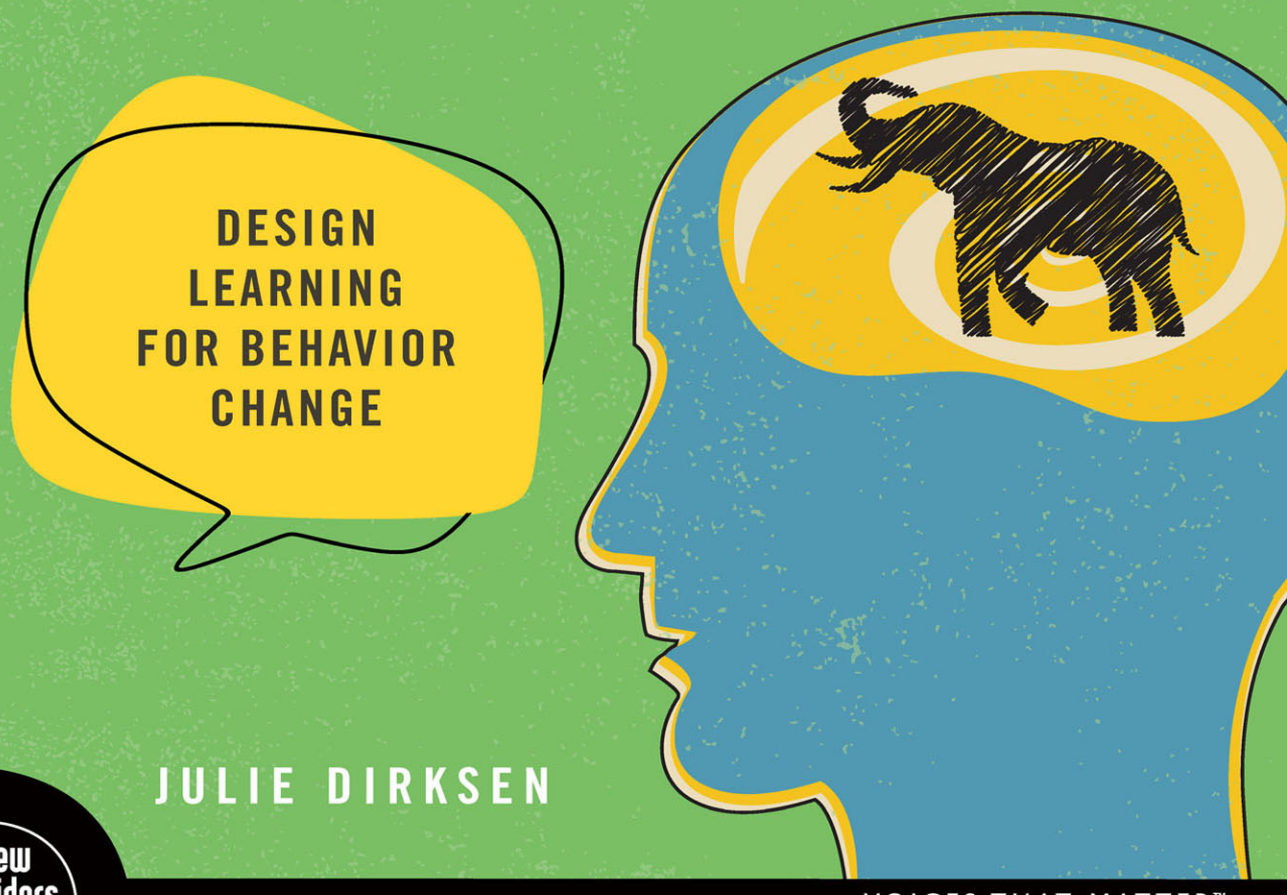
TALK TO THE ELEPHANT

DESIGN LEARNING FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE



JULIE DIRKSEN

New Riders

VOICES THAT MATTER™

TALK TO THE ELEPHANT

DESIGN LEARNING FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE

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Design Learning for Behavior Change

Julie Dirksen

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

(In which we ask, "Just who is the audience for this book, anyway?")

So, if you are viewing the preview pages for this book on a website or while you're standing in a bookstore right now, you might be asking yourself if this book is useful for you. That is a fair question.

This book is intended for people who create learning experiences. Specifically, this is for people who are designing or creating or implementing learning experiences that are intended to change behavior.

This could be for just about anything. For example, these experiences could include

- A training program on safety procedures for food service workers
- A tutorial on a financial services website about how customers can save for retirement
- A class to help middle school teachers learn ways to support positive communication traits in their students
- A study skills online course for college students
- A community education class for seniors on maintaining strength and flexibility as they age

You might be noticing that this list is mostly about learning experiences for adults, and you'd be absolutely correct about that. I've been creating learning materials for about 30 years, and pretty much all of the projects I've worked on have been for adult audiences, either in workplace settings or higher education.

