TravelSmart Workplace fact sheet

Designing a travel behaviour change project

Making your workplace TravelSmart is about influencing the travel behaviour of employees and visitors. This fact sheet is a guide for designing a travel behaviour change project. It provides an approach (what works, what doesn’t) and sets out a toolkit of strategies for fostering long term behaviour change.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE: A SIMPLE APPROACH

What changes people’s behaviour? Lots of things influence what we do. People often think that advertising is the way to bring about change, but while it might affect the brand of shampoo you choose, it is unlikely to change complex behaviours like how we travel to work.

Behaviour change can seem complicated, and there are many different competing models and approaches, but there’s a simple and effective formula for designing a behaviour change project:

- **Inspiration**
- **Enablement**
- **Invitation**

= **Trial**

**Satisfying experience**

**Unsatisfying experience**

**Sustained change**

**Unsustained change**

PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Inspiration

First, people need to be offered something they personally desire. Framing a new travel behaviour as an opportunity to become healthier, to look or feel good, to be more socially connected, or even just getting where you want to go faster and with fewer hassles, is vital to connect the behaviour to peoples’ personal motivations.

Enablement

Second, people’s fears and doubts need to be taken seriously. How can we modify people’s physical and social context so they feel more able to manage the risks of change? Staying the same is easy; change presents risks. Walking, cycling or catching a bus or train may evoke fears for those who haven’t yet done those things. There are physical fears (injury), potential embarrassment from making a fool of oneself, as well as the small humiliations of getting lost or arriving for work exhausted and soaked in sweat.

Telling people that their fears are wrong is pointless and creates denial and resistance. Instead we need to address and modify the aspects of the environment that cause those fears.

Invitation

People need an invitation to start their journey of change. They need someone they trust to say “Come along. Try it out. I’ll be there to make it easy.”

The ways we engage people need to be designed with an eye to lowering fears as well, focusing on qualities like familiarity, autonomy, community building and social proof (which are discussed below). This is the same as increasing people’s ‘self-efficacy’ – the belief that they can carry out the new behaviour, and get the benefits, without embarrassment, loss or injury.

Trial and satisfaction

Finally, their first experiences should generate personal feelings of satisfaction. If people feel good about their experiences and achievements then they’re likely to sustain the new behaviour in future. However, if they experience negative feelings then the behaviour is likely to be dropped and further attempts to change behaviour resisted.

The next sections look at how these principles of behaviour change can be applied in travel related projects.
Inspiration, enablement and invitation

INSPRIE: MAKE IT PERSONAL

Inspiration is always about stories.

The most inspiring stories are surprising, positive and emotional anecdotes about ordinary people experiencing change in their lives who surprise themselves and others about what they are capable of. These kinds of stories expand listeners’ sense of what is possible for themselves.

Importantly, inspiration is not rational, and it’s not about ‘benefits’. When people are presented with lists of benefits, the effect is to make them feel pressured to change. This causes denial and resistance.

This can be a very hard point for change-makers to take on, but it’s at the core of a successful project. When we present an argument for change, we often assume that people aren’t aware of the benefits of walking, cycling and using public transport. This is almost certainly a false assumption.

Research shows that people are already highly aware of, for example, the health and fitness advantages of walking and cycling. Knowledge of these benefits has not caused a monumental shift to people using these modes, indicating that awareness does not necessarily bring about change. Inspiration can be as simple as hearing someone recounting their cycling experience.

ENABLE: EASE PEOPLE INTO IT

Enabling people is all about helping them feel more confident to manage the personal risks of change.

It’s often said that we should “challenge people’s comfort zones”. Nothing could be further from the truth. People always resist the feared loss of control that comes from exposure to unfamiliar situations. It’s often forgotten that the biggest threats can be social: the fears of embarrassment and humiliation that accompany any activity. Those fears cause denial (flight) and resistance (fight).

Don’t push comfort zones - expand them.

Simply being given unwanted advice about how one should behave – even with the best of intentions – causes denial and resistance in normal people. Rather than challenging comfort zones, it’s better to expand them. This can be done by building two kinds of ‘enablers’ into your project.

