebook? Block all external internet access. Smartphones? We need to encrypt them. Working off site? Strict clock in - clock out procedures.

If this is all sounding too familiar to you then don't worry, you are not alone. If you want to know how to avoid these traps and still generate effective behaviour change, then this is the right place for you.

In the following pages we are going to introduce a model we developed at Bangor University as part of the Wales Centre for Behaviour Change. We call it **The NEWIDEA system** and it's designed to show you how to create lasting, positive behaviour change in your workplace.

The history of change

Our system is based on **Behaviour Analysis** and **Design Thinking**. These two schools of thought are relatively recent additions to the pantheon of academe, but are based on a rich historical tradition of scientific research.

In the beginning there was Dog

Over 100 years ago Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist, made a now famous discovery. The dog's he experimented with would start producing saliva when they were presented with food, at the same time as being given food he would also ring a bell. To his surprise when the bell rang, **but no food was present**, the dogs still produced saliva. The process he described later became known as **Classical Conditioning** and became the foundation for a research program still in place today. Simply put Pavlov discovered that two things could be paired together and could produce the same effect in a subject. Prior to the food the bell had no real function to the dog, but as soon as the bell was rung alongside food it started to acquire the same function, soon enough the bell alone was enough to get the dog excited for the food. You may have noticed something similar with your own pets, the sound of their food rustling or being opened will bring them running.

This simple idea would go on to inspire John Watson, famously known as the "first behaviourist". Watson postulated that human beings are simply a product of this "Stimulus-response" (S-R) relationship that Pavlov had identified, and set out to show that behaviour was just a learned reflex.

Fast forward 40 years and onto the stage steps B. F. Skinner, the infamous **Radical Behaviourist**. Skinner argued that the S-R model was no good, and we needed something far more complex and far more rigorous to explain why we do what we do.

Inspired in part by the mechanism of evolution (or selection by consequence, as he called it), he developed a new system that he called **Operant Conditioning**. His central theme was this; human's interact with the environment, which, in turn, provides consequences (both good and bad) for that behaviour. Behaviour which is followed by a good consequence is more likely to occur again in the future (is selected by its consequence) whereas the behaviour that receives a bad consequence is less likely to occur again in the future. Crucially Skinner did not restrict behaviour to just what we see people do, but also encompassed thoughts, feelings, emotions and so on (he called these **private events**).

Skinner's work later inspired the science of Behaviour Analysis which seeks to provide a scientific, objective understanding of human behaviour, allowing us to predict and change that behaviour.

How does this help me?

By learning how to turn these scientific theories into practical tools you can harness the power of reinforcement and make lasting, positive changes in your workplace without the usual guesswork of traditional advice.

The Myths of Change

Before we move on to the NEWIDEA system first let us explore some of the myths and misconceptions of behaviour change in the workplace. You may have heard of some, all, or none of these. They are, however, prevalent in our thinking about management and work-related behaviours. Here follows are three of the most pernicious myths going.

1. Working for the sake of work (or, you should just *want* to work)

This is a most common myth and is often given out in exasperation when faced with a particularly difficult worker. "I'm paying them aren't I? They're a grown up, aren't they? They should just want to work, why should I do anything for them?!"

Often said in a moment of haste the idea nonetheless worms its way into our thinking. The idea of rewarding someone for doing what they are "supposed" to do seems insulting and patronising. Visions of gold stars for sitting at one's desk dance across our vision and we shudder at the ridicule we'd heap upon ourselves and our business should it be widely known we reward coming in to work on time, or dressing appropriately.

Yet, when we examine the premise underlying this myth we hit upon a very serious point, we are faced with a question, is there an internal drive to work? A biological imperative to sit at a desk for 9 hours a day, five days a week, 40+ weeks a year? The question seems bizarre when laid out in such a fashion and we are forced to concede that something else - something **learned** - is responsible for our attitude toward work.

Ask yourself, would you eat food that made you sick? Would you watch a film you couldn't understand or don't like? Would you read the Aramaic-Language version of the Harry Potter series if you couldn't read Aramaic? Obviously not. Why then would you work hard if it was an entirely punishing (and thus fruitless) experience?

2. The workplace should be fun and interesting

We can thank the progressives of Silicon Valley for the popularisation of this myth.

Historically the workplace was a dull and lifeless place. A mix of punishing management styles, dull, drab interiors, and an assembly line mentality (a holdover from the industrial revolution) meant work was not a fun place to be. Often contingencies were constructed in such a way as to encourage people to work hard to avoid punishment, some people used bonuses but these are and were so far removed from the behaviour (for example end of year Christmas bonuses) that they had no real positive effect, especially when the negative consequences associated with a daily failure to meet the targets takes precedence.