Although a lot of what I will discuss in this book could also be relevant for school-age kids, that's not my area of expertise, so I won't comment on how to translate any of this material for those age groups.

WHO IS THIS BOOK NOT SO MUCH FOR?

So, maybe knowing who the book is for has left you wondering who the book is not for. The contents may be helpful for other audiences, but it's *not* really directed at

- **People who are trying to change their own behavior.** I'm sure that many of the strategies discussed in this book are relevant to people who are trying to make changes in their own lives, but that won't be the focus.
- **People who are treating audiences with diagnosed conditions relating to mental or behavioral health.** For example, this book is not intended for therapists working with clients in a mental health setting. Again, some of the strategies may be useful, but this is not my area of expertise, and most of the solutions and strategies discussed have been designed for a general audience.
- **People who are working with kids.** As already mentioned, people who are creating educational materials for school-age children may find some useful ideas but would definitely need to filter it through their own expertise with the age group they work with.

IS THIS BOOK FOR BEHAVIORAL DESIGNERS?

As I'm writing this book, the field of behavioral design is rapidly expanding in organizations. Roles like "behavioral designer" and "behavioral strategist" are popping up in many organizations and consultancies (okay, at the moment, it's mostly consultancies). While I don't have any particular insight into how the field will evolve, I think it's reasonable to suppose that training and instruction will continue to play a role in many behavior-change initiatives. This book is not intended to teach behavioral designers how to do instructional design, but it will have many options they may want to consider when part of their intervention relies on the creation of effective learning materials.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK TRYING TO DO?

Billions of dollars are spent every year on workplace training, and most of it is in service of training the participants to do something differently when they leave the training environment and go back to the workplace.

It's not clear how much of this training is effective in supporting those behavior changes, but I don't think it's controversial to say that we could do better. Over the last dozen years, there has been an abundance of new research happening in the behavioral sciences, but not much of it has made its way into learning and development or higher education.

Additionally, training and education are often part of interventions designed by behavioral scientists, and integrating instructional design with behavioral design can help make those learning experiences more effective.

In this book, I share tools and strategies to help people create learning that supports behavior change. Here's a brief overview of what you'll find in each chapter:

- **Chapter 1, "Talking to the Elephant":** I explain why the book is titled *Talk to the Elephant* and how we need to think about learning design differently when we are trying to help people with complex behavior-change challenges.
- **Chapter 2, "Taking a Systems View":** Often behavior-change efforts require a very narrow focus on the behavior, but too narrow a focus can cause us to miss more systemic causes. In this chapter, I share examples of how to consider both the specific behavior and the broader systems that influence that behavior.
- **Chapter 3, "Moving Along the Change Path":** Change is a process, not an event, and this chapter covers the stages of change and how you can support learners at different points in the change process.
- **Chapter 4, "Communicating Value":** Most learning and development professionals are given the advice that they need to communicate WIFFM (What's In It For Me), but often how we communicate value fails to achieve the desired outcomes. This chapter looks at how the elephant perceives value and how to craft messages to help the learners buy in to a behavior change.
- **Chapter 5, "Understanding Motivation":** This chapter covers some of the most useful models of motivation and how to frame learning experiences to support intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and agency.
- **Chapter 6, "Analyzing Behaviors":** I share how to frame, prioritize, and select behaviors and how to use the Behaviour Change Wheel and COM-B model to analyze a behavior.

- **Chapter 7, "Determining if It's a Training Problem":** Often learning and development people are presented with problems to solve that aren't really training problems. In this chapter, I go through some of the most common issues that often get handed to us as training problems and examine what we can and cannot do for each.
- **Chapter 8, "Mapping to Solutions":** This chapter looks at how you take the COM-B analysis of the behavior and start to map your analysis to different types of behavior-change interventions.
- **Chapter 9, "Using Persuasion and Motivation Techniques":** This chapter looks at examples of behavior-change techniques that are related to persuasion and motivation.
- **Chapter 10, "Using Planning, Practice & Feedback":** This chapter looks at examples of behavior-change techniques that are related to planning, practice, and feedback.
- **Chapter 11, "Using Environmental and Social Support":** This chapter looks at examples of behavior-change techniques that are related to environmental and social support.
- **Chapter 12, "Values and Identity":** This chapter looks at examples of behavior-change techniques that are related to values, identity, and ownership.
- **Chapter 13, "Designing Responsibly":** This chapter looks at the ethical issues involved in behavioral design and at ways to ensure that you are designing as responsibly as possible.
- **Chapter 14, "Putting It All Together: A Case Example":** This chapter walks through an example of using all the tools I've discussed so far and applying it to a particular behavior-change challenge.
- **Chapter 15, "Real-World Examples":** To conclude the book, we hear from people who are doing behavioral learning design and examine different examples of the behavioral design process.

