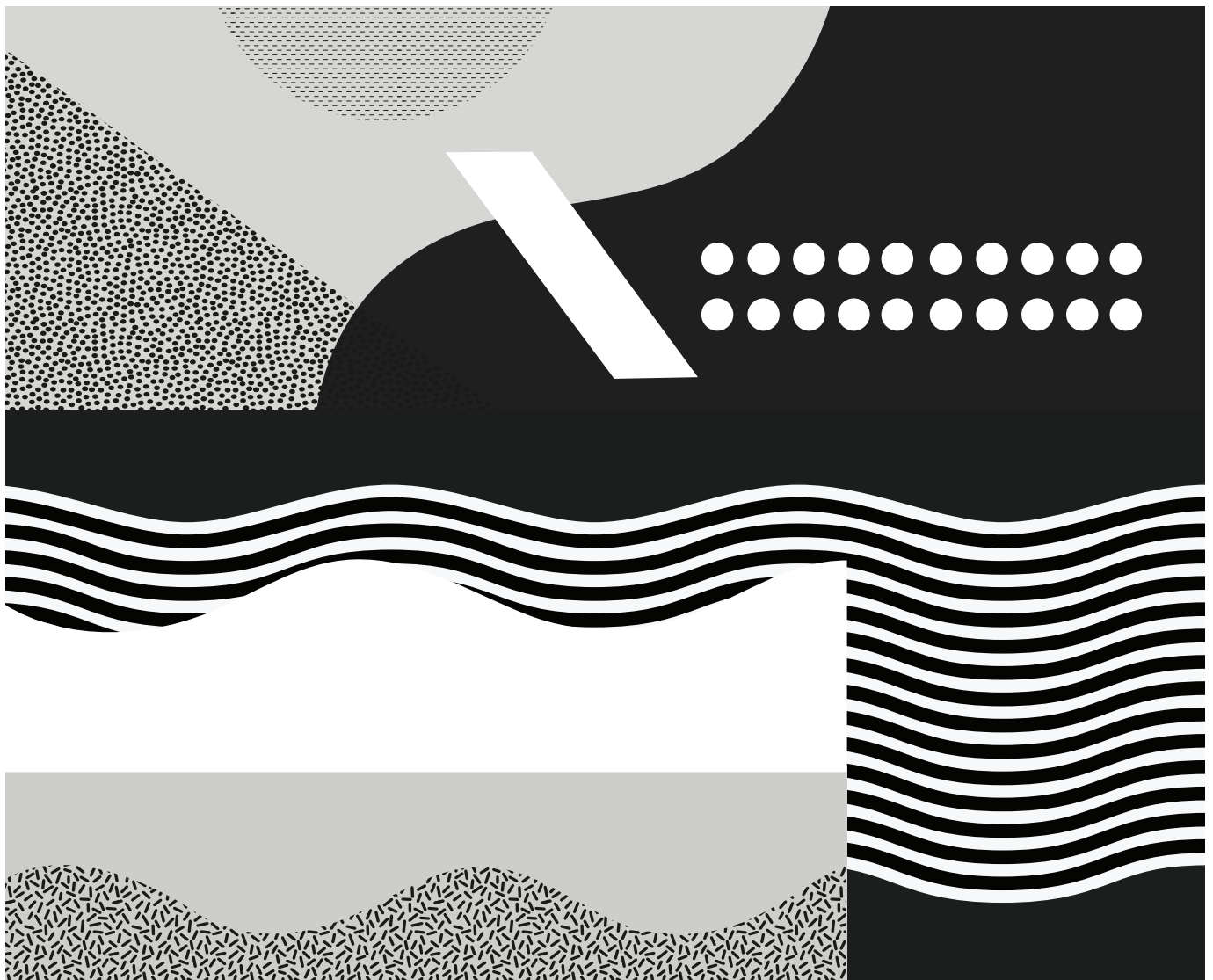# MINDSPACE

Helping Supporters Choose – putting the science into cultural fundraising

By Marina Jones, Dana Segal and Bernard Ross

DecisionScience

FOREWORD

Arts Council England has long-been curious about the possibilities that arise from cross-pollinating ideas from different disciplines. What might corporate businesses learn from artists and their creativity? How would policy-makers shape public services if they saw them through the lens of people's wellbeing? So we were particularly excited to support this exploration into how insights from neuroscience and behavioural economics might inform the ways that arts organisations fundraise.

A cohort tested principles and theories of decision science which though commonplace across other industries are not yet so widely used in ours. They found simple and effective strategies: retail offers made customers more loyal and increased their spending, the positioning of signage and donation boxes had signifi ant impact on income, and the use of good storytelling when making a monetary ask unlocked more funding. The latter is a particularly powerful insight because the arts are well-placed to tell meaningful stories – so how then might we use this skill to inspire further giving and sponsorship?

The Arts Council invests public money in artists, arts organisations, museums, and libraries. Whilst this is often the foundation of support for our sector, Trusts and Foundations contribute much, as do donations from individuals. We support organisations to drive income from the public, partners and donors. This mixture of income alongside new collaborations add to the quality and the diverse range of work that is produced.

Earlier this year we published our strategy Let's Create, in which we set out our vision to create a country in which everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We stated our commitment to help organisations be ready to respond to future challenges, to maximise their income and to become financially resilient. This work here exemplifies the creative thinking we need to help deliver on that commitment. New ideas and innovation around fundraising will ensure arts and cultural organisations continue to make great work that can be enjoyed by more people everywhere.

Dr. Darren Henley
Chief Executive, Arts Council England

MINDSPACE

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND

What's now?

Those of us who love and value the arts and culture recognise that private support is vital. Not just because it makes the arts more sustainable, but also because private support for culture needs to be part of our public mandate. One very practical way we can establish this mandate and deliver sustainability is by securing gifts from individuals as well as agencies such as companies and foundations. Individual gifts come in a range of formats from £1 dropped in a collection box by a mother delighted she can bring her children to an engaging museum, to a £30 a month regular donation to sustain a theatre company, to the £10M gift of an entrepreneur to deliver support for emerging artists.

