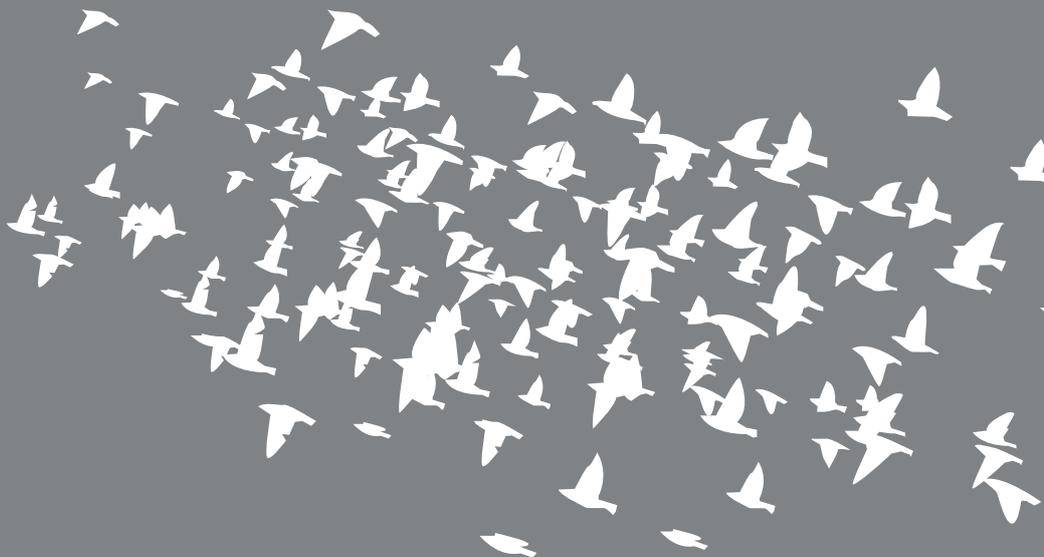# Changing behaviour
by design

Combining behavioural science with design-thinking
to help organisations tackle big social issues

Design Council

wbs
WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL

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About the Design Council
Design Council champions great design.
For us that means design which improves
lives and makes things better.

As an enterprising charity, our work places
design at the heart of creating value by
stimulating innovation in business and public
services, improving our built environment
and tackling complex social issues such as
ageing and obesity.

We inspire new design thinking, encourage
public debate and inform government policy
to improve everyday life and help meet
tomorrow's challenges today.

For more information visit
www.designcouncil.org.uk

About Warwick Business School
Located at the centre of the University
of Warwick, WBS is one of the world's
elite business schools providing top-class
programmes for ambitious people.

We are led by innovation, creativity and
change, and engage with the big debates
in business and public policy. Our vision is
to be the leading university-based business
school in Europe.

Our mission is to produce cutting edge research
and world-class, socially responsible leaders
capable of shaping the way organisations
operate and businesses are managed.

For more information visit:
www.wbs.ac.uk

Delivering better outcomes for society

The Behavioural Design Lab is a collaboration between Warwick Business School and the Design Council, uniting behavioural science with design-thinking. We use a scientific understanding of people to design better products, services and places that change behaviour and improve lives.

The biggest issues in society – from obesity to climate change – are due to behavioural and lifestyle risk factors that people embrace on a daily basis.

Too many organisations rely on information provision alone, falsely assuming that raising awareness of key facts will change behaviour.

We believe the best way to solve social issues is to not only research how and why people make decisions, but use the design of products, services and places to help us all make *better* decisions.

Behavioural design boldy provides the best of both worlds to inspire radical ideas, create social and economic value, and further knowledge of human choices and wellbeing.

The lines between the public, private and voluntary sectors are blurring and social enterprise is now entwined with commercial, political and charitable goals.

We can help organisations experiment to understand the role of behaviour in the challenges they face and adopt new approaches through design-led innovation.

Change can only happen collaboratively. For those issues common to multiple partners, we aim to bring pioneers together to share the time, cost and risk of innovation.

We are currently seeking funding and knowledge partners from all sectors to tackle issues related to health and wellbeing, green living, communities, consumer empowerment and education.

For any questions about the Behavioural Design Lab or to find how to get involved, contact:

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Opportunity areas

We want to take on the biggest issues where there is a clear opportunity to research and develop novel ideas. Below is a selection of examples from current projects that illustrate the need to bring multiple partners together to tackle these issues, stimulating new opportunities for industry and contributing to the public good.