HOW DOES THIS MATCH UP WITH MY PREVIOUS BOOK?

First of all, if you are reading this book because you also read my book *Design for How People Learn*, then THANK YOU. I'm very happy to know that the first book was useful enough to bring you back.

This book is an expansion and elaboration on the motivation chapter and some other points in *Design for How People Learn*. It's a deeper dive on the topics, and my rough estimate is that 10 to 20 percent of the material will sound familiar to readers of the

previous book, but if that's not your experience, please let me know. All the words are new, but many of the principles have not changed between the two books, and I can't assume a reader of this book has also read the other book, so there will be some necessary repetition.

WHO AM I TO WRITE THIS BOOK?

When people ask me what I do, I usually say, "I'm an instructional designer." Most of the time (like, 99 percent), this provokes a slightly puzzled head tilt and a hesitant, "Okay....?" (Other instructional designers know what I'm describing.) My degree is in "Instructional Systems Technology," and I've worked for almost 30 years on the design of learning materials and experiences for adults. I also spent about half my time in graduate school studying human-computer interaction (or what we now more commonly call UX (User Experience) design).

I became interested in behavioral design in the early 2000s because I felt like there was a gap in my toolbox, but I've spent the last dozen or so years educating myself on the principles and models of behavioral design via books, media, research papers, practical application, and formal workshops.

Many of the books on behavioral design come from academic researchers, and it's great that so many of them are able to translate their work for more general consumption. It can be difficult, though, to take even the best written books on behavioral science and connect those to practical guidance in an applied domain. I'm not a researcher; I'm very much a practitioner who tries to translate research into practical application. I try to approach all of these topics with humility and strongly encourage you to test any recommendations or solutions with your audience in your context. Just because something worked in one context doesn't mean it will work for you, but these concepts and models do give you a place to start.

Thanks for considering this book, and best of luck.

Materials and resources to support this book can be found at usablelearning.com/elephant

TAKING A SYSTEMS VIEW

(IN WHICH THE ELEPHANT IS JUST PART OF A WHOLE ECOSYSTEM)

"WE NEED TRAINING"

When a system fails, "training" is almost always promised as part of the solution. Here are some examples:

- In 2018, Starbucks Coffee Company—in response to complaints about discriminatory actions from Starbucks employees—closed approximately 8,000 Starbucks locations for a day and had roughly 175,000 employees participate in "racial-bias education geared toward preventing discrimination in our stores."
- Police officers spend thousands of hours every year in "Use of Force" classes aimed at teaching them how to not use unnecessary or excessive force.
- Billions of dollars are spent every year on things like "leadership" training.

It's not difficult to see that for each of these, training is likely only a small fraction of what is needed to truly make significant change.

LEARNING AS PART OF A SYSTEM

There's a quote that I'm a bit obsessed with (attribution is a bit murky, but a likely originator is Paul Batalden based on ideas from W. Edwards Deming, a well-known engineer and management consultant):

> *Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.*

Whenever we are dealing with a problem, challenge, or difficulty, it's always worth asking these questions:

- What is it about the system that is causing an outcome?
- And how is the system influencing the behavior of the people in that system?

When we attribute outcomes to people's attitudes or capability (for example, "They're just lazy"), we miss the crucial point that there's usually a reason for someone's behavior, and if we don't ask what that reason could be, we are missing vital data that could help change the situation. A behavior can be "wrong" according to standard operating procedures and still be right in the sense that there is some functional reason in the environment or system for that person's behavior.

For example, a store clerk might guess the price of an item rather than holding up a large line of customers while they go through the official process of getting the price checked. Some stores recognize that a very strict adherence to a procedure like price checking can compromise bigger goals like good customer experience, so they deliberately give clerks latitude about using judgment for small-stakes items in service of that better customer experience.

IRRATIONALITY AND BIAS EXIST IN SYSTEMS

Much has been made of irrationality and bias when it comes to behavior change. There are impressive infographics that show all the cognitive biases. Several books have been written about the quirks of human irrationality. These are often interesting and entertaining, and there are important things we can learn from them, but they aren't always useful. Looking at these biases as interesting phenomena ignores the fact that they're related to the context and environment in which they occur.

Daniel Kahneman (the winner of the Nobel Prize for his contributions to behavioral economics), in his seminal text *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, explains a riddle that they used to test what he describes as people's "Lazy System 2":

> A bat and ball cost $1.10.
>
> The bat costs one dollar more than the ball.
>
> How much does the ball cost?