In response to this (admittedly bad) culture of working conditions the rich and cutting edge of Silicon Valley (and their proxies around the world) sought to make workplaces fun and interesting. Gone were the cubicles of yesteryear and in were the bean bag chairs, and open plan workspaces, the pinball machines in the common room, and staff outings all over the place.

The argument is simple and appealing. If we enrich our workers environment with high value things they will naturally want to work within that environment. Whilst most of these practices do not go beyond the walls of Facebook or Google one practice has infiltrated all corners of the corporate world; the open plan office.

Heralded as a new age in office organisation the open plan office was praised all over the world as a means to increase communication, break down barriers (literally and figuratively), and generally improve morale. The intention was good, and the theory sound, unfortunately the reality was not so rosy. In fact recently a number of individuals have expressed their concern with open plan offices within their workplace and have complained that employees are now so sociable that no work gets done and privacy is no longer *de rigueur*, instead one is expected to be public and visible at all times - something many people find stressful.

A measure of environmental enrichment is a good thing, but only a measure; one should always be mindful of the function of the workplace - to encourage work.

3. We all have our own working styles

The final myth we'll tackle here today is that of "working styles". You may have come across this idea in education in the form of learning styles. Are you kinesthetic? Auditory? Visual? A mix? Similarly you may have heard this around the office; "I just work better with music on", "I've never been able to get going in the morning", "mondays have never been good for me" and so on.

These are probably all true, many people struggle with Monday's (Garfield being the most famous), and plenty of us are useless before lunch (just as many are useless **after** lunch instead), and some people can happily work with a radio blaring while others need a stony silence to think. The issue is not variation in requirements, but rather the idea that these represent some sort of internal, immutable structure.

I am sorry to burst this particular bubble but there is no evidence that there are fundamental differences in the way we work, we simply become accustomed to certain patterns (as I write this Netflix is playing a tv show I watch in the background, to me the sound helps me block out other distractions, but to some of my colleagues the only way to work is in the dead silence, one even has to turn off the lights!).

There is always a reason why people prefer different settings. The rise of headphone wearing and music listening in offices probably correlates directly with the rise in open office layouts with people using them as a way to cut out unpredictable noises. How many people hate mondays because it always starts with a 4 hour team meeting?

The answer to this myth is simple; all behaviour is functional and serves a purpose to the behavior. If you want to beat the monday blues, look to the reasons one might have to dislike mondays.

Conclusions

There are a lot of myths out there and obviously we can't cover them all here. Hopefully this has given you a little bit of an insight into how you can think differently about the supposedly insurmountable problems you might face in the workplace.

In this next section we'll look at the NEWIDEA system in full....

The NEWIDEA System

NEWIDEA is the brainchild of the Wales Centre for Behaviour Change an organisation by which your author was employed.

The goal was to help our clients have new ideas (sorry for the weak pun) about behaviour change. It is, in fact, an acronym made up of the words **New** and **Idea** but also the Welsh word **Newid** which means **change**.

Briefly NEWIDEA stands for:

- ★ Now
- ★ Environment
- ★ Who
- ★ Impact
- ★ Reward*
- ★ Evidence
- ★ Action

The more observant of you may notice a slight discretion with the word **reward, namely that it **ends** with a **d** rather than begins with it. We toyed with the idea of using the acronym NEWIREA but felt that it sounded far too much like the name for a Urinary Tract Infection for our liking, we hope you forgive our little switcheroo!*

On the following pages I will breakdown each concept within this model so that you can further understand how it comes together.

Now

The concept of Now is all about what is currently happening. We first identify behaviour (see the section on **Identifying Behaviours**) that we want to change and then measure it. This gives us a clear picture of what, where, when and how it is happening. We can't effectively change behaviour until we understand exactly how it is occurring.

Environment

The environment can refer to the way your present situation (as you identified in Now) is currently working. How does the environment change behaviour? How does it inhibit the behaviour you want to see? How does it reward the behaviour you don't want to see? The environment can relate to the physical layout of a room, the systems you use to reward and punish behaviour, and also the thoughts, feelings and language of the individuals who operate within and upon the problem you want to change.

Who

Who is about people. Who is rewarding behaviour? Who do you want to change? Who is punishing behaviour? Who should be doing something but isn't? Who is about acknowledging the people who make up your environment and how they interact and help or hinder you.

Impact

Understanding Impact is understanding not only what the actual effect of your behaviour change will be (including the unintended consequences) but also how it will impact on

your environment further on down the line. Who will affect and how? How long with the effects last? Do you want all these effects? are they worth the behaviour change?

Reward

Reward is fairly self explanatory. How will you be rewarding certain behaviours? And conversely what won't be rewarded and what could be punished? Are you rewarding something you don't want to reward? Are you not rewarding the thing you do want to reward? what form will these rewards take?