[1] Office of National Statistics (2009), Drinking: Adult's behaviour and knowledge in 2009.

[2] Macmillan Cancer Support (2013), Living with or beyond cancer.

[3] Design Council (2013), The Knee High Design Challenge Call for Ideas.

[4] Climate Change Act 2008.

Health and wellbeing

Over 30% of people in the UK exceed the daily guidelines of three to four units of alcohol for men and two to three unit for women. Raising awareness of damaging behaviour does little to challenge norms in certain social groups, where drinking more is a way to fit in. *How can we breakdown the acceptance of excessive drinking to create positive norms and keep the social benefits of sharing a drink?*

There are currently over two million people living with and beyond cancer diagnosis in the UK, with the number set to rise to four million by 2030. There is now significant evidence that the treatment environment can have an impact on patient experience. *How can we design better experiences to provide the best possible care for patients?*

The first five years of someone's life, including pregnancy, are critical in the development of a person's life beyond childhood. During these early years, we develop the foundations for an understanding of our selves, the people around us, and the world we live in. *How can we come up with new ideas for radically improving the health and wellbeing of children under five?*

Green living

The UK is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050. Despite the effectiveness of current technologies, how people interact with this technology and the decisions they make have a major impact on building energy consumption. *How can we develop a new service that reduces the energy consumption of organisations through behaviour change?*

Consumer empowerment

Repeated scandals have shown institutional failures across many sectors, leaving consumers harmed, disengaged or out of pocket. In poorly designed institutions, even good people can collectively make very bad decisions. *How can we design better systems and services that support a positive organisational culture and make the process of providing feedback from staff and consumers as routine as possible?*

The importance of behavioural science

Behavioural science is a young field built on a strong scientific heritage. It is broadly the study of behaviour, seeking to understand human choices and wellbeing by drawing on insights and methods from psychology, economics and neuroscience.

Challenging convention

Behavioural science challenges the traditional economic view that people are governed by a rational self-interest with little regard for the wellbeing of others. The reality is we have limited time, energy and attention, leading to behaviours that sometimes appear self-defeating.

Convention no longer rules. It is well-established that people often make decisions intuitively, effortlessly and with little conscious awareness. These choices are influenced by a web of environmental, social and economic factors.

The gap in knowledge

Popular methods in the social sciences and market research, for example focus groups and observation, explore what people think and do, but they cannot answer *why* they do it. There are too many confounding factors in real-world contexts to tease apart independent effects.

There is also a heavy reliance on self-report – asking people to explain their decisions or actions. The relationship between attitudes and behaviour is tenuous at best and introspection is a very limited and unreliable tool. Direct questions often prompt people to rationalisations that may be unrelated to the real causes of their choices.

Using experiments

Behavioural science is different. It uses controlled experimental studies to identify the crucial factors that determine people's judgments, choices or experiences.

In their simplest form, experiments involve randomly assigning participants to either receive an intervention or not. The assumption is randomisation controls for other differences. Any change in outcome must be due to the intervention.

Outcomes are measured by looking at people's actual choices and decisions rather than their stated intentions or potentially unreliable self-reports of what they like and dislike.

Having isolated the key drivers of behaviour in controlled settings, we are able to make recommendations about real-world changes. Experiments can reveal the 'basic principles' from which a service or product can be better designed and tested in the field.

The power of design

Design is a creative approach to problem solving with the power to tackle complex and pressing social issues. It is people-centred, getting straight to the heart of an issue to encourage new perspectives and generate powerful ideas.

Breaking the mould

The traditional, linear approach to problem solving is through slow incremental change. Each step is constrained by the one before, stifling any room for creativity.

Design thinking can break this cycle to encourage new perspectives and generate powerful ideas. The design process is non-linear with no fixed starting point and no preconceptions over potential solutions.

The end goal is always better outcomes – be it healthier children, better sales or happier inpatients – allowing designers to manage uncertainty with a clear end point in mind.

From information to action

The default approach to changing behaviour is to provide more information, assuming that key facts about nutrition, energy use or exercise will lead to better decisions. The result is a range of programmes with a firm rationale but minimal impact.

Telling people how they *should* behave has little effect on how they actually *do* behave. Issues of willpower, motivation, cost and convenience are often more important than a lack of knowledge.

