

Push the right buttons

Penny Walker on how best to influence staff behaviour

Sometimes you only need to influence one person to make a big decision, such as getting the purchasing director to specify certified sustainable timber products. At other times, the only way to meet your environmental objectives is to get a large number of colleagues to make small changes in their everyday activities. You can fit dual-flush toilets, but you only save water if people use the minimum flush; the impact of cycle racks depends on people getting on their bikes. This is where routine behaviours, social norms and habits come in. So how do you influence staff behaviour?

Think globally, act locally?

If you want people's behaviour to be more environmentally friendly, then it helps if they have green attitudes, right? Well, yes, but much less than you would think. According to Professor Ken Peattie of Cardiff University's Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS (lexisurl.com/iema11055)), research shows that attitudes towards the environment explain less than 20% of the differences between low-impact choices and

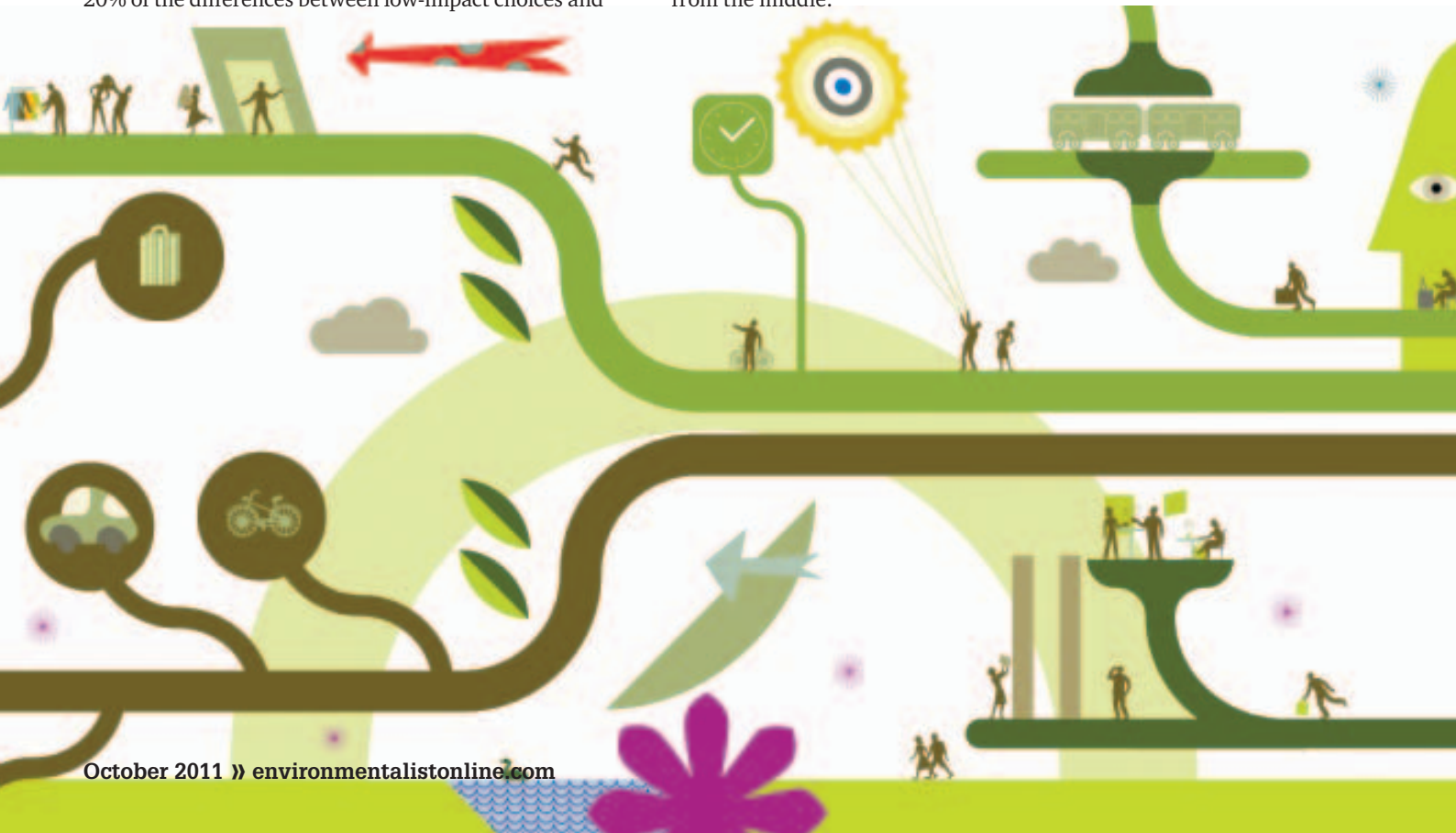
high-impact ones. Even if people have them, eco-values are a very poor predictor of eco-action. So if you want to change people's behaviour, changing their attitudes may be a very slow and unreliable way of going about it.

Six of one ...

Fortunately, individual motivation is just one of six key sources of influence that together provide a sound foundation for getting the behaviour you want. These influencers on behaviour divide into the categories of motivation and ability. You need to address these two crucial components at the level of the individual, their social setting (peers) and the structures within which they work. The more sources you utilise, the more powerful your behaviour-change lever will be.