Fundraising is not new to the arts – there is a long history of private support stretching back beyond the Medicis. But the reality is that despite significant efforts in the last decade to increase public support for the arts and culture it has not increased as much as it needs to. This is in contrast to the massive gains that, for example, higher education has made. (In 2019, 37 UK donors made gifts of over £1M to HE amounting to 48% of total High Net Worth Individual (HNWI) giving. Arts and culture lagged significantly behind, securing just 15% of HNWI gifts.) And yet arts and culture touches many more lives, and perhaps touches them more deeply, than higher education. The implication is we need to up our game and move beyond the existing techniques and approaches. It's not just big gifts. Many of our most successful charities rely on small regular donations of £20 a month from individuals. And many of these donors are giving to causes that do not affect them directly – homelessness, women's rights, animal protection and more. We need to tap into that same field of altruism and philanthropy, especially from those whose lives we enrich.

What's next?

Decision science offers that set of techniques. This book provides an introduction to one way to implement these techniques, which is important for two reasons. First, these approaches are based in science rather than anecdote and wishful hope. Second, these techniques are already in use in the commercial world to sell us goods and services, and in use by successful mainstream charities to encourage supporters to become donors.

This 'How to…' book is one product of the world's largest experiment in cultural fundraising run over six months, October 2019 until March 2020. The experiment was designed to help cultural organisations throughout England to trial new techniques to engage supporters and potential supporters to make gifts, to make more gifts, or to increase their gift level. Eleven agencies took part and some of the experiments they undertook are recorded as case studies here. (You can find out more about the experiments on page 57.) And you can find out more about using decision science in your work at www.decisionscience.org.uk. The project drew on the latest thinking in behavioural economics, neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. And the guide is designed to provide a powerful practical toolkit for fundraisers, arts campaigners, marketing managers, artistic directors and others.

What is decision science and why is it important?

People decide to donate. Traditional decision-making theories start with the assumption that people are rational and make decisions based on facts, assessing costs and benefits. With this logic simply producing impact reports on the social and economic benefits of the arts and culture, or explaining the need for support, would lead donors to offer support.

This approach might work with public bodies or with agencies like foundations or corporations. But this assumption of rationality doesn't explain much of general human behaviour: why we eat what's harmful, or buy a product we don't need, or partner with the wrong person. It also doesn't explain why we help strangers in trouble, give blood, or make donations to causes we have no direct connection with.

Two deciding systems

Underpinning this science is a model developed by Daniel Kahneman, Nobel laureate, that identifies two mental systems we use to make decisions – see below. System 1 is fast, subconscious, intuitive and emotional: it's our autopilot most often engaged in philanthropy. System 2 is slow, conscious, reflective and rational: it's our pilot used for investment.

Since we make around 27,000 decisions a day, we mostly use System 1– it's faster and takes less effort. We use it to make decisions on everything from what socks to wear to how much to put in the donation box at the museum. System 2 checks those decisions, usually endorses them, and sometimes modifies or stops them. MINDSPACE offers a framework clarifying how to engage your supporters' System 1.

System	1	2
Characteristics	• Fast, effortless, unconscious • Looks for patterns • Creates stories to explain events	• Slow, effortful, conscious • Looks for logic • Uses analysis to explain events
Advantages	• Responds quickly in a crisis • Comfortable with the familiar • Makes associations	• Demands consideration • Weighs up pros and cons • Establishes consequences
Disadvantages	• Jumps to conclusions • Unhelpful emotional responses • Makes 'mistakes' unconsciously	• Slow to decide • Requires energy and effort • Becomes tired thinking

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This "How to…" guide is designed to:

- provide background to some of the fundraising and income generation experiments that we ran, and some of the results produced
- offer a model, widely used to design and deliver decision science impact – MINDSPACE – that we used during the experiments
- share examples of resources – from books to websites – and agencies that can help you develop your own experiments

About MINDSPACE

There are a number of models that can help design and deliver your improvised supporter engagement process. (See Resources, pages 52-55, for an indication of these.)

We've chosen a widely used model that uses the mnemonic MINDSPACE to structure this guide – the same model we used to plan and deliver the experiments. If you're thinking about developing a decision science-based approach to your fundraising use MINDSPACE as checklist to develop your idea, design your value proposition or flesh out our supporter journey.

Each of the letters identifies a specific issue you should consider when designing your process. In every section you'll find the same elements:

- Definition: what does the etter in question stand for? For example, M is for Messenger.
- How to apply: some questions to help you to practically apply the approach.
- Links to: what other elements of MINDSPACE are connected to this one.
- Implications: how specifically it might impact on your fundraising.

We've shown throughout this guide how you can adapt MINDSPACE specifically to your fundraising. However, application of the framework goes well beyond that. It has proved useful in a wide range of settings – from designing interventions to promote healthy eating among children, to increasing levels of organ donations and encouraging BAME individuals to access higher education opportunities.

So, as well as improving your fundraising, look for ways to use MINDSPACE more widely such as to improve attendance by key communities, to sell more tickets, or even to make exhibits more engaging for visitors.

Professor Paul Dolan and some of the world's leading behavioural thinkers have developed the MINDSPACE framework to make it possible to apply psychological insights to non-academic settings.

MINDSPACE

MESSENGER
We are heavily influenced by who communicates

DEFAULTS
We tend to 'go with the flow' of pre-set options offered

AFFECT
Our emotions can powerfully shape our actions

INCENTIVE
Our brains are wired to maximise rewards and strongly avoid losses

SALIENCE
Our attention is drawn to novel and relevant to us

COMMITMENTS
We seek to be consistent in our actions

NORMING
Our behaviours are strongly influenced by others

PRIMING
Our actions are often influenced by other subconscious cues

EGO
We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves

MINDSPACE

What is it?

Messengers are an important part of your communication. The messenger could be someone with authority – formal or informal.