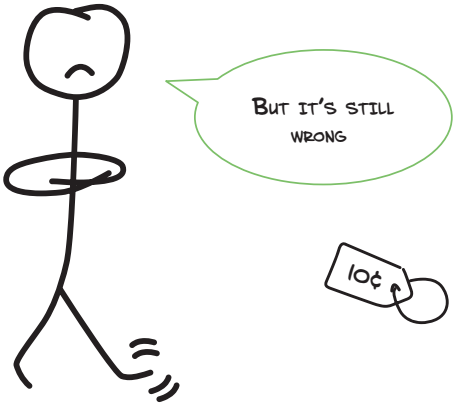
Many people answer 10 cents. The actual answer is 5 cents, with the bat costing $1.05 (one dollar more than the ball). In his book, Kahneman describes how System 2 "allocates attention to effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations," but goes on to explain that "The distinctive mark of this easy puzzle is that it evokes an answer that is intuitive, appealing, and wrong." This is

Kahneman's "Lazy System 2." By not paying appropriate attention, many people get this answer wrong.

So let's look at how this question appears to the elephant:

- **It's clearly historical.** Baseballs and bats cost much more now, and this is presented as a puzzle. It's not a real, immediate problem with any real stakes to it, and so the signal to the elephant is *it kind of doesn't matter*.
- **It's an odd format.** If I wanted to know the price of an item, I would never ask it in this format, nor would I expect anyone to ever give me this piece of information for two unsimilar items (item one costs much more than item two). For example, if I was splitting a check with someone, I might compare the price of two similar items (for example, two glasses of wine), but I would never tell anybody, "My entrée cost $28 more than your dessert." The deliberately confusing format tricks the elephant.
- **It's close to a format we are used to.** A much more common conversation might be "Q: How much was the ball?" "Answer: Well, it was a $1.10, and the bat was $1.00, so...." You've probably had versions of that conversation many times in your life. You may never have had a question in the format of the example from Kahneman's book.
- **It's trivial.** The difference between the right answer (the ball is 5 cents) and the intuitive answer (10 cents) is trivial for most people, so this is something where the consequences of getting it wrong just don't matter very much, so it makes sense that people would not allocate a lot of effort to figuring it out. This is also a cue to the elephant that the answer isn't particularly important.

So this example has several cues to the elephant that a quick guess will be sufficient here, and whether you consider that laziness or efficiency depends on your perspective.



There's probably no shortage of people who would point out (with some ire) to me that it's *still wrong*. And they would be correct about that, and I'm not suggesting that it doesn't matter that people get it wrong. But if we ask ourselves the reasons that they got it wrong—it's a weird format no normal person would ever use, and all the cues are telling our brains that this is a problem not worth a lot of attention, with low stakes if you get it wrong—we know a lot more about how to recognize situations where people need to heighten their attention or risk error, and how to help people avoid those errors.

SYSTEMS THINKING

So how do we take into account all the other variables that exist in the environment and consider them as we discuss a behavior? We are going to zoom in to focus on very specific behaviors in later chapters of this book because that sharp focus helps us analyze and diagnose, but a too-narrow focus can also cause us to miss other causes and solutions.

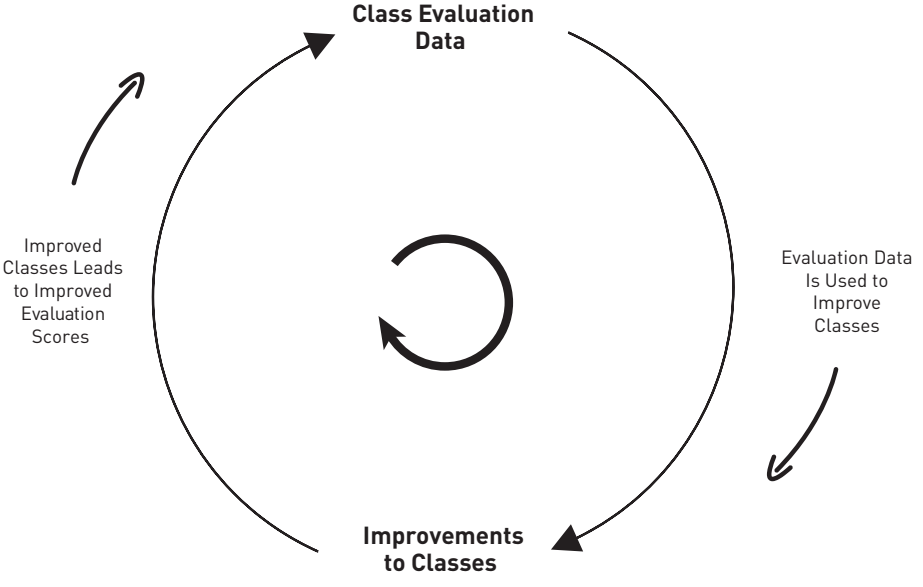
Donella Meadows, author of the classic book *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*, describes a system as "A set of things—people, cells, molecules, or whatever—interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behavior over time." Trying to understand the complexity of a whole system can be overwhelming, but being able to both focus on individual behaviors and keep in mind the overall system is a necessary balancing act for any serious behavior change effort.