1. Environmental enablers: These are more-or-less permanent modifications to people’s environments that make new behaviours easier, safer, more predictable, and more enjoyable. Environmental modifications are essential for sustained behaviour change. There are many kinds of environmental enablers, but the most important in the field of travel choice are easiness, incentives, and thwarting.

2. Self-efficacy enablers: These are short-term psychological techniques that increase people’s confidence or self-efficacy by reducing the perceived risk of new behaviours. The most common in the field of travel choice are buzz, familiarity, autonomy, enjoyment and social proof.

These two types of enablers complement each other, so the more you use in one project the better.
**Environmental enablers:**

Environmental enablers are sometimes called ‘nudges’ and work by changing the landscape in which people make their day-to-day choices.

**Easiness** means lowering the physical and mental effort required for a new behaviour.

Parsons Brinckerhoff, one of the world’s leading planning and infrastructure firms, aims to reduce non-project travel miles by a 50% increase in video-conferencing and virtual communications. To enable this, it has:
- installed four videoconferencing suites in their new Perth offices with a significant upgrade of bandwidth
- trained all staff in videoconferencing technology, including Communicator and WebEx
- reimbursed full costs for Perth-based business trips taken by public transport

Woodside has incorporated many tangible TravelSmart initiatives in the design of the current workplace. Facilities include a spacious secure bicycle parking area with 280 racks in the basement car park, shower and locker facilities for cyclists and walkers and a dedicated cycling lane on the car park ramp. Outside the building there is a bicycle rack for visitors and a median strip cycle laneway on busy Milligan Street has improved safety for the hundreds of Woodside staff who cycle to work.

The City of Mandurah and Heart Foundation both have fleet bicycles for employees to use for meetings around town and to book for lunch time rides or to try cycle commuting.

**Incentives** enable new behaviours in a number of ways: they focus attention, create buzz, and make the new behaviour seem more socially valued.

St John of God Hospital, Subiaco, pays a Travel Green Allowance of $5 per day to employees who give up their parking privileges and agree to commute by active and sustainable travel modes (335 employees currently receive the allowance).

The Department of Environment and Conservation has a “15 for 15 Policy” that lets employees count 15 minutes of time spent exercising, cycling or walking to work as if it were 15 minutes of work time.

**Thwarting** means making an undesired behaviour difficult and more costly to do.

Reducing access to parking (known as ‘parking restraint’) is a kind of thwarting that strongly influences travel cost. For example, in a study in the Sydney CBD 97% of subjects responded that the cost of parking was the single most significant factor determining their travel choice.

The Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre Trust has implemented measures to manage parking at this busy health campus during redevelopment including:
- removing around 1,400 staff car parking bays
- allocating staff parking permits based on need (e.g. for staff working early or late shifts)
- increasing staff parking fees, which in time will equate to twice the two-zone public transport fare
Self-efficacy enablers:

Self-efficacy enablers are project delivery techniques that increase people’s belief in their own ability to manage the perceived risks of change. They are often called ‘persuasion’ techniques.

Create buzz It’s vital that people talk about the changes. Conversation is the ‘carrier wave’ of behaviour change. It’s how communities make decisions, decide what is a good or bad idea, and establish social norms. A universal rule is ‘no buzz, no change’. Successful change projects always give people something positive to talk about.

In their book on communication Made to Stick, Chip and Dan Heath write that a contagious communication is always a short, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotionally-engaging, story (SUCCES, for short). Unexpectedness and emotional-impact are the most important ingredients.

To create buzz, the two questions we should ask are “What’s something we can do that’s unexpected?” and “What’s a surprising, emotionally-engaging story we can share?”

Familiarity If we want people to be less afraid of a new action, unfamiliarity is probably the number one obstacle to tackle.

Familiarity can be achieved through training and information sessions, but the best way is through social events where people get to experience a new behaviour in a safe, supportive environment.

Training, bike buses, bike buddies and group rides all increase the confidence of novice cyclists. For example, a survey of 5058 participants in the 2006 Sydney Spring Cycle found that novices and first-time participants rode significantly more in the month after the event. Half those who rated their cycling ability as ‘low’, rated it as ‘high’ a month after the event.