A classic *formal* messenger-led advert has a dentist in a white coat recommending the whitening toothpaste. For you as a cultural organisation your messenger could be an expert in your field (a curator or an artist), or someone with authority in your organisation (the CEO/Artistic Director, the Chair of the Board.) Or it could be someone famous and popular – consider the power of celebrities promoting and endorsing Comic Relief.

The *informal* messenger is often most effective when it is someone like us – another supporter. We tend to respond best to those who are most like us (same gender, age or background). A peer messenger signals supporting, especially donating, is a 'normal' activity done by normal people like us.

Our ability to engage with the message also depends on our view of how likable the messenger is. We don't listen to people we don't like. (When was the last time you listened to a speech by Donald Trump?) In this case we are subconsciously affected by the emotional reaction we have to the messenger and we can't evaluate the message content of the independent of the deliverer.

How to apply

- Which messenger will emotionally connect best with the audience to mobilise for each ask:

  - **A celebrity for a new appeal?**

  - **A curator for a restoration project?**

  - **A beneficiary or an outreach programme?**

  - **A legacy pledger and supporter like them?**

- **Can you include visuals that support who they are and their status/function as a messenger?** Does the curator look like a curator? Are they wearing gloves/a white coat? Does the donor look like the kind of person the target is- by gender, age etc?

- **Who are the messengers you use in trust applications or sponsorship proposals?** Use quotes and examples – e.g. a teacher speaking about the impact of your education programme; a sponsor might value an endorsement from another businessperson

- **How can you use this internally?** Who is the best messenger to talk about the restructure, the capital appeal, the new community project? Does the message have more emotional connection coming from the CEO? The Board? A beneficiary An audience member? A fellow staff member?

- **How can you connect the messenger for the thank you?** This may be different from the ask. Who will the donor connect with emotionally? If you're asked by the curator, then a thank you from them might be appropriate. If asked by a supporter like you, a thank you from the beneficiary migh have more impact. Or the Artistic Director might add gravitas.

- **How can you test and track the responses so you can see what impact the messenger has?** It may be worth testing different messengers on audience samples before a full roll-out

LINKED TO

Social norms – we are herd animals and want to act as the group does. There's a neurological basis to this. In a fMRI scanner we can see social rejection activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain – so not going with the herd is painful. The messenger should

Halo effect – here one salient characteristic (attractiveness, good presentation skills) has an overly positive impact on perception of other characteristic (kindness, integrity), or using a popular celebrity as a goodwill ambassador to make your cause seem attractive or normal
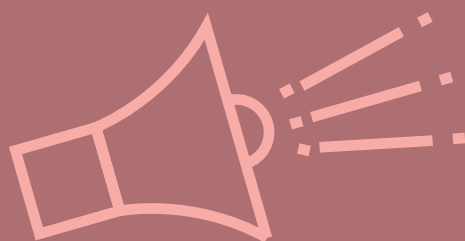
MESSENGER
We are heavily influenced by who communicates information

CASE STUDIES

1

Decorating the Christmas tree with shoes and love

Each year the **Royal Opera House** raises money for the dancers' shoes (They use over 6000 pairs a year). Audience members care deeply about the dancers and often write to thank them for performances. With their annual Christmas appeal, the Royal Opera House highlighted this emotional connection and invited a reciprocal exchange – donors were sent a pair of paper pointe shoes to decorate with messages for the dancers. These were then covered with glitter and used to

decorate the front of house Christmas tree. The shoes went out with a powerful message from the dancers who supporters emotionally connect with.

"I'd like to invite you to help us decorate our Christmas tree.

So many of you take the time to write personal messages to us, especially at Christmas, and my fellow dancers and I are deeply touched to read them. So this year we would like to thank you in a special way.

Every year we have a Christmas tree in the Royal Opera House, and this year we would like to decorate it with the thoughtful messages you send. You can use the shoes enclosed, and we'll hang them on our tree with a brightly coloured ribbon. I think it will be an inspiring sight with all your kind words on their glittering pointed shoe tags."

②

Testing the messenger

The Handlebards, the Shakespeare theatre company who tour on bicycles, tested four different messengers for their first online fundraising appeal. They created four videos each with a different messenger. The videos were emailed to comparable sections of their supporter list. The messengers were:

CASE STUDIES

1. An actor who appeared in their shows (likeability/recognised by audience)

2. A child and audience member (a beneficiary)

3. A donor (social norm/someone like them)

4. A celebrity actor (Adrian Scarborough – killing Eve (likeability/trusted to know quality)

In each of the videos the message and the primed ask amounts were the same so that messenger impact could be compared.

This was the company's fi st fundraising campaign and on a small sample size. With that caveat the best performing proposition in terms of number of gifts and gift size was

1. Famous actor   3. Young person

2. Actor   4. Donor
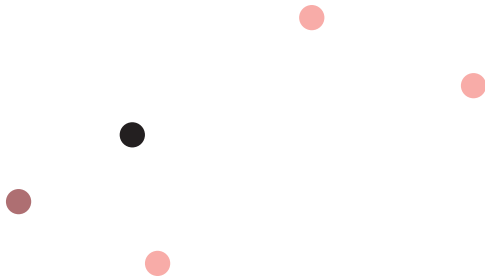
Implications

Who delivers your message is crucial. Be clear who your target market is and who the best messenger is. Most likely it will be the one who will emotionally connect with them.

- The Chair of the Board might be perfect for the VIP gala dinner, but not suitable for the parents of the youth group.

- For a legacy message you might choose a beneficiary, an actor who started their career in your youth theatre, or an audience member who has also committed a legacy gift.

Likeability is important – we listen to those that we like – but this is subjective and can change when their status or behaviour is judged differently.

- Some authority messengers might alienate core supporters as they are perceived to be not like them ("Well, they can afford to support – they're rich – not like me.")

- Five years ago, Kevin Spacey might have been the perfect theatre messenger, but times change. (And Prince Harry after his status change?)

Sometimes you may need multiple messengers.

- Fundraisers are not always the most effective messengers – although they might be choreographing who is delivering the message behind the scenes.