For example, we know that plastics cause many ecological issues, so you could have a narrow focus on the behavior "People need to recycle consistently and correctly." But it's worth asking if that narrow behavior will make a big enough change. Maybe people recycling more frequently and accurately will change things significantly, but we probably need to look at the bigger system and consider variables like the cost and availability of recycling facilities, the market for recycled plastics, the incentives for manufacturers to use less plastic, and so on.

One tool we can use to consider how a system works is system mapping. There's no single way to do this kind of mapping, and I'm only going to use the simplest examples here. Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* and Donella Meadows's *Thinking in Systems* are both excellent books if you'd like to explore this further.

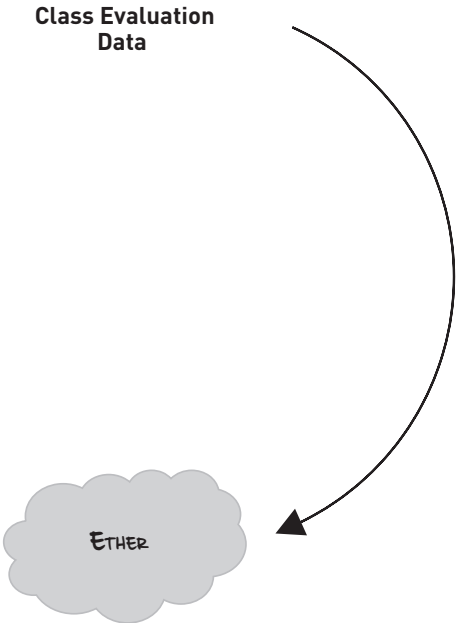
Peter Senge explains that the building blocks are reinforcing processes, balancing processes, and delays. Let's look at a reinforcing process. If you've been in the world of learning and development or higher education for any time, you are probably very familiar with the "end of class survey."

The illustration shows how this should probably work. Evaluation data should be used to improve classes, which will then improve the evaluation scores.



Eventually the system will balance out when the evaluation data and the class quality can't get any higher. Everybody wins!

That's how it theoretically *should* work. It often doesn't go quite like that. I've seen organizations where it goes something like this:



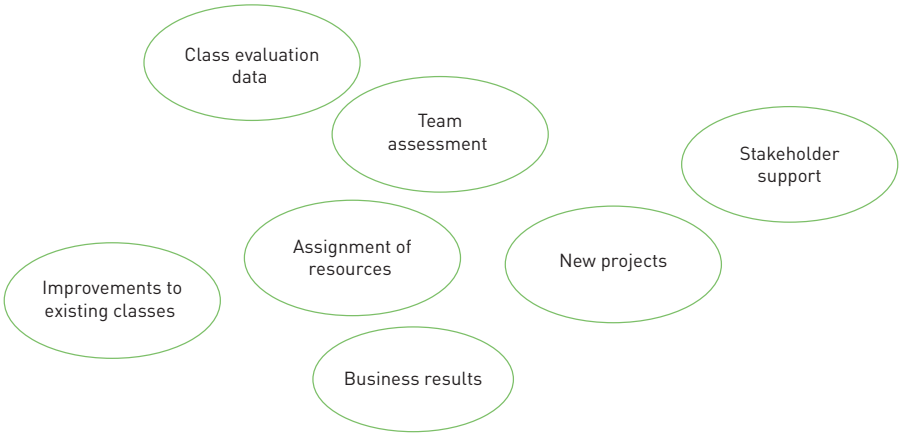
Yep, the evaluation data is collected, but then doesn't go anywhere, except into the metaphorical ether.

If a system is supposed to work a particular way, and it's not, then it's worth asking "why not?"

You can tug on each of these threads and, for example, ask why the data isn't actionable or who should be responsible for paying attention to the data.

Let's say that you are managing the training function, and you decide the team will evaluate all the evaluation data and allocate resources to improve the classes, which hopefully improves business results. That sounds pretty good! But, of

course, other things are involved, like resource allocation to new projects, stakeholder support, and so forth. If you think about how these all interact, it can get complicated quickly:



If we try to figure out how these things interact, we might find that the assignment of resources to improve existing classes doesn't come with an overall increase in team resources, so they have to be pulled from somewhere. That means fewer resources for new training projects, which makes some stakeholders unhappy and leads to a decrease in business results from new projects. And the unhappy stakeholders decrease their funding support, so now you can't fill the open staff position you were counting on to support the improvements.