Kerry Patterson, co-author of the book *Influencer: The power to change anything*, sets out each of the sources of influence in a useful table (see panel, p.30). They are:

- 1. Make the undesirable desirable.** Give people reasons to do the new thing, or to stop doing the old thing. These can't simply be your reasons – which may be altruistically environmentalist – but reasons that match their own motivation (which could be completely different from your own).
- 2. Surpass your limits.** Find out what people need to be able to adopt the new behaviour and put it in place. This could be skills, equipment or permission.
- 3. Harness peer pressure.** Encourage those who are prepared to do so to nudge and comment, to lead from the middle.



THE SIX SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

Motivation	Ability
Personal	
Make the undesirable desirable	Surpass your limits
Social	
Harness peer pressure	Find strength in numbers
Structural	
Design rewards and demand accountability	Change the environment

Source: (2007) Patterson K et al, *Influencer: The power to change anything*, McGraw-Hill.

- 4. Find strength in numbers.** Does the change need critical mass (for example, a car-sharing scheme)? Are there economies of scale (for example, buying fair-trade refreshments)? If so, put them in place.
- 5. Design rewards and demand accountability.** Make sure people get feedback. Will anyone notice if the behaviour changes? What will the consequences be for them if people adopt the new way of doing things, and if they don't?
- 6. Change the environment.** Ensure that the equipment, resource, and physical environment prompt and enable the new behaviour.

In practice

Helen McGreal is a health, safety and environment manager at chemicals company AkzoNobel. One of her goals was to reduce CO₂ emissions from the sales force, who rely on their company cars to do their jobs.

Her initial approach included raising their awareness of the environmental impact of driving, as well as getting more fuel-efficient models onto the fleet list. But the shift in car choices was minimal. There was also a risk that the best salespeople would leave if they did not like their cars, which are symbols of success as well as tools to do a job.

McGreal realised that while her own motivations included care for the planet, the natural motivators for the sales force in her company were a strong competitive drive and the esteem of being thought well of by their peers. So she found ways of harnessing these personal motivations. The more fuel-efficient cars on the fleet list are now those with the best interiors and gadgets. "Instead of comparing engine-sizes, the sales force now talk about their sat nav and audio systems," says McGreal. Choosing the coolest car is inseparable from choosing the greenest, so almost everyone chooses the more fuel-efficient cars.

Cutting vehicle emissions is not just about the right equipment, it's also about driving style. During AkzoNobel's "Safe and green" driver training programme, people compete to beat the instructor by getting their mpg as high as they can. And with real-time mpg displays in the fleet cars, they can continue to compete with themselves and each other to do journeys ever more fuel efficiently. A driving simulator game in the staff canteen gave everyone a chance to drive round a virtual track with the lowest emissions possible. The head of the UK and Ireland business was so keen to win that he came back and took part every day for a week. "There were small prizes on offer," McGreal explains, "but the chance to beat the boss turned out to be the real draw." Having used five of the six sources of

Penny Walker is an independent sustainability consultant. Read her blogs at penny-walker.co.uk/blog



influence, McGreal is pleased with the results. "Currently, we are driving less miles, have lowered the gCO₂/km profile of the fleet and controlled the fuel spend," she says.

For the journey

Paul Turner, group community investment and sustainable development director at the Lloyds Banking Group has made full use of the "structural ability" lever, when influencing staff behaviour on travel and paper use.

Lloyds has introduced a TRAVELWise programme promoting the use of teleconferences, video conferencing and web-enabled virtual meetings. As well as running awareness workshops about the programme and setting up self-guided training on the company intranet, every third week in the month at Lloyds is classed as a "no-travel week".

"Unless you are seeing a customer, you don't travel," Turner says. "It's still early days, but the vast majority of people who would normally travel, don't." And the effect is seen outside of the no-travel week too. "We thought there might be an increase in travel either side of the third week, but in fact we're seeing less travel in the other weeks too, as people realise how easy it is to use alternatives."

The monthly no-travel week is supported by the company's bookings and expenses systems. If you try to book travel or claim travel expenses a warning flag on the system discourages this.

A similar approach has been adopted for the bank's "Copy cat" initiative, with Turner's team putting systems in place that have led to significant reductions in paper, ink and energy use from printers. Some machines are password protected and this – alongside default black-and-white settings and double-sided printing – makes it harder for people to print wastefully and easier to do the green thing.

What about motivation? Have staff grumbled about these changes being built into IT systems? Turner says that because Lloyds, along with the whole banking sector, has been under significant pressure to change, those who are already interested in environmental improvement have welcomed the opportunity to do something positive. And those who are less green see the initiatives as part of the wider move to save money and work more efficiently. A network of about 800 internal champions has also been promoting the projects, reinforcing people's ability through training as well as providing some "social motivation".

What can you do?

If you're clear about the new, desirable behaviour you would like to get colleagues to adopt, check:

- Are you making use of at least four of the six sources of influence?
- Have you identified something that will motivate the individuals you want to influence? Remember, this may not be the same as what motivates you.

Once you are sure the answer to these questions is yes, take action and then reflect on what the impact has been. You can now adjust your approach and continue!