- You might want an appealing celebrity to front the appeal then position the fundraiser as the expert for a conversation on how to include a gift in will.

MINDSPACE

What is it?

Incentives are an important element in the fundraiser's approach. Overall, we seek rewards and avoid losses, and especially love the idea of FREE as it seems to offer a benefit t no cost. For example, trial samples in a store or even a trial period of a service at no cost.

We are also motivated to action when something appears rare or we might miss out without speedy action. For example, we don't want to lose the 'only 1 room left at this price' when booking hotels online. Notice this kind of offer is often coupled with a social norm effect of '5 people booked at this hotel in the last 24 hours.' In cultural fundraising the chance to try at no risk or investment is powerful (trial membership; free entry for children etc), as is scarcity of an item (a special ticket, unique 'backstage' event, a private view.)

Making progress towards completion can be an incentive. The lazy part of our brain doesn't like open endings, or doubtful conclusions. Showing progress towards a fundraising goal taps into this need for completion, resulting in more donations. Think of the classic church roof fundraising thermometer on a board. As you donate week by week the target line moves up. Interestingly perception of 'progress' is not evenly distributed. Research shows that supporters are more eager to contribute at the start of an online campaign and then most of all near the end. The middle shows a drop off – maybe suggesting being 'stuck.' Clearly articulating your target and showing your progress will encourage others.

How to apply

- **What can you add for free to encourage people to try or to do more?** A free fi st month to a membership? Or a free gift in the shop with every £20 spent? Or discounts with local retailers?

- **How can you frame your proposition as a potential loss?** 'If you don't act now this painting could be lost forever.'

- **How can you increase the scarcity factor and encourage action?** 'Only 10 tickets left at this price' or 'This is a limited edition/limited offer.'

- **Can you motivate your audience's natural inclination to reciprocate?** Perhaps by offering something to kick off a fundraising appeal? A bookmark? A postcard? (Be careful not to excite System 2 – 'is it worth it?')

- **Can you make the incentive salient- relevant -to the proposition?** A Scottish literature and literacy agency gave high value supporters personalised libraries of books, one a month, specially selected and signed by the CEO.

- **Can you find someone o match any gifts?** Knowing that a donation is going much further towards the goal motivates supporters and heightens the reward.

- **How can you keep your supporters engaged?** The relationship shouldn't stop with one gift. How can you use the endowed progress beyond the public fundraising thermometer? Can you send them a picture when the painting arrives at the museum with the curators smiling?

A word of warning

By giving tangible rewards for philanthropic behaviour you may be setting the expectation that supporters will always get something real in return, the key is to avoid System 2 kicking in and supporters asking "Is this worth it?"

LINKED TO

Framing: the choices that we make are influenced by how the information is presented. Discounts for early action do incentivise, but work best if they are framed as a potential loss suggesting a penalty for late payment.

Ego: we like to feel good about ourselves and this motivates us to act – whether this is the external incentive of your name in the programme/on the building or the internal incentive of knowing you helped create some great art or social good.

Social norm: reciprocity is a social norm. If someone gives us something we feel obliged to give something in return. (Even if it is just someone saying 'good morning' – we feel compelled to reply 'good morning')

INCENTIVE

Our brains are wired to maximise rewards and strongly avoid losses.
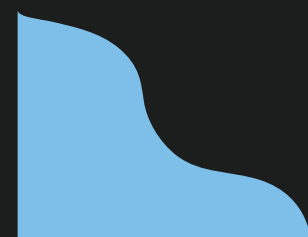
CASE STUDIES

1

Testing the power of FREE and FEW

One of our experimenters, **Magna Vitae**, run a range of cultural activities from festivals to leisure centres.

They tested the power of FREE to promote their swimming lessons on Facebook. The no-risk, no investment opportunity to try the leisure opportunity for children attracted attention from a previously unengaged audience.

They also tested FEW. When there were only 50 FREE places left, compared to 100, this increased enquiries and sign ups. People didn't want to miss out on an offer that was free and limited.
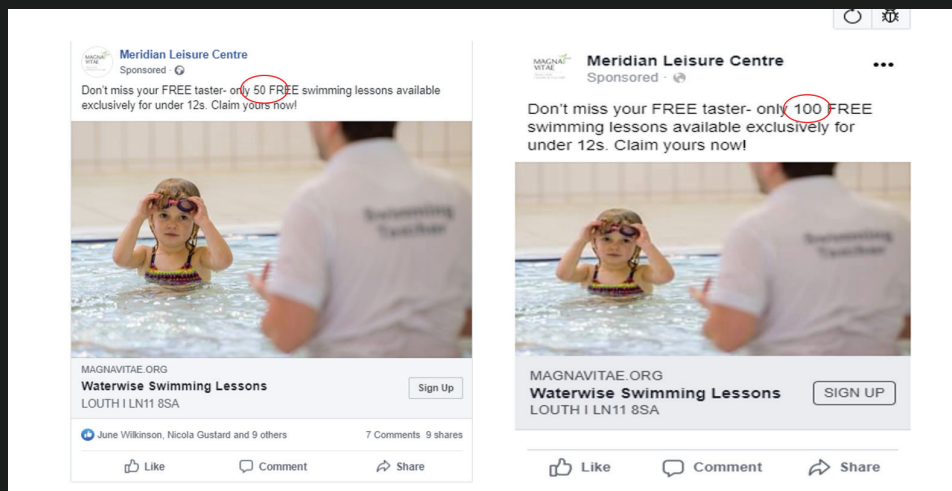
②

Create a sense of reciprocity

In order to improve donations in their donation box **Bluecoat**, Merseyside's contemporary art centre, put their free heritage guides on top of the box.

By moving the location of the heritage guides they set up the potential for a reciprocal exchange with their audience. Audience members who collected a free gift (the heritage guide) proved more inclined to make a gift (donation in the box) in return.
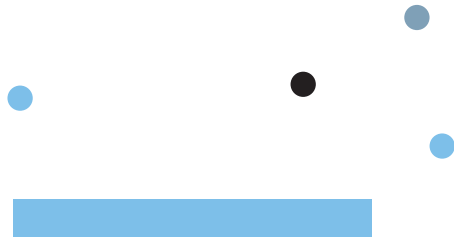
Implications

- FREE excites our brains. It's why we buy a BOGOF in the supermarket even when we don't need that much cereal. Use FREE to engage people in your proposition.