Evidence

One of the key elements of a scientific, evidence-based approach is just that; evidence. Facts. Proof that what you've done has had the change you want it to. Behavioural Science has a number of easy-to-implement but nonetheless powerful methods to analyse the magnitude and direction of change inherent in any behavioural intervention. Garnering evidence is essential to properly implementing an intervention and following through on the answers you've found.

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Identifying Behaviours

The most important skill in the behaviour changer's arsenal is the ability to accurately identify and record behaviour. By being able to select, from out of everything that is happening, the specifics of a single behaviour you can target it with an intervention and effectively change it.

To be able to identify behaviour we must satisfy two conditions; **first** we must be able to say exactly **what** behaviour is. Once we have defined it accurately we can satisfy the **second** condition, that we must be able to identify the **function** of a behaviour.

Lets go through these two conditions together, now.

What's in a definition?

The word *behaviour* originates, from the Latin *habere*, the French *avoir*, and the Old English *behabben* and originally meant something one had rather something you did, but a more modern definition would be something like this:

I would define behaviour as the movement of an organism in space with respect to itself or any other useful frame of reference.

- B. F. Skinner.

In other words, it's **everything that we do!**

That was the simple part. Next we are going to look at the function of behaviour and how we can identify the function by looking at the environment.

The Play's The Thing

--the play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

Hamlet Act 2, scene 2

In the Shakespearean masterpiece Hamlet, the titular character plots to find out whether his uncle (spoilers!), the murdering King Claudius, indeed did kill his father in an act of regicide, or whether the ghost of his father who told him this fact was in fact lying (and you wonder why you need a GCSE to understand this stuff!) by writing some suggestive lines of dialogue in a play to be delivered to the Court. His hope, embodied in the above quote, is that the play will reveal the behaviour of the king and cause him to react.

Well, to the behaviour changer it's not the play that's the thing, but the **function**. By understanding the function of a behaviour we can ourselves *catch the conscience of the King*.

Let's explore

The function of behaviour is simply the reason why the behaviour occurred. We can split the function into antecedent factors and consequence factors.

Antecedent factors

We can divide antecedent factors into **Skills** and **Motivations**, colloquially we can call these **Can't Do's** vs. **Won't Do's**.

Can't Do's are skill deficits. If a person wants to perform a behaviour, but can't actually engage in the appropriate forms then no matter how motivated they might be they will never be able to complete it. For example, you may really want to be on the Oxford Rowing Team. You are highly motivated in this regard but, and this is where your plan falls down, you simply can't row (nor do you attend Oxford). You're motivated to be on the rowing team which is commendable, the problem is that you simply **can't** perform the behaviour. The corollary to the **can't do** dimension is that you may have the skills but are being blocked by some barrier in the environment. For example, you are highly motivated to complete a report on time, you write the report, but your co-signatory, required for a successful hand-in, has left for a two week holiday to the south of France, and you are therefore unable to complete the behaviour no matter how much you want to.

Consider the implications of this. You have a colleague who is not performing a certain task, you are convinced they are simply lazy and don't want to work, so you shout, and discipline, and otherwise get tough with them in an attempt to get them going but they only continue to avoid the task. The potential reason for this lack of work may be that they simply don't know how to do it. No amount of shouting or telling off will effectively communicate a skill.

Won't Do's are motivational issues. A person may well have all the skills necessary to complete a task, but they see no value in actually doing the work. The attendant rewards are either so remote, so weak, or so variable (or some combination thereof) that they just won't do the work. If rewards are **immediate, certain, and positive** then they are much more likely to make a person want to do a behaviour. Let's look at an example: you are tasked with holding a bi-monthly team meeting to keep track of where everyone on your team is in their individual projects. The first few times you keep these meetings up to date but shortly people start showing up late, they are disruptive, people leave halfway through to answer phone calls, people sit on their laptops answering emails in the middle of it, eventually people start giving you excuses as to why they can't come and finally they simply say no. Frustrated by this lack of interest you decide to skip one of them, no one above you seems bothered about this so you miss the next one and so on. Eventually you are 6 months on without a meeting, no one appears bothered, in fact the staff seem

happier. So you simply forget the whole thing - despite the fact that people's projects are veering off into obscurity.

The consequences for holding the meeting were highly negative, the little positives you may have got out of it were few and far between. So you simply said "**I won't do it**".

Those were the **antecedent factors**, let's now look at the **consequence factors**.

Consequence Factors

Consequences can be split into **Want to** behaviours and **Need to** behaviours.

