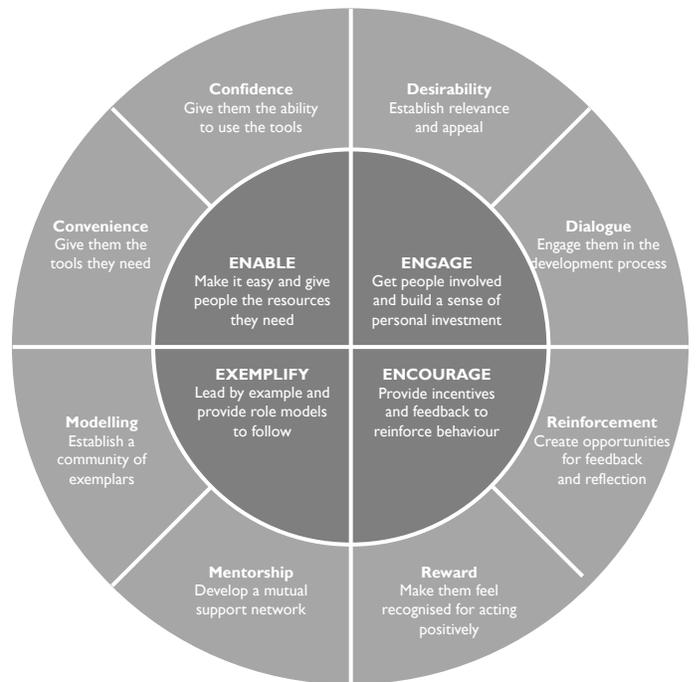


Behaviour change



The relationship between behaviours and motivations is a little like the relationship between chickens and eggs: nobody is really sure which comes first, but it's awfully difficult to form one without the other.

Behaviour follows motivation

For the first half of my career (so far), I thought the relationship between motivations and behaviours was fairly straightforward: brands work by identifying what motivates people and then exploiting those motivations to influence how we behave. This idea is implicit in the notion that in order to effect change, we must first capture people's 'hearts and minds'. It's central to how marketers think: if we can apply insight to uncover the most potent motivations, then we can use that emotional 'hook' to change how people behave.

Although there are several very clever theories about how motivations affect behaviours, one of the simplest and most popular is the Fogg Behavior Model (FBM), named after its creator, Dr. BJ Fogg of Stanford University. The FBM proposes that three elements combine to create a behaviour:



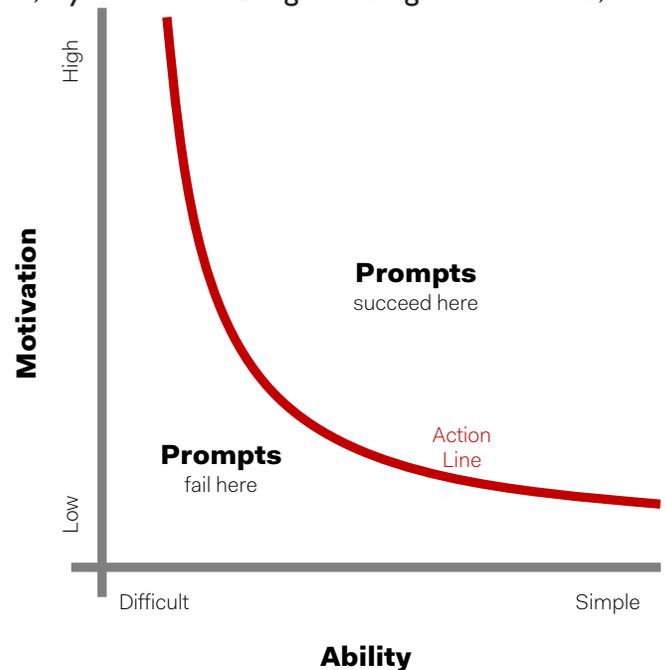
Motivation: These can be physical (achieving pleasure or avoiding pain), emotional (appealing to hopes or fears) or social (seeking acceptance and avoiding rejection)

Ability: These are the factors that simplify or enable behaviours, such as time, money, lack of physical and mental effort, social norms, and routine

Prompt (or Trigger): This is the spark plug that starts the engine going and can be internal (being hungry), or external (the smell of food being cooked), or synthetic (prompts that are intentionally designed to trigger a consumption behaviour, like McDonalds' golden arches)

Fogg's model also points to a trade-off between motivation and ability: a highly motivated individual is likely to be willing to act, even if a behaviour is difficult. On the other hand, someone lacking in motivation is unlikely to engage in a behaviour unless it is made really simple. This trade-off is represented in the FBM by a downward sloping 'action line'. Below, or to the left of this line, a prompt is likely to fail. Above and to the right of this line, a prompt is likely to succeed.