- Reciprocity also excites our brains. We are programmed to respond to a gift. If someone sends a Christmas card you feel a need to send one back. If there is a funder who matches their gift this enhances the psychological reward for the donor.

- A supporter's sense of agency can be heightened when they can see the direct impact their gift, makes in making progress in or completing the campaign.

- Membership can function as an incentive through the **Endowment effect**. Here we value something more if we feel it is ours. Once enjoying the reward of membership, a supporter may see giving it up as a loss. Help potential members imagine enjoying membership, the exhibition, the performance. Emphasise the possible loss if they don't renew, as well as the benefits.

MINDSPACE

What is it?

We take our understanding of social norms from the behaviours of others. This means that both good social behaviours (e.g donating blood) and bad ones (e.g illegal music downloading) can develop and spread rapidly, if they are normalised, because individuals see others doing them. We do this because we want to be part of a bigger group, and we don't like feeling alienated from those around us. It's a human trait we have had for millennia – from a time where being alone meant a high risk of being left with no food or shelter.

In modern times the result of going against the grain might not be as extreme as the above. But we still feel it strongly if the group is big enough and consistent in its behaviour. And we can override what we would do if we were alone. Think for example of the Bystander effect – where the larger the crowd of people, the less likely anyone is to act. (Look up the Kitty Genovese case – though note the results are now seen as more nuanced.)

In the Bystander effect we assume someone else is helping. And because we all tend to make this assumption it means that no one acts. While it might seem on the surface that placing a supporter list with your biggest donors and foundations on your theatre, gallery or website is normalising giving, to an individual audience member, the reality is that they are more likely to think 'others with more money than me have stepped in, therefore they don't need my support'.

Another implication is that sometimes we simply follow the crowd because it's easier for others to make the decisions for us, saving us a precious bit of cognitive brain space. Have you ever uttered the phrase 'I'll have the same' in a restaurant with friends? Has anyone else said it after you ordered too? Ever gone to a Pay What You Like event at a fringe festival, seen others get out notes from their wallets and suddenly rush for yours, even if you had already decided you didn't think it was worth more than the change in your pocket? That's social norming in action.

How to apply

- **What's the norm we are trying to socialise at this moment?** Is it clear, repeated and framed as a behavior and group the prospects can relate to?

- **How can we make our supporters feel part of a defined philanthropic group?** What messages and incentives will promote engagement?

- **How can we demonstrate that other people have supported?** What case studies, images and quotes can we use to normalise this request?

- **How can we make the 'norm' feel as close as possible?** Can we frame our norming within a phrase like "this month," "this week," or "today," to bring it closer?

- **How can we encourage supporters to bring their friends onboard?** What updates and or information makes them see others they know have supported?

LINKED TO

Messenger: who is promoting the norm, and how they are connected to the supporter you are addressing, can strengthen the social influence. This is particularly powerful in legacy giving – other pledgers speaking of the value of a gift is more likely to influence others.

Defaults: presenting the specific norm or action you want as an already prescribed/filled out piece of information stops our brain from having to think too hard. It supports us to immediately action the social norm instead (see Case Study 2 below). You should automatically promote a gift option.

NORMING
Our behaviours are strongly influenced by others.

CASE STUDIES

1

Getting groups to donate online

An effective technique adopted by **Change.org** was introducing social norming to their online ask. Once someone signs a petition, they are asked if they'd like to donate to encourage others. As it does this, it offers three powerful pieces of social norming, along with some decision science tools, to encourage you to chip in:

- **It tells you how many people, in real time, have shared or donated in support of this petition.** This signals that you are part of a bigger movement, an essential feeling to draw on.

- **It shows you pictures and names of other people like you who have acted.** This makes you think that if Lucy Warren shared and Emily Evans contributed £6, you should probably do something too.

>> Continue >>

CASE STUDIES

>> *Continue* >>

- **It pre-loads a socially normal amount.** This removes any extra decision making needed and prompts you to action your donation with one click, instead of taking any more time or giving you too many options that would cause you to overthink.
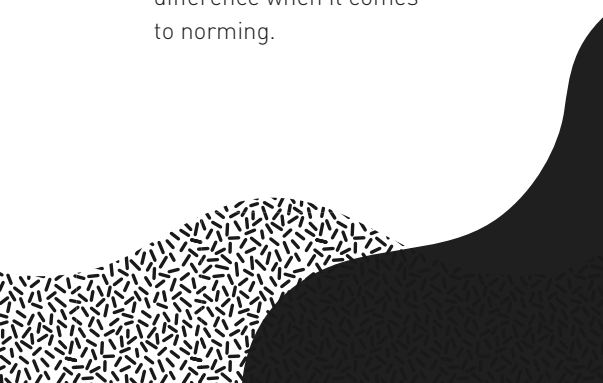
②

Getting people to donate after a show

Northern Ballet normalised giving as part of a performance, having never asked people for donations at The Stanley and Audrey Burton Theatre before. Key was a direct ask on the night from the CEO, explaining donating was a normal thing done by many guests. There were also fl ers in the ticket envelopes. Guests saw others making gifts in the envelopes, which nudged them to follow. To date, over £1,500 has been donated either at or following an opening night event. Historically few donations were made so this is a significant increase using social norming techniques.

Implications

- **Let people know what the desirable norm is.** You need to remind supporters what the appropriate or desirable behaviour is at every point in their relationship with you. If it's signing up to your mailing list, tell them. If it's making a regular donation, let them know.

- **Relate the norm to the person as much as possible.** Use examples of other people who are 'like them', 'with them' or 'amongst them' to make the behaviour seem typical in the crowd. Phrases such as 'most people like you' can influence behaviour more powerfully than an ask with no social norm.