Thinking through these relationships can help you identify key places in the system where you can intervene and adjust to make beneficial changes.

A system view can help show where there isn't enough reinforcement, where there are unintended effects, or where difficulty seeing feedback can be causing problems.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Any behavior change intervention can have unintended consequences. For example, the *intended* consequences for most compliance training efforts are outcomes like employees not doing things that are illegal or problematic, or legal defensibility if the company is sued.

But if we create compliance training that isn't relevant to the audience, and the message is that you just need to tick the completion box, then we may not like the

unintended consequences of forcing compliance training where it's not relevant or useful.

I talked to Christian Hunt, author of *Humanizing Rules: Bringing Behavioural Science to Ethics and Compliance*, and he described it this way:

> It used to frustrate me in banking when my assistant had to do training on obscure regulations that made no sense to her whatsoever. It was not relevant to her job. And so she would sit there and go, "Oh, it's another one of those things from the people who brought you the tedious trade course." So even when it was relevant, she would sit there and go, "Here's more useless stuff from those idiots that don't understand me, I'm going to ignore it." **We are teaching people to ignore our training**.
>
> I think the key bit with all of this is that we're dealing with human beings that are sentient. And so they will react to what they see us doing. Attempts to assess whether our training has been effective needs to bear in mind that the test itself sends a signal to employees. If you teach them something you say is important, but then if the assessment is dumb—you tell them to just regurgitate what they've just been told or give them an "everybody knows this" kind of test—that's not a genuine test of whether they know it, and they'll recognize that. And so in trying to test the effectiveness, we often actually make the situation worse and we undermine the subject matter in the tests.

WHERE DOES FEEDBACK BECOME VISIBLE?

Often, in a behavior-change project, we decide that a set of behaviors will produce the desired outcomes. At that point, it's worth asking, "Where do the consequences of a behavior becomes visible?"

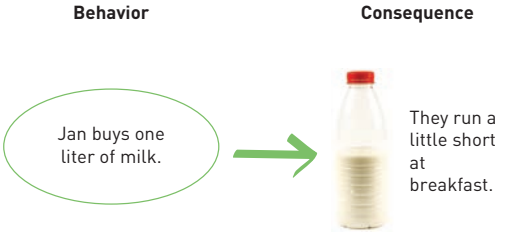
Here are some example behaviors:

- Salespeople should increase their sales of the turbowidget (desired result: increased turbowidget sales).
- Hospital healthcare providers should wash their hands according to governmental guidelines (desired result: decreased patient infections).
- Jan needs to buy extra milk while her brother and nieces are visiting (desired result: there will be enough milk for breakfast and other meals).
- Managers need to ensure that salary offers to new hires are fair and equitable (desired result: staff will be paid appropriately for their qualifications and responsibilities).

Results of behaviors can becomes visible at very different levels. I usually use the distinction of individual, group, and system levels.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL CONSEQUENCES

Jan's behavior will be visible at the individual level. She'll be able to see whether they have enough milk or she needs to buy more. The behavior and consequences will be pretty easy to see at the individual level:

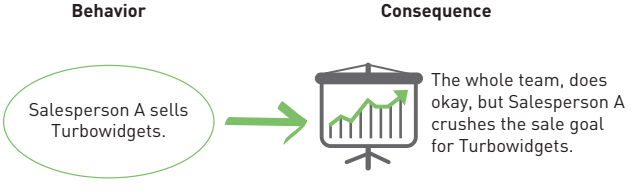


The same thing is probably true with the sales example. Most organizations track sales results at the individual level, so we can see how a particular salesperson did, as shown in the illustration.

So buying milk and selling Turbowidgets both have a visible outcome at the individual level.

GROUP-LEVEL CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes, evaluating the outcome can require comparison across a group. For example, selling 180% sounds great, but if everybody does exactly the same, then it's less impressive. But if most other people on a sales team sell around 100% of goal, then 180% is going to be exceptional.



In most healthcare facilities, the consequence of handwashing is very difficult to measure at the individual level. It would be extremely unlikely that a patient only has contact with a single healthcare provider in a hospital setting. Impact would really only be visible at a group level.

Since it's pretty much impossible to see the consequence at the individual level, the consequence has to be examined at the group level, but that might not be enough data for comparison either.

If a manager is hiring a new employee, that manager might have all sorts of reasons for the salary offer being 15% less than the person currently doing the job. The new person might have less experience or different qualifications, or the current employee might have been in the job for several years and received merit increases over the years.

A manager might be able to judge the fairness of a salary offer against several other people in the department doing the same work with similar qualifications, or they might not have anyone else in that same role.

So, sales goals, handwashing, and salary offers need comparison or aggregate data to be relevant. We need to have some basis for comparison to know if the rate of sales or patient infections are good numbers, and a single salary offer can't be judged equitable without comparing it to similar offers.