Using design principles

The design approach is different. It uses a pragmatic approach to solving challenges, recognising people need practical help to overcome barriers or go with the grain of making better decisions.

The most obvious attribute of design is that it makes ideas tangible through an iterative process of testing and refinement. Prototyping from the start leads to real and rapid impact.

The best designers don't work alone. Collaboration is essential when faced with a complex challenge because innovation can't happen in isolation. The most interesting solutions lie at the boundaries of disciplines.

Most importantly, designers take time to identify those who are affected and understand their needs, wants and capabilities. This information is used to create products and services that are genuinely better for the people using them.

By focusing on people's real needs – whether they are fully aware of them or not – we can create positive and sustained impact on a diverse range of issues. Design is capable of physically changing the way people think, feel and behave for the better.

Crossing the divide between research and practice

Behavioural science naturally involves the design of interventions, while designers have long enjoyed a relationship with the social sciences. The Behavioural Design Lab gives organisations the best of both worlds, crossing the divide as a catalyst for change.

Building on common ground

Making the jump from research to practice is a challenge. Academia is often criticised for not making results accessible or relevant, while creative industries are accused of neglecting evidence.

Behavioural design succeeds because it is built on common ground. Behavioural science and design are both iterative processes, always seeking to expand our knowledge of people.

The Behavioural Design Lab makes the relationship work by ensuring design principles are embedded in research from the start and that design projects are built on empirical evidence of human behaviour.

Working with us

Our approach falls into four stages:

1. Discover the problem:

Social issues are complex. Even when the goal is clear, the problem is often ill defined and uncertain. We embrace this uncertainty by focusing on the people involved. Observational methods are used to describe the needs, wants and behaviours at the root of an issue.

2. Define the cause:

Once we know what, we can understand why. Existing insights or novel experiments are used to isolate the crucial factors that influence the target behaviours. These 'basic principles' form the brief from which new ideas can be designed and tested in the field.

3. Develop ideas:

The most creative ideas lie at the intersection of disciplines. We use our networks to bring together the right teams to tackle the brief and support them throughout development. Ideas are incubated from pencil on paper to tangible products and services.

4. Deliver what works:

As ideas become real we use prototyping and field trials to test and refine what works. The same experimental methods are used to determine if we are successfully influencing the outcomes of interest. Proof of concept is demonstrated in lieu of longer-term measures.

The Knee High Design Challenge: Improving the health and wellbeing of children under five.

Conclusion

This process can deliver real change. The complexity of the issues faced by society demands that industry, academia and the creative industries work in new ways together. We make it easy to build these crucial partnerships.

At the heart of behavioural design is the belief that organisations must adopt experimentation and creative thinking. Only then will they uncover radical ideas. Innovation is inherently uncertain but the Behavioural Design Lab finds short paths to creative, feasible solutions.

By focusing on better outcomes for society, a strong evidence base and practical results, we can help organisations meet their core commercial, charitable and social goals.

The Behavioural Design Lab

Behavioural science at WBS

The Behavioural Science Group at WBS was formed in 2010 and is one of the top centres in Europe. It contains an experienced faculty of psychologists, economists and social scientists heavily involved in applications for business and Government.

A dedicated state-of-the-art research laboratory was completed in 2011 to focus on topics including behavioural and experimental economics, cognitive science, judgment and decision-making, wellbeing, leadership and creativity.

Our aim is to explore the mental processes that underpin behaviour to answer questions such as how and why people make decisions, judge value and form beliefs. These questions are of fundamental importance to any organisation or programme that seeks to make life better for people.

The group is spearheaded by Professor Nick Chater, one of Europe's leading experimental psychologists, author of over 200 papers and advisor to the Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights team.

Design Challenges at the Design Council

The Design Council provides a neutral platform for design to address key social issues and stimulate new commercial opportunities for industry.

Through our Design Challenges – open innovation competitions – we provide a collaboration platform on which designers, engineers, technologists and entrepreneurs can work together to develop strong concepts to address social problems. We provide funding, advice and networks to accelerate idea generation and real world development.

Over the past five years, we have run Challenges on public health and wellbeing, crime and security, environmental sustainability and unemployment. The result is a portfolio of innovative products and services that are improving people's lives and creating business opportunities.

The Design Challenges team is led by Mat Hunter, Chief Design Officer at the Design Council, former Partner at IDEO and an award winning practitioner in design-driven innovation.