

Does your work environment speed you towards your business success?

Research suggests that anywhere between 50% and 90% of our behaviours (during waking hours) are habitual behaviours. Suggesting we're on autopilot most of the day, not realising we're doing what we do in the way we do it.

The science of habit shows that habits are mostly triggered, prompted or cued-up by something in our environment (see later for the 5 habitual triggers).

Knowing this 'triggers' a question that you should take seriously if you're committed to improving the results of your business every day:

What is it about your work environment that prompts and triggers behaviours every day in your business?

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STOP taking your work environment triggers for granted

START choosing your work triggers to improve your working behaviours (habits) and results

1. The one 'BREAKTHROUGH QUESTION' you must ask to help you take charge of the triggers and behaviours (habits) in your work place...

When did you last change the environment structure that triggers your behaviour in your work setting?

A 'good enough' working environment will not deliver 'world-beating' or even 'great' results.

And if you improve your working environment, you'll improve the results of your work.

So, it pays to ask yourself:

What is it about your work environment that prompts and triggers behaviours every day in your business?

Where is the value in this question?

The value in this question lies in *identifying* the things at work that deliberately trigger the decisions and the behaviours you want from your people. Stepping back and working them out rather than leaving them as they have always been or leaving them as they are now, even though you didn't choose them to be that way!

- If Alan Mulally, who turned around Ford Motor Company from a multi-billion-dollar loss, can insist and encourage his leadership team to use the structure (triggers) of a weekly well-run business review meeting, what can you do to trigger improved decisions, improved behaviours, habits and results?
- If a small manufacturing business can put up a white board on the wall and create a simple weekly production 'scoreboard' that triggers and supports a daily check-in about the day's priorities, what can you do to change something in your work-setting that stimulates the right behaviours and actions to support your business success every day?
- If an events business can install a large white-board with a game of 'battleships' that results in increased event bookings thanks to the 'game' dominating the work-setting triggers, what can you do to use a 'game' trigger to drive the action that will drive your business success throughout the working day?
- If a training company can change who sits beside whom 3 times in 3 months just so they get the right blend of people sitting with each other to support the behaviours they need to improve results, what can you do to reorganize your people to improve your behaviours, habits and results?
- If the AA can re-organise the layout of their recovery vehicles and the 'ipad' prompts to ensure their engineers follow the best recovery routines, what can you do to provide the right tools and equipment in the right place to improve your people's behaviours, habits and results?



Working Triggers

Support tools and resources

Once you've asked the question above try this one next:

What work environment triggers (structures, visual and auditory prompts) have you deliberately put in place to help you and your team automatically do the right things at the highest standards every day?

2. Never under-estimate the power of hard-wiring in your brain (and the resistance to change this creates)...

The well-known phrase **'Old Habits Die Hard'** is proven to be mostly wrong with a basic understanding of neuroscience.

A more accurate phrase would be **'Old Habits Never Die'**.

It's all about how the brain learns. And how the brain then hard-wires your learning (and then never forgets!). Just like when you've learned to ride a bike, you'll always be able to ride a bike. The same applies to every skill and thought process you have (because of the way the brain learns and then hard-wires the learning).

Your brain is complex. However, the simple job of learning a new skill or behaviour is what the brain does brilliantly. As your brain learns a new skill, the speed of the signals passing through your brain's nerve fibres used for your new skill, increase 100-fold.

This creates short cuts in your brain for decisions and actions that turn into habits – the brain follows the path of least resistance and a brain signal travelling at 200 miles per second will beat a signal travelling at 2 miles per second.

These 'brain short cuts' help save you time and energy (and the brain consumes a lot of energy). However, they also put you into autopilot!

Neuroscience 101...

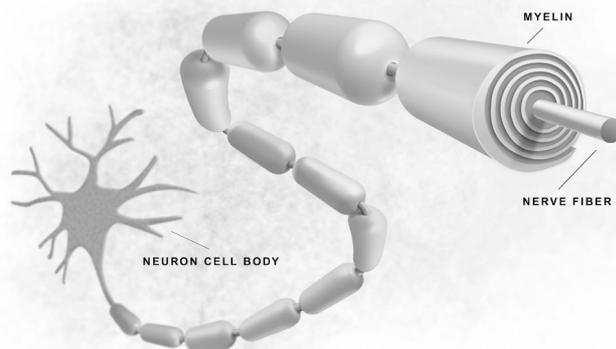
Go to a beach when on holiday, for the first time, and you'll wonder where to park yourself and your beach 'stuff'.

Because this is a new decision and new behaviour, the brain signal speed in the relevant nerve fibres for this decision is a modest 2 miles per second.