- **Make the norm close to the supporter.** The difference between a phrase like 'others like you this year' vs 'others like you today' makes all the difference when it comes to norming.

MINDSPACE

What is it?

Our 'lazy' brains tend to prefer options that involve less cognitive load or System Two-type thinking. This preference has a significant impact on our decision-making. Defaults help to overcome inertia – our tendency to do nothing when faced with choices we are unclear about. Defaults 'nudge' people towards choices we want.

One example of the power of this approach to deliver social good involves countries who instigated a default in favour of organ transplants. There is a sizeable difference in the results from *opt out* schemes (default: you *consciously refuse* to allow your organs to be used for transplants) and *opt in* schemes (default: you *consciously decide* you want them used.) In 2020 the UK moves to opt out. After years of highly targeted campaigns – and despite the fact that many people claimed that organ donation was a good thing – only 20% of people had chosen to opt in. This led to a significant shortage of life saving organs. Using 'opt out' defaults will save more lives.

You probably unconsciously use defaults on a regular basis. There are many search engines available, such as Yahoo or Bing. However, more than 75 % of searchers – including you? – use Google. Mostly this is simply because Google is the default search engine on many browsers.

Donation defaults are more like the transplant example above. They need to align with your prospect's values and beliefs. ("I think your cultural agency is

worthwhile and I'd like to support you. Help me do it without too much work.")

It's not enough simply to create a default- you need to create the context in which it will work: MINDSPACE helps create that context. At their simplest defaults can involve asking for an add-on donation when customers are buying a ticket for an event. Importantly we are seeking to change behaviour here – from customer (= does this purchase represent value for money?) to a supporter (= do I care about this cause and want to make a gift?).

Defaults tend to work through three Es. First, they reflect an implicit **Endorsement** in amount and gift subject from the perceived messenger – the artistic director, the curator, the head of education, or another donor. ('Please give £10 towards ensuring a school student can enjoy theatre.') So, it's important that these endorsers should be associated with the proposition. (See **Messenger**)

Second, they work because staying with the default choice is **Easier** than switching away. People don't know what a reasonable or appropriate gift is – "How much would really help?" By guiding them you make their life easier. Otherwise they have to make a guess. Or decide to do nothing since they don't know.

Third, they work because they **Endow** the supporter with one or more selected options. The donation is often "My gift of £xxx." Behavioural economics suggests people are less likely to want to give something up, now that it's 'theirs.' (See **Endowment effect** and **Incentives**.)

How to apply

- **What is proper and ethical to encourage supporters to do?** Does the approach you have fit with your values and those of your supporter?

- **How can you build on what's called the Goldilocks effect?** Make the default option you want attractive to the prospective supporter – generally put it in the middle of three choices.

- **What opportunities can you take to use the three Es – Endorsement, Ease and Endowment?** They will help make your preferred option attractive.

L I N K E D   T O

Normal: we like to act in concert with others who share our sense of identity. Creating this sense among our supporters is important. Make it feel like responding to the default gift is normal. For example, citing that 75% of legacy pledgers are 'Friends of...' – like them.

Priming: the sequence in which information is given can make a significant difference to the perceptions we have of subsequent information – or even the decisions we reach. Create an architecture- a sequence of information – that encourages your supporters towards the choice you would like them to make.

DEFAULTS

We tend to 'go with the flow' of pre-set options we are offered

CASE STUDIES

①

Divine Defaults

English Touring Opera have a terrific set of donation defaults that help supporters meet their goals and represent a great way to meet the company's need. Below is a gift opportunity presented after you've bought a ticket. At the top is an endorsement from a fellow donor, below a set of three of attractive choices each with a defined outcome, and the opportunity to enter your own amount if you choose to.

rt ETO

ual operas along with box office certs; good singing, and venues nea
support – Richard Williams, ETO Silve

ow much would you like to donate?

| £ 60.00 | £ 120.00 |
| £ 240.00 | £ Amount |

How £120.00 will help:
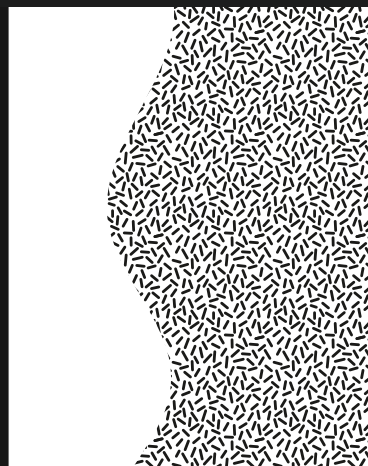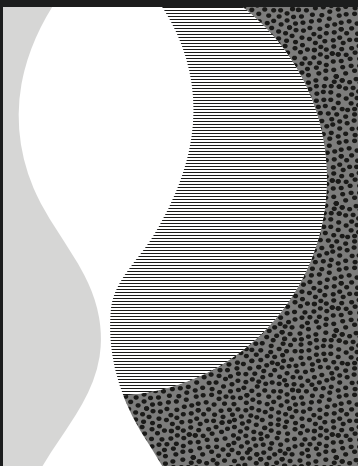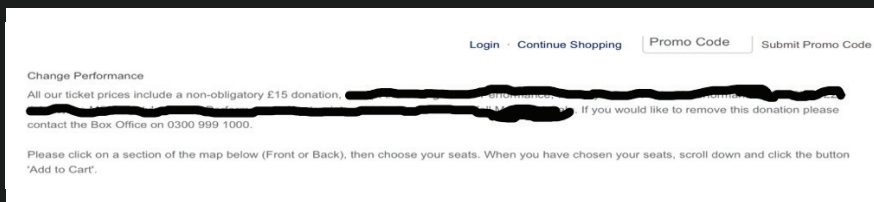£120 could help ETO send 12 teacher's packs to enhance the experience of 12 school performances

CASE STUDIES

(2)

Dodgy Defaults

Below 'Another' Opera Company – a real example – shows how to use defaults unethically. Here the default is you have a make a 'non-obligatory £15 donation' when buying a ticket. (Odd wording even for a default.) They step over an ethical line when you couldn't remove it during the transaction and were obliged to call a landline to undo the 'donation.' This worked in terms of income. (The Artistic Director, when challenged, boasted "80% of people don't call up.") It works but it shows no concern for anyone vulnerable and isn't ethical.