Want to behaviours are those behaviours that allow us to gain a value or reward. We **want** to engage in those behaviours (hence the snappy name). Consider when you go to a fancy restaurant; eating is a biological necessity but eating expensive, fancy food is entirely optional, we eat it because it's highly rewarding to do so. It tastes nice, it looks lovely, other people see us eating at a fancy restaurant, we impress our significant other, and so on. **Want to's** are only possible when we are being rewarded somehow. Consider a workplace example; as part of your job you are asked to write a monthly report on how your colleagues are progressing. Although you are not exactly thrilled with the idea you complete the task on time and your superior immediately thanks you for the job well done. Later you receive an email with a more comprehensive thank you. Buoyed by this show of appreciation you perform the task again and again, each time with great care, and each time you perform it you are thanked and shown genuine appreciation. In time you come to want to complete the report on time in order to gain that positive approval.

Conversely **Need to's** are behaviours we engage in to avoid some future punishment. We **need to** pay our taxes, we **need to** pay our bills. Despite some people's protestations to the contrary no one wants to pay taxes (or else they wouldn't be taxes, they'd just be voluntary contributions!), and no one wants to pay bills, we do so to avoid the negative consequences of not doing it. This leads to two very important problems.

First, we tend to put in minimal effort. We work only hard enough to avoid the punishment, no more. We have no particular interest in helping out those same people who are threatening us, one way or the other.

Second, we start to resent the person wielding the threat. We begin to hate our managers, our colleagues, our customers, even. We associate them with the negatives and start to treat them negatively as a result.

Summary

Let's summarise; behaviour is generally driven by a combination of the following four factors:

- Can't Do
- Won't Do
- Need To
- Want To

We can describe the first two as a skill deficit vs. a motivation deficit. The latter two as a positive consequence vs. a negative one.

Now for the burning question. How do you know which is which?

The Behaviour Changer's Checklist

If you've read this far you are probably now asking; how do I identify these functions?

The following checklist is designed to allow you to identify them by using a few probing questions:

Can't Do Questions

1. Is there an accurate, up to date job description available?
2. Is there an accurate description available of what the member staff is supposed to be doing?
3. When asked to perform a new task is adequate instruction / skill training given?
4. If the job or task is complex are their available resources to help the staff member complete what is required of them?
5. If equipment is required, is it reliable, in good working order, and ergonomically correct?
6. Is the equipment and environment optimally arranged in a physical sense?
7. Is the manager or supervisor present when the task is performed?
8. Do the standards required of the member of staff change as they improve?
9. Are the goals set for the staff member realistic?

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10. Is there an overarching mission for the group?
 - a. Are staff aware of the mission?
 11. Can a member staff do their job / task without being blocked or interrupted by barriers?
 12. If asked, can the member of staff give you an accurate description, without a visual aid, of what what they are supposed to be doing and how to do it?
 13. If asked, can the member of staff actually perform the task or a portion of their job without unnecessary assistance?
 14. If necessary can the member of staff complete appropriate training and upskilling to be able to perform the task?

Won't Do Questions

1. Are their consequences delivered once the task is complete?
2. Are these consequences positive or negative?
3. If improvements are seen in performance, efficiency or output are these gains communicated clearly to staff?
4. In what manner, if any, do supervisors or managers deliver feedback to staff?
5. Do staff react positively or negatively to the manner of feedback delivery?
6. Is a systematic form of performance monitoring used? Is it tied in with the feedback mechanism?
7. Do the results of performance monitoring positively or negatively impact work performance?
8. How difficult is it to perform the behaviour requested?
9. Are there extra rewards in place for completion of difficult tasks?
10. Do members of staff have access to alternative, or competing behaviours?

11. Do these competing behaviours drown out the target behaviours?

By answering these questions you'll be able to better identify what might be controlling the behaviours you particularly want to change.

ABC Journal

ABC Journals allow you to record the behaviour you are trying to observe. Once you have a handle on what is actually happening in your organisation you can start to record the instances of that behaviour to build up a more complete picture of what is happening. The ABC journal is a very useful tool used by researchers and practitioners and when you use it you'll see why it's such a favourite!

Date	Antecedent	Behaviour	Consequence
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Designing an Intervention

Incentive

Identify clear reasons for why you want to make the change e.g to fit into your skinny jeans; to have more energy on the night shift; to be a positive role model for your patients...write them down.

Social commitment

Enlist the help of colleagues by posting a weekly and monthly achievement chart in the staff kitchen (and get them involved too!). Post your achievements alongside your weekly goals and your reasons for doing it.

Small achievable goals

Breakdown your overall objective (e.g eat more healthily; lose 5lbs) into daily and weekly manageable targets.

Reflection

Keep a journal where you can write down the Antecedents, Behaviours and Consequences of days that have gone well, and those that have not gone so well.

Action Plan

Make a clear and detailed plan of what steps you will take to overcome a challenging situation that would usually see you 'falling off the wagon'.