However, every time a signal passes down one of your brain's nerve fibres for a decision and an action your brain creates a wrap of insulation around the nerve fibre (called Myelin) – see the picture.

Just like the insulation you see around an electrical wire the nerve fibres in your brain are insulated by Myelin.

On your second visit to the same beach your brain fibres used for the decision have a myelin wrap that speeds the signal up and the chances are you'll be drawn to the same spot where you put yourself on day 1. Several more trips to the beach and several more myelin wraps on your brain's nerve fibres for this decision and action means the signal speed increases even more – we commonly call this 'habit forming'.



With many myelin wraps on a nerve fibre in your brain the signal speed increase to 200 miles per second through that nerve fibre. Making it less and less likely you'll visit any other part of the beach!

Choosing another spot on the beach will be resisted! This has serious implications for change.

Well-established habits will always win over new fledgling habits (unless you nurture new habits with new triggers – and remove the old triggers). It's important to know this if you want to install change in your business in the face of existing habits (habits that have hundreds of myelin wraps and signal speeds of 200 miles per second) it's important to realise it's going to be tough, really tough.

It's why we start out with good intentions and then resort to doing what we've always done. It's why so many New Year resolutions fail to last beyond the 14th of January! It's because of Myelin wraps, signal speeds, it's because 'Old Habits Never Die'.

Action worthy of your attention

Remove the triggers for the old gnarly habits and nurture the new triggers every day or every week until they are stronger/faster than the old habits.

Like Marshall Goldsmith says in his book about triggers:

"Achieving meaningful and lasting change may be simple – simpler than we imagine. But simple is far from easy."

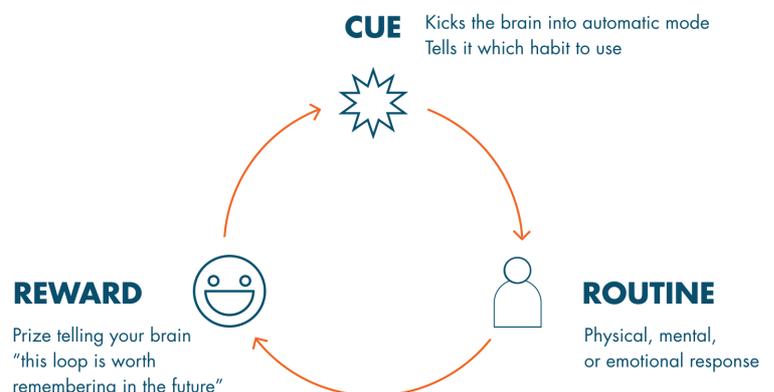
How triggers drive habits...

Habits are a mostly unconscious behaviour. We are unconscious of the trigger that prompts the behaviour and we're unconscious of the resulting behaviour habit. We're mostly on 'autopilot'.

- A trip to the petrol station triggers a chocolate bar purchase (choose a garage where you can pay at the pump)
- A 'ping' from your mobile phone triggers you to stop working to see who's text you (switch off notifications)

Thinking you can beat the power of triggers and habits is like thinking you can push water uphill.

Only when you choose your work environment triggers do you turn the habit wheel to your advantage – Trigger; Behaviour; Reward (Result).





Working Triggers

Support tools and resources

Change is hard...

Change is hard because the brain hard-wires habits. New behaviours are struggling against well-established, myelin-coated, hard-wired habits.

Which is why you have to **remove the work-environment triggers that stimulate the habits you want to stop** and **install the work-environment triggers that stimulate the new work habits you want to encourage**.

The better the triggers the better the behaviours and habits and results. Like Aristotle is quoted as saying:

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

So, get your work-environment triggers to help you (rather than hold you back).

3. Is 'good enough' mostly OK?

There's a significant problem with 'good enough' standards.

Good enough isn't a bad thing all the time but it does undermine your results in certain areas of your behaviours and your team's behaviours.

However, in many areas of life, chasing perfection is a fool's errand, or at least a poor use of our time. A good enough mustard for your cheese or ham sandwich is probably ok with you and won't make much difference to the rest of your life! Hours taste-testing every mustard on the gourmet shelf won't appeal too much. Chasing that last bit of improvement is not worth the time or effort. It will not significantly increase our happiness or satisfaction.

In some areas 'good enough' is a real problem.

The problem with 'good enough' begins when this good enough attitude spills beyond our marketplace choices and into the things we say and do.

Do you want to treat your spouse in a 'good enough' way? Do you want to deal with an aged parent or a child in a 'good enough' way? Do you want to deal with a customer in a 'good enough' way when they buy from you or query your pricing or delivery timing?