Login · Continue Shopping   Promo Code   Submit Promo Code

Change Performance
All our ticket prices include a non-obligatory £15 donation, ~~...~~ ....performance... ~~................................~~ ... If you would like to remove this donation please contact the Box Office on 0300 999 1000.

Please click on a section of the map below (Front or Back), then choose your seats. When you have chosen your seats, scroll down and click the button 'Add to Cart'.

Implications

A word of warning. Defaults are powerful and useful. But they offer opportunities for manipulation. See the 'Dodgy Defaults' case study.

Assuming you are keen to be ethical when fundraising:

- **Create attractive default settings:** use defaults that help people find the simplest, easiest route to a gift decision. Offer options but suggest one as the most popular, giving supporters the social reassurance to choose it.

- **Ask people to choose before moving on:** with EasyJet once you've booked a fight, you're offered the opportunity to select a hotel, rent a car, etc. You have to skip these to progress. The National Theatre, for example, adds a % of your ticket cost to the price. Frame your ask so people have to choose not to make a gift.

- **Make the whole process seamless:** avoid taking people off your own website to make a gift. Allow them to stay on your website, make a gift, and be thanked all in the same setting. Make it a single seamless process.

- **Encourage longer term commitment:** where you can, make the payment process a default – for example, a regular direct debit. Once set up supporters have to actively cancel this instruction. Other forms of support may require annual renewal – giving supporters a point for System 2-type reflection

- **Use the Goldilocks Effect:** you're probably aware of the fairytale heroine who always chooses the middle option. We also tend to choose the middle – reasonable – option. Offer three gift choices – not too many, not too few – with your target choice in the middle.

MINDSPACE

What is it?

When we design information-words, images, or even experiences – we should work to make them salient to the target audience. As fundraisers we shouldn't assume that simply giving supporters more information automatically increases engagement.

The challenge is that every day we are bombarded with information and stimuli of various sorts. Dealing with all this data increases our cognitive load, so our energy conscious brains try to avoid a constant analysis and assessment. To cope we unconsciously filter out lots of information. When we use salience the goal is to create a reaction and a connection

Create a reaction: Marmite's marketing slogan is *Love it or hate it*. 'Marmite' has become a descriptor of anything that strongly polarises opinions. While most brands try to appeal to the largest number of people, Marmite actively promotes the idea some people dislike the product.

Here they're using information that might appear not to be in their interest, but at the same time playing into the confirmation bias of the spread's supporters, and their sense of being an in-group. The worst emotion is indifference.

Create a connection: The P&G Pampers and UNICEF tie- in is perhaps the most famous Cause Related Marketing (CRM) campaign of the last 20 years. In 2008 two adverts were developed. Both involved the basic premise that for every pack of disposable nappies sold, a child was vaccinated against tetanus. But they had different messages.

The first said "One pack of Pampers equals one life-saving vaccine." This was enormously successful, raising income for UNICEF and boosting Pampers sales. It provided 150 million vaccines. The second advert was identical, apart from the strapline. "Together we can help eliminate new-born tetanus." It was much less successful. Why? The slogan was more abstract, didn't include direct personal impact, and missed the emotional word lifesaving.

Make sure you don't focus on an abstract concept like 'the importance of the arts.' Instead emphasise elements which are salient to your prospects – "This precious local library that's been sharing the joy of reading to children in the town for over 50 years."

How to apply

- **Consider how to bring salience to bear in your fundraising?** Consider the BIG question "How can we make our case or proposition one that the potential supporter might **USE?** (Unusual, Simple, Easy)" Then consider these follow up questions:

- **Ask how can we provide reassurance?** Supporters can be sceptical and need to know your proposition will deliver impact. Be specific about what the money will do: "Your gift will ensure a class of 30 can experience the joy of Shakespeare."

- **How can we make our proposition more tangible?** The more concrete the proposition the better. "Meeting our core costs" is not concrete. "Paying skilled conservators to preserve the precious county records for 1860" is very concrete.

- **Can we connect with emotion?** Rather like the words 'Grandma's home-baked' adds value to 'cake,' a strong adjective like 'life-changing' adds emotional content to the more prosaic 'medical treatment.'

LINKED TO

Messenger: messengers are important to salience. We are more likely to recognise some messengers- perhaps because they have celebrity, or they are more like us, or are respected. For examples elsewhere see the impact of different messengers on impact and response in The Handlebards case study.

Default settings: defaults help people find the simplest, easiest route to a decision. Defaults may also imply that a specific option is the most popular, giving us the social reassurance to choose it. Consider adding a suggested percentage of the ticket amount as a gift when patrons check out. Make it clear what various specific amounts will do.
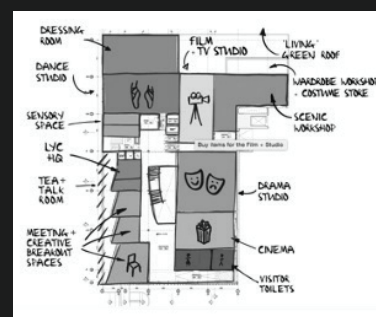
SALIENCE

Our attention is drawn to what is novel and seems relevant to us

CASE STUDIES

①

Make the ask immediate and relevant

When the **Lyric Hammersmith** in London ran their capital campaign, they allowed you to click on various parts of a virtual building and then to select the gift you wanted to make. See the screenshot below. Note that you can choose a specific gift – something very simple and practical and within your means. You could also 'gift' a gift for someone else.

Square Metre of Green Screen
4 Available

Quantity 1 @ £15 each

ADD TO BASKET >

>> Continue >>

CASE STUDIES

2

Use salient nudges

Bristol Museum was able to increase traffic to the shop and sales – up 18% on a comparable previous year. One product sold almost three times as much. What did they do?