A trial with TravelSmart workplaces in the Perth CBD found that cycle training boosted participants’ confidence and increased the number who cycled to work.
INVITE PEOPLE

Behaviour change is a little like a party. No matter how much people want to come, they still need an invitation.

The key ingredients of an invitation are:

- The invitation should come from a real person, respected by the audience, who is ‘living the dream’ of being fitter, healthier, and happier.
- If possible, it should be personal. A real voice on the phone is far more persuasive than any number of emails or letters.
- It should include a surprising, emotionally-engaging story (that grabs peoples’ attention and creates inspiration and buzz).
- It should anticipate people’s fears. For example, to address fears about time commitment, you might say “We meet for just 1 hour per fortnight”; to address fears about personal safety, you might say “Everyone will have an experienced buddy to watch out for them.”
- It needs a clear, simple ‘call for action’ to take their first, simple step on the journey, for example “Come to the Walking Challenge launch BBQ at 5.30 on 26 October.”

Autonomy

Since fear of lost control is one of the main reasons people resist change, offering free choices is a powerful enabling tool. Successful projects allow the audience to become actors by making significant decisions about how, where, when, who with, and whether they adopt a new behaviour.

The best way to mobilise autonomy is to involve people in decision-making about travel initiatives or infrastructure in their workplace. Assuming that we know what people want and what their barriers are is a big mistake – it’s essential to consult and involve people.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment has a great impact on people’s sense of their own abilities to undertake new behaviours. Happiness, or elation, or just being in a good mood fundamentally alters people’s sense of risk and it makes them more persistent at difficult tasks, more creative and more likely to accept requests and invitations.

Food, social interaction, a sense of humour, and a focus on positives make a great difference to the success of a travel behaviour change project.

Social proof

Social proof refers to providing evidence that lots of people are already enjoying the new behaviour. If lots of people are doing it must be normal, and if it’s normal it must be safe! It can be as simple as stating:

- 38% more people use Transperth services than five years ago
- 360 staff participated in our recent walk to work day
- Staff saved 25,000 driving miles in the last 12 months

Beware of inadvertently creating the wrong social proof. For example, the statement in a brochure that “Despite the cost and stress of congestion, 80 per cent of people still choose to drive to work alone.” Says to readers: “Most people drive to work, so it must be normal.” This kind of negative social proof makes it more likely that people will keep driving.

The most powerful social proofs happen during public events like the Freeway Bike Hike when lots of people gather together, demonstrating the popularity of an activity. When staff participate in these events it’s important to spread the social proof by publishing photos of lots of smiling faces in the staff newsletter. Add their comments, and you’re providing inspiration as well!

As part of Sustainable September, the Department of Transport ran a series of events, including a lunch walk, a social ride and bike maintenance sessions. The aim was to get people out of the office during the day and back on their bikes for the start of spring. The events were promoted to all staff in the building, not just Transport staff, and the posters were engaging, fun and inclusive and activities fit within convenient lunch hours. The events proved popular and participation was even higher than expected.

Lunch River Ride
Friday 16/9 12:30pm - 1pm
Meet: Basement 1 Bike Cage
For some biking and banter, join in with other One40 staff for a 30 minute leisurely ride around the CBD and down to the river. RSVP to lana@transport.tas.gov.au

Bike Doctor Workshops
Friday 9/9 12pm - 2pm
Friday 23/9 12pm - 2pm
Where: Basement 1 Bike Cage
Bring your bike back to life and get ready to Cycle Instead This Spring! A workshop with a bike specialist on hand to help with some basic bike maintenance.

Heart Foundation Free Walking Tour
Friday 23/9 12:15pm - 1pm
Meet: Ground Level Foyer
Join fellow One40 staff on a walk through the city and see how much we can take in in just 45 minutes – and you’ll get a goody-bag!
RSVP by 21/9 and register your shirt size to transport@transport.tas.gov.au
Shirt sizes are: Ladies: 12, 14, 16 and Men: S, M, L, XL, 2XL.

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Designing your project

THE PURPOSE OF YOUR PROJECT

A rapid theory generator

A change project should start with a clear mental model or ‘theory of change‘ that captures your thinking about how and why you think your project could influence behaviour. Create your theory of change with a diverse group or ‘brains trust‘ including a mix of professional and lay people.