In these situations, 'good enough' disappoints people, creates distress where there should be harmony and results in break downs that can be costly in time, money and stress.

'Good enough', can end up destroying relationships (and profitability).

Higher behavioural standards are needed.

And, if your behaviours – what you say and what you do – are triggered by your work environment, it makes sense to ensure you have high-quality environmental triggers triggering high-quality (habitual) behaviours.

Are you treating your work environment seriously enough?

Do your work environment triggers support the best performance or just 'good enough' performance at work?

What about your desk or office environment, what about your computer desk-top environment, or your diary work environment – are you treating it seriously enough?

A regular review of the visual, auditory and structural work triggers (once a quarter or at least twice a year) will stop you ignoring the vital behaviour prompts that support your business success.



Working Triggers

Support tools and resources

A customer perspective

If some Amazon customers now get deliveries the same-day they order products online, your customer expectations around your delivery timescales change – you have to change your work environment triggers and structures to prompt new habitual behaviours to adapt to your customers' needs.

There's a café we no longer visit regularly because they are not conscious of the customer environment triggers – their toilets have not been upgraded in a long time which triggers us to wonder if cleanliness is as high as it should be in the kitchen.

A worker's perspective

Your workers' expectations change too. Fail to change your work environment and you risk losing good employees, good customers, revenues and profits. Allowing your work environment to stay the same is too risky.

4. Avoid depletion and, like a Duracell Bunny, “keep going for longer!”

If you were in prison, but up for early release, would you want your parole hearing to be in the morning or in the afternoon?

The real question is: When would the parole board be more depleted?

In 2011 a study of 1,100 decisions by an Israeli parole board showed the power of depletion on decision-making. Not physical depletion but psychological and emotional depletion.

Researchers discovered that:

- Prisoners who appeared before the board early in the morning were granted parole **70 percent** of the time.
- Prisoners appearing late in the day were approved only **10 percent** of the time

There was no meaningful pattern—no bias or malice among the three Israeli board members—except the time of day.

An afternoon hearing would give you **ONLY** a 1 in 10 chance of getting home to your loved ones thanks to early parole. In the morning you’d have a 7 in 10 chance! 700% more likely!!!

The arduous work of deciding prisoners’ fates all morning wore down the board members, so by the afternoon they chose the easy course of not deciding at all; they let the majority of prisoners finish their sentences. Here’s what Marshall Goldsmith (author ‘Triggers’) has to say about depletion:

“Unlike being physically tired, however, we’re usually unaware of depletion. It’s not like engaging in strenuous physical activity where we expect to feel the weariness in our muscles—and take time out to rest.

“Depletion, like stress, is an invisible enemy. Until someone invents a body gauge to tell us we’re running on emotional empty, we can’t measure it, so we don’t appreciate how it’s grinding us down, affecting our behavioural discipline—and exposing us to bad judgment and undesirable actions.”

Big decisions, the most important or valuable action therefore should be a morning focus – before emails, before anything that might deplete your ability. So how about ensuring your systems and technology, your working protocols and structures support your people doing the big important jobs of the day first?

As explained in the Business Breakthrough report, triggers and structures can be used to limit decisions and actions and so help avoid unnecessary depletion – it’s why a shopping list and a recipe are so useful. It’s why the AA recovery engineer has the technology and the van set out to ensure he or she is still as helpful on the 8th recovery of the day as they are on the 1st.

Use triggers and structures at work to minimise or help manage depletion.

Limit the decisions, limit the variables and limit the time exposed to complex, highly emotional, challenging situations and you reduce the effects of ‘depletion’. You also help your people be more efficient and achieve a better result too.

5. Stack the odds in your favour...

Get your working environment to set you up for success. Get your working environment to 'trigger' behaviours that support your success.

As Marshall Goldsmith in his book 'Triggers' points out, triggers come in all sorts of shapes and sizes:

- Direct or indirect
- Internal or external
- Conscious or unconscious
- Anticipated or unanticipated
- Encouraging or discouraging
- Productive or counter-productive

In 'The Power of Habit' by Charles Duhigg the author points out 5 sources of triggers that cue our habitual behaviours:

- People
- Timing
- Emotional State
- Preceding Action
- Setting

Duhigg also points to the power of setting (environment) as a dominant source of habitual behaviour, citing the size of the popcorn box you order at the cinema as having the biggest influence over the volume of popcorn eaten during a film! Reduce the box size (setting) and you reduce (limit) your consumption.

You should also consider whether the triggers currently dominating your work setting are

- **Visual triggers** – anything your work team can see as likely to trigger a response or a habit
- **Auditory triggers** – ambient noises, language
- **Spatial triggers** – where things are placed
- **Olfactory triggers** – what people feel (temperature, humidity, etc) and what people smell

All these potential environmental triggers influence how your people respond, how they behave habitually and ultimately what results they deliver for you and your business.