SYSTEM-LEVEL CONSEQUENCES

Sometimes consequence can be judged only at the level of whole systems. A hospital might not know whether its infection rates are excessive without being able

to benchmark against similar hospitals or national averages. Behavior changes that focus on changing the individual will be easiest when the results or consequences are visible at the individual level.

When you are being asked to design learning for a behavior change where individual learners can't see any feedback because there are no systems in place to measure at the group or system level, it's important to recognize that this will be a difficult and uphill battle, and you should make stakeholders aware that training alone will probably not be enough to support change.

For example, it can be very difficult to judge the fairness of a job offer without more data than most hiring managers have access to.

THE EXAMPLE OF PAY EQUITY

The company Salesforce.com set out to look at salary disparities. In an article in *Wired* magazine, Salesforce.com CEO Marc Benioff and two members of the senior executive team, Cindy Robbins and Leyla Seka, raised the issue of gender pay equity and proposed an audit of compensation for all employees. Benioff described how they had been working on equity initiatives for a few years at that point, so he didn't expect the audit to show much disparity.

It wasn't simple to look at the data. They "assembled a cross-functional team and developed a methodology with outside experts that analyzed the entire employee population to determine whether there were unexplained differences in pay." Benioff was chagrined to discover that there were significant disparities and that 6% of Salesforce.com employees needed their salaries adjusted, at a cost of approximately $3 million. They found that the next year, they had to perform a similar adjustment (mostly due to acquiring companies who brought their own salary disparities to the organization). The company discovered this would be an ongoing effort and publishes an annual update on their website regarding goals and progress.

Benioff describes how this is not the product of deliberate bad actors in the system. No bad person is scheming to pay people less based on race or gender. He describes pay inequity as "a stubborn, slippery problem in business." He also explains that the reasons to fix it aren't about reputation or even doing the right thing, but that diversity and equity are good for business, according to research from McKinsey & Company and others.

The point of this example isn't to promote pay equity (though I'm a fan), but to show how a focus on individual behavior would be inadequate here. I've worked on

many diversity training projects over the years, and the training has had learning objectives like

> Managers will be able to describe the importance of fair and equitable treatment.

Or even

> Managers will be able to identify the characteristics of a fair and unbiased salary offer.

But in the Salesforce.com example, they were unable to see the problem clearly without a system in place to measure and correct for the issue. After the initial audit, they "devised a new set of job codes and standards and applied them to each newly integrated company." With those measures in place, it might be possible to address the problem at an individual level, as disparities against those standards would be visible on an individual basis.

TUNING A SYSTEM

Behavior change initiatives are often treated as a campaign, a class, or an event, but in the Salesforce.com example, they found that one correction was not enough. Instead, they have built up ongoing systems and publicly release their outcomes every year on their website.

We tend to view training classes as a Start > Learn > Finish process. You now know the thing you needed to learn and move on to the next thing or go out and use your knowledge.

Behavior change efforts may not always work like that. It may be an ongoing effort to reinforce and adjust. The metaphor may not be a journey, but more of a garden that needs tending as it grows or a thermostat that needs adjusting over time.

If that's too vague, we can use the example of cybersecurity. The behavior is that learners should create strong, unique passwords. There's a class that's really fun and engaging, and people come up with the hardest passwords they can imagine, and everybody leaves ready to do the right thing. That lasts for maybe six weeks or so, and then the behavior of weaker, reused passwords starts to creep back in.

I don't want to get into solutions here, but there are many kinds of behaviors that may never be a one-and-done training solution.

HOW THIS IMPACTS BEHAVIOR-CHANGE PROJECTS

If you are being asked, as a learning designer, to design a class or resources to help address individual behaviors in a system where results are not visible at an individual level, it probably won't be enough. It doesn't mean that you shouldn't try or that it can't be part of the solution, but it may be useful to have that discussion with stakeholders so the expectations are set appropriately.

- Teaching healthcare providers how to talk to patients about exercise won't help if providers aren't given the time to have those conversations.
- Teaching people the right method for handwashing will be of limited usefulness if the environment lacks clean water and adequate supplies.
- Teaching people to sort their recycling won't make a dent in plastic going to landfills if there's no market for recycled goods.

Please understand that I do not mean this in a pessimistic way! As we proceed in this book, I'm going to speak optimistically about our ability as learning designers to impact or influence behavior. I wouldn't be writing this book if I wasn't optimistic about this topic. That said, I want to be as clear as possible about the limitations of a tight behavioral focus, how solutions may often need to be part of a broader system approach, and how learning designers should also be part of those broader systems discussions.

HOW THIS IMPACTS LEARNING DESIGN

I started this chapter talking about how training often gets invoked to help solve large systemic problems. Let's take a look at a small example of making biased judgments.