Here’s a process you could follow:

1. Bring together your diverse brains trust
They’ll be people in your workplace who are interested or can offer a perspective on the travel behaviour/s you are focussing on.

2. Inform them
Inform them of the findings of research you have done. This can include travel survey and access audit findings. Inspire them with stories and ideas that have worked for other travel behaviour change projects in similar situations around the world. Do a Google search first to gather examples.

3. Brainstorm
Identify a specific, measurable behaviour, and then brainstorm the question “What would make the biggest difference to X people adopting Y behaviour?” Be very specific here. For example, the question might be “What would make the biggest difference to staff in the East Perth office car pooling to work?”

4. Tell your brains trust to
• Be biased towards permanent modifications in people’s social, institutional or physical environment. They’re the ones that will result in sustained change.
• Avoid referring to intangible mental states like ‘awareness’ or ‘attitudes’ or vague ideas like ‘sustainable’ ‘accessible’ or ‘resilient’. Instead, focus on concrete, observable actions by identified people or organisations. Vagueness in describing who is responsible and what actions will be taken is one of the biggest causes of failure in behaviour change efforts. Actively enforce this as the brainstorm proceeds.
• Come up with at least one wacky idea per person. Successful change efforts are never boring or predictable. It’s the wacky ideas that get people buzzing and engaged. Remember that every great idea seemed wacky the first time it was proposed!
• Be positive. Focus on ideas for success, not reasons for failure.

5. Prioritise
Get the brains trust to prioritise their ideas. Once you have a big list of ideas written down, in silence, each person distributes 10 dots between the changes or actions they think would have the biggest impact on the desired behaviour (and are realistically achievable). Weighting time = 5 minutes (don’t overthink it)

6. Add it all up
Add up the dots. The 3-6 actions with the most dots become your theory of change

EXAMPLE
An example of a rapid project generator brainstorm for cycle commuting at Cherry Park Hospital. Dots show prioritisation by the brains trust and the shaded items become their theory of change.

3-6 actions:
IF staff have a map of safe, enjoyable cycling routes; AND there are fun, sociable cycling events; AND if there are opportunities to cycle with buddies and bike buses; AND if there are lockers, showers, towels, and secure bike parking; THEN more staff will cycle to work at X workplace.

Your project then becomes a test of that theory.

Prototyping to “learn fast”
When implementing a change effort always start small, aiming to rapidly field test a prototype of your project on a small group (say, people in one office). “Fast prototyping” allows you to quickly learn what works and improvise new ideas on the fly. Fast prototyping is superb risk management because it allows you to discard poor ideas and improve good ideas before very much has been staked in terms of project time and money.
## Resources

### WORKPLACE CHECKLIST

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Your Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have you brought together a diverse brains trust?</td>
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<td>Have you informed the brains trust with the results of your research?</td>
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<td>Have you inspired the brains trust with successful ideas and stories from around the world?</td>
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<td>Have you brainstormed environmental changes that could lower people’s perceived risks of change, including those that create ease, incentives/pricing and thwarting?</td>
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<td>Have you planned ways to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Create buzz through an unexpected and emotionally-moving event of story?</td>
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<td>- Increase people’s familiarity with the desired behaviour?</td>
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<td>- Give people free choice about how, when, where, who with and whether to adopt the behaviour?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Create enjoyment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Create social proof that lots of other people are enjoying the behaviour?</td>
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ENDNOTES


RESOURCES

Robinson, L. (2012) Changelology, How to Enable Groups, Communities and Societies to Do Things They've Never Done Before. Totnes, Devon: Green Books.

A comprehensive and readable introduction to the practice of designing behaviour change projects. The steps to designing an effective change project are explained in more detail.

Les Robinson Enabling Change online resources

Fact sheet prepared by Les Robinson

TravelSmart Workplace is helping WA workplaces reduce car use and promote active, sustainable travel choices. The program is a partnership between the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Transport.

To find out how your workplace can be part of the transport solution, contact TravelSmart Workplace:

CONTACT

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Perth WA 6000
Telephone: (08) 6551 6000
Email: travelsmart@transport.wa.gov.au
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