6. Time to take charge of your work environment?

Your work environment constantly intervenes in the work you and your people do.

Outlook notifications, for example, are constantly distracting your people from the focused work they have planned to do. The smell of bacon wafts up from the kitchen, and we forget our doctor's advice about lowering our cholesterol. Our colleagues work late every night, so we feel obliged to match their commitment, and miss one of our kid's football games, then another, then another. Our phone chirps, and we glance at the glowing screen instead of looking into the eyes of the person we love. This is how our environment triggers undesirable behaviour.

Because our environmental factors are so often outside of our control, we can easily think there isn't much we can do about it. It's easy for us to feel like victims of circumstance.

And yet you can take control of your environment!

You can put half-fat rather than full-fat milk in your fridge to reduce fat consumption – you're managing your fridge environment.

You can switch off email notifications and help ensure your team stay focused before 10.30 every day.

You can take control of your environment.

Adam Peaty – Eat, Sleep, Swim...

Adam Peaty's goal since the Rio Olympics in 2016 has been Project 56 – being the first man to go under 57 seconds for the 100m breaststroke.

In the world Championships in South Korea June/July 2019 he achieved this and swam a new world record of 56.88, breaking his **own** world record by 0.22 seconds. He became the first person to break the 57-second barrier.

Peaty is the European, Commonwealth, World, and Olympic champion in the 100m breaststroke.

Peaty gets up at 6am to train, completing three two-hour sessions a day, gym sessions, psychology sessions, six days a week. Then he's in bed each night by 9pm.

So, what is it that makes Adam Peaty remarkable?

Yes, he is talented, yes, he works hard, BUT he was successful in part thanks to Mel Marshall his coach. Peaty was already World and Olympic champion and world record holder when they started Project 56. What was needed was an environment change. So, Mel and Adam left the City of Derby swimming club and went down the A6 to Loughborough where the environment was a significant step up – an environment that triggered a number of small changes that helped them achieve 56.88!

Click here to learn how Peaty's working environment has EVERYTHING to do with his success...

<http://bit.ly/AdamPSWIMMER>

7. Identifying your triggers, try this exercise and remember – we always have a choice...

Try this powerful exercise:

- Pick an outcome goal that you are pursuing – increased sales calls per day, increased on-time deliveries or something that's directly connected to your customer perceptions of your business
- List the people and the situations that influence the quality of your performance
- List the behaviours that result in the current level of performance
- List the triggers that prompt the current behaviours
- Now decide whether each of these triggers and behaviours are encouraging or discouraging, productive or counterproductive?
- If you're falling short of your goal, this simple exercise will tell you why
- Then open the discussion about which triggers and behaviours to remove and which triggers and behaviours you should install

If nothing else, you'll get to understand what's triggering current behaviours and what you can do to remove or install triggers that get you the behaviours/habits and results you want to encourage.

This exercise can:

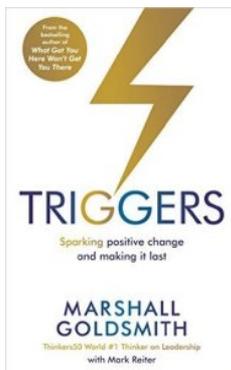
- make us smarter about specific triggers and
- help us connect them directly to our behavioural successes and failures. It's a reminder that, no matter how extreme the circumstance, when it comes to our behaviour, we always have a choice about how our work-environment stimulates behaviours

8. The book and other resources

Check out the book by Marshall Goldsmith – ‘Triggers’ – Creating behaviour that lasts – becoming the person you want to be.

In this book Goldsmith shows how we can overcome the trigger points in our lives and enact meaningful and lasting change. There is no doubt that change is hard, no matter how urgent and clear the need.

Knowing what to do does not ensure that we will actually do it.



The Harvard Business Review made this book one of their top business books to read and writes:

“Simple truths, often forgotten, beautifully constructed into something all of us can use. As with all things, reading solves nothing, it is action that moves us forward. The minor genius of this work is the offering of a way to do it that is engaging and achievable”.

Here’s the link to purchase the book: <http://bit.ly/triggersmg>

Check out this video by Marshall Goldsmith – inspiring us to be who we want to be...

Some of our inner beliefs can trigger failure before it happens. They sabotage change by cancelling its possibility! Discover how to recognize these sabotaging beliefs and learn what you can do about them. <http://bit.ly/Triggersvideo>



Triggers: Why don't we do what we know we should do?