You've probably heard the message that it's wrong to judge people based on their appearance. "Don't judge a book by its cover" and all that. *Sesame Street* made sure my four-year-old self knew that judging people based on how they looked was bad. And it's not difficult to look at the news and see examples where judging by appearance leads to awful consequences. Making people aware of unconscious bias is a large part of many training initiatives.

But imagine you live in an apartment building, and a delivery person contacts you over the intercom to let you know that you have to sign for a package you ordered. You walk into the lobby and see these three people:

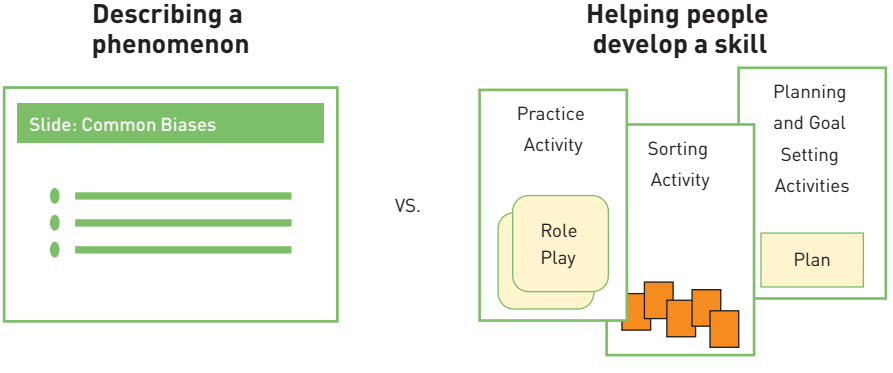
I don't think you would be guilty of any problematic bias or irrationality if you walked up to the person in the uniform holding a delivery box.

The point isn't that "judging by appearance" is okay. The point is that *sometimes it's okay and sometimes it's not*, and the hard part is *knowing the difference*.

So the learning objective isn't helping learners understand that "this bias exists." The learning objective is helping learners "recognize in which environments and circumstances I need to use extra vigilance to make sure I'm not making unfair assumptions."

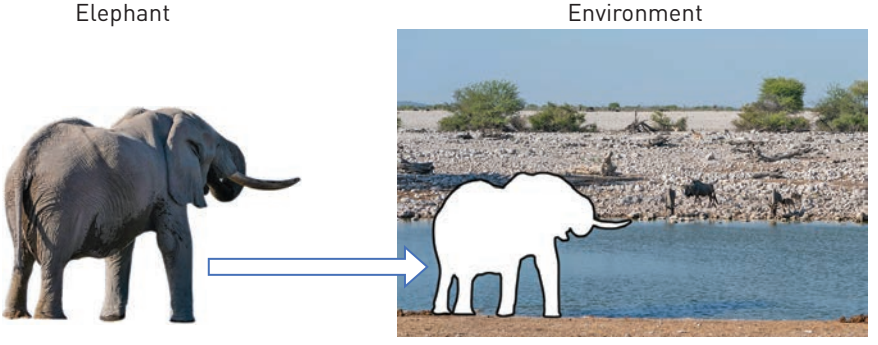
The first is an interesting psychological phenomenon that you tell the rider about, and the second is a skill or habit you probably need to practice consistently to help the rider and elephant both develop.

This is an important distinction for learning design, because *the learning design will look very different*. If you are describing an interesting phenomenon, you might only need a single slide in the presentation deck, but helping people develop a skill or habit requires learning activities with practice, a feedback mechanism, and reinforcement over time.



Learning where and when you need to heighten your vigilance is a product of the environment you are in, the influences that shaped your learned behavior, and the cues you have acclimated to.

The behavior, like the elephant, never exists in a vacuum. The elephant is always operating in the social and physical environment it exists in. We need to consider these things if we want to design effective learning experiences.



KEY POINTS

- Training is often called upon to provide solutions to difficult problems, but there are often bigger system issues at play, and an intervention that only focuses on training is often not enough.
- Every system is perfectly designed to get the result it gets, so always ask, "What is causing this behavior to happen or not happen right now?"
- If a behavior is being blamed on attitude or capability, it's important to dig deeper and see if there's anything in the system or environment that is causing that behavior to happen.
- Mapping a system, and considering what forces are encouraging the change and what forces are restraining the change, can help you identify the best places to intervene in that system.
- A tight focus on individual behavior can help you design for behavior change, but you do need to periodically zoom out and consider the whole system to ensure that the individual behavior supports the outcome.
- Always ask where the feedback or consequences of the behavior will become visible. If it's visible at the individual level, it will be easier to provide feedback to individual learners. If the feedback only becomes visible at the group or system level, then there will need to be mechanisms in place to measure and assess group- or system-level impact.

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