So, if you want to design a change in behaviour,

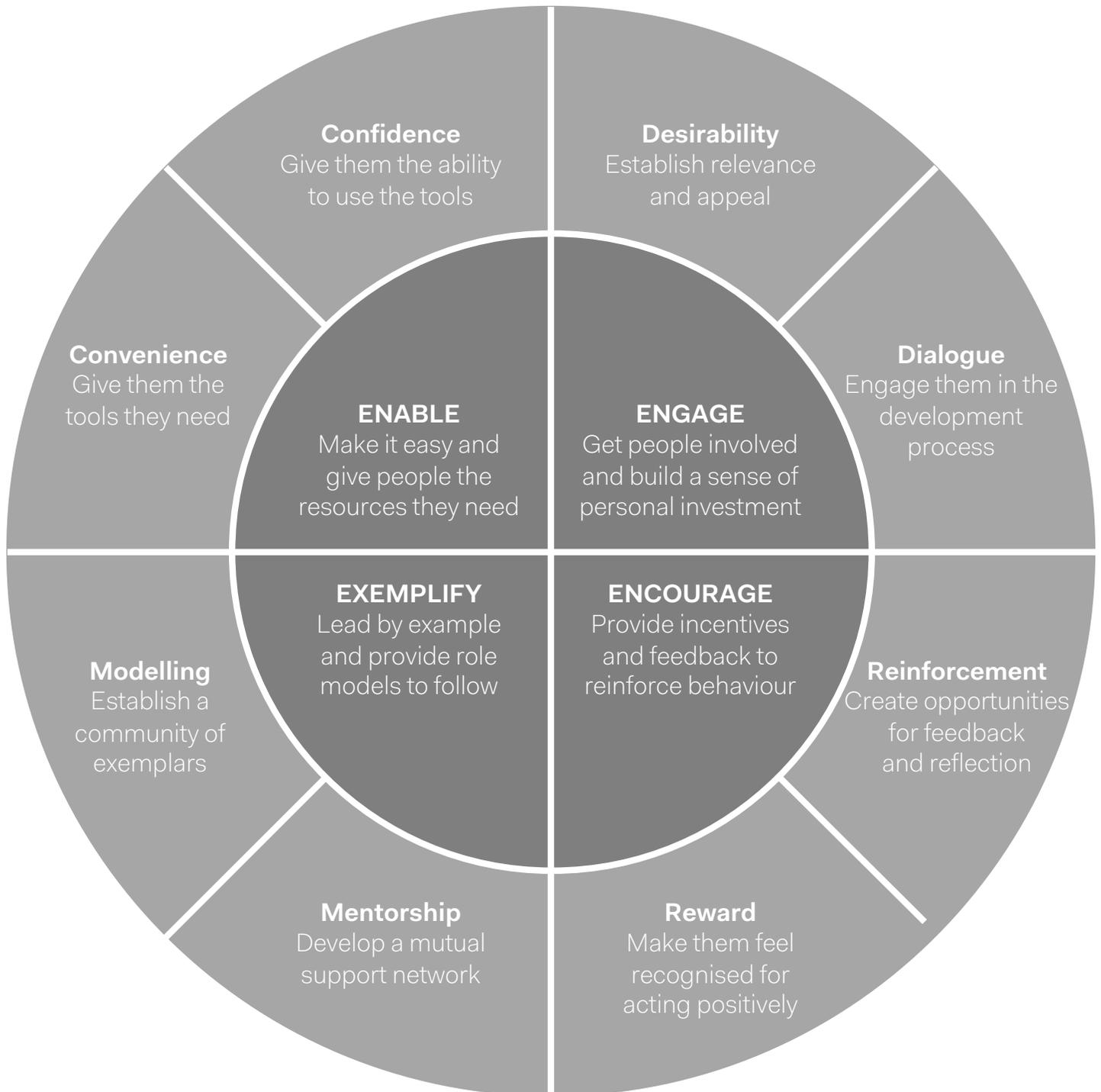


then you need to engineer a situation where all three elements occur in combination. If an individual or group has the ability to change but lacks the motivation, then the task is to engage them through a relevant motivational hook. If the issue is a lack of ability, then the task is to find the most appropriate way to simplify the behaviour. In Fogg's model, designing behaviour change depends upon our ability to accurately identify the missing element – motivation, ability, or prompt – and design an intervention to fill in the gap. What's clever about Fogg's model is that while motivation is an important driver of behaviour, it isn't the only determinant of how we behave: context is vital.

Motivation follows behaviour

Fogg's formula is only half of the story. It suggests that behaviour is explained (at least in part) by motivation. But research suggests that the opposite is also true: behaviours can shape motivations. For example, students told to perform a boring task - and then asked to misrepresent the task as interesting to other people - subsequently rate the task as more interesting in order to justify the lie to themselves. We all do this on pretty much a daily basis: moderate what we believe in order to justify

how we behave. This is because the gap between our behaviour and our motivations creates 'cognitive dissonance': we feel uncomfortable when our behaviours and our motivations don't align. In response, we can eliminate the dissonance either by changing our behaviours (which Fogg's model demonstrates can be tricky in the absence of a compelling prompt or motivation), or by changing our motivations.



This interplay between motivation and behaviour is really important for anybody who wants to design a change in behaviour: it's often not as straightforward as appealing to the right motivation or finding a way to make the behaviour simpler. Motivations affect behaviours but behaviours also affect motivations. So, the trick for designing lasting behaviour change is to avoid a vicious cycle in which an undesirable behaviour erodes the motivation to improve. The goal is for behaviour and motivation to form a virtuous cycle, just like chickens and eggs. Lasting behaviour change is not just a matter of motivating, enabling and prompting. It's also important to reinforce positive behaviours (leading by example) and weed out undesirable behaviours (by inviting people to reflect on and change their existing thoughts and feelings). That's why my go-to model for behaviour change is loosely based on the 4E policy framework originally developed by Defra in 2011 as a way to reduce waste and promote sustainable lifestyles:

The 4E model is a helpful way to make sure that you're thinking beyond abilities (Enable) and motivations (Engage) to include reflection and reinforcement (Encourage) and the opportunity to lead by example and help others (Exemplify). I'm not claiming any authorship here – this is a bastardised version of the Defra model, with added bits from various frameworks I've encountered over the years. It has evolved over time and will no doubt evolve further, but I've found it helpful for planning internal brand launches and designing cultural change programmes, as well as identifying ways to encourage more sustainable resource use and to improve brand experiences. I don't always use every single quadrant or segment, but I've found it's a handy way to develop a more rounded set of initiatives that don't rely entirely on winning hearts and minds to effect a desired change in behaviour. And it saves me having to worry about whether the chicken or the egg came first.