- Gave a card in the café offering a small gift to anyone who went to the shop – which was the other side of the building

- Used handwritten cards on shop items signalling various messages e.g. "Our most popular crafts piece," "A terrific Christmas gift."

- Put messages on a large digital screen about how the museum's profits help protect and preserve local heritage.

These small nudges contributed to a significant pay off. Note also that the messages on gifting – to friends and the museum – were especially salient at Christmas time.

Implications

- In this case we can literally 'use' salience, People will pay more attention to ideas and information that we can USE:

   – Unusual: messages e.g. 'give your ex the gift of a cockroach this Valentine's day'

   – Simple: a memorable slogan e.g. 'make poverty history'

   – Easy: little effort e.g. 'add a donation here at the checkout'

- Our behaviour is greatly influenced by what our attention is drawn to. It helps make the brain work less hard. But you also need to make information make sense. For example, the size of the current council culture budget is more salient when expressed as an amount per resident than as the overall amount. And a local donor might be more impacted by the information that "the council spends half as much today as it did just 10 years ago on local art opportunities for children."

- Research demonstrates supporters can give two to three times more when an

intangible need is replaced with a specific impact. Some nice cultural examples of making your proposition or engagement device unusual and impactful include:

– Scottish Opera had high net worth supporters walk up several flights of stairs to the cheaper seats where most had never been to help them understand the need to make access easier for older patrons or those with disabilities.

– Oxford Museum of Modern Art sent corporate prospects a nail with a direct mail appeal asking for help to secure the kind of exciting and challenging art to be hung on the gallery walls

– The British Film Institute gave a potential supporter a piece of crumbling nitrate film with a clip from their favourite movie to show the impact of decay and the need for conservation.

MINDSPACE

What is it?

Priming, also referred to as 'pre'-suasion, shows that people's subsequent behaviour may be altered if they are first exposed to certain sights, words or sensations. In other words, people behave differently if they have been 'primed' by certain cues.

Priming works outside of conscious awareness, which means it is different from simply remembering things. It works by activating an association or representation in memory just before another stimulus or task is introduced. For example, a study done on telephone fundraisers showed that if the team shared stories about their cause at the beginning of their shift, they secured more than twice the number of donations over the phone compared to when they got straight to work.

Professor John Bargh of Yale University describes priming cues as "Whistles that can only be heard by our mental inner butler." Once called upon, these servants act on your pre-existing tendencies.

The same kind of priming cue can have both positive and negative consequences. Names, for example, can be a powerful priming tool for consumer behaviour. Mars chocolate bars saw sales rocket (pardon the pun) when the Pathfinder probe landed on the planet Mars in 1994. But poor old Corona beer lost an estimated a $120m in 2020 due to an entirely innocent association with the Coronavirus outbreak.

A complementary fundraising example happened in November 2019 when The Times & The Mail Online criticized the RNLI for spending donations on lifesaving programmes for people abroad. However, rather than putting supporters off, it raised awareness of those programmes amongst people who do care about international issues, priming them to support the cause.

How to apply

• **How can you sequence your ask?** MSF's success came by convincing people that the option of donation was easier than that of volunteering. What could you ask your supporter to do first, that makes the second ask (donating) easier? What's the supporter journey?

• **Where can you introduce the message?** Whether it's loo posters in a gallery asking for a gift, an email newsletter, or a social media post... tell people you're going to ask them for money before you do, and they'll be more primed to do it than if they were being asked with no warning.

• **What tools can I use the priming effect with?** Priming is most powerful when combined with another heuristic such as **social norming** or **commitment**. When testing one of those tools, see how you can incorporate the idea of priming into it in order to achieve better results.

• **Have I thought about every pre-moment of contact?** When you're planning a fundraising event, test strong visual priming cues on the signage before people even walk in, the invitation, even the envelope itself. All these moments are opportunities to prime your supporter for particularly good feelings or associations ahead of the day itself, which can create that 'inner butler' ready to donate on the night.

LINKED TO

Commitments: priming your supporter with a gift – virtual or 'real' – will encourage them to reciprocate that gift

Affect: priming your supporter with a specific emotion that will drive action, can be a powerful way to encourage them into action quicker

Norms: priming your supporter to think others have similar feelings, and acting in similar ways, can be a powerful way to inspire them into action

PRIMING

Our actions are often influenced by other subconscious cues

CASE STUDIES

1

The sequence matters

Medecins sans Frontières (MSF UK wrote one of their most successful fundraising DM pieces by using a powerful priming technique. They wrote directly to doctors and detailed the bravery and sadness that many doctors must face when leaving their children, family and loved ones to provide medical care in some of the most difficult and dangerous places in the world. This put the reader in a strong space of empathy – as a doctor themselves, with friends and loved ones, they could start to associate their own experience with that description.

They directly followed this narrative with two requests - the first was a question along the lines of:

"As a doctor, would you leave your friends, family and loved

>> *Continue* >>

CASE STUDIES

ones behind to go out into the field and support
those in areas of war or destruction with
essential medical support?"

The clever thing about this question, is that they
didn't strictly want people to say yes. What they
did want, was for them to respond to the
second question, which was:

*"As a doctor, could you support another doctor
who has left their friends, family and loved ones
behind to go out into the field an support those
in areas of war or destruction with essential
medical support?"*

By priming the readers with something they
could never imagine themselves doing, MSF
created the perfect conditions for empathy.
This priming would enable supporters to make
a choice that felt more within their means –
sponsoring another doctor in the field.

2

Priming people at rest

Bluecoat is Liverpool's centre for the creative arts.
Their fundraising aim was to increase donations from
individuals at key donation points. As a large space they
had many opportunities to 'prime' people in other areas
of their building, before anyone arrived at one of the two
donation boxes it was testing.

One of the small yet simple changes Bluecoat made
was adding posters of the donation boxes on the back
of the toilet doors. This small visual priming cue meant
that people were more ready to see the boxes when they
arrived at them, and therefore more likely to donate.
The results reflect this, with a 600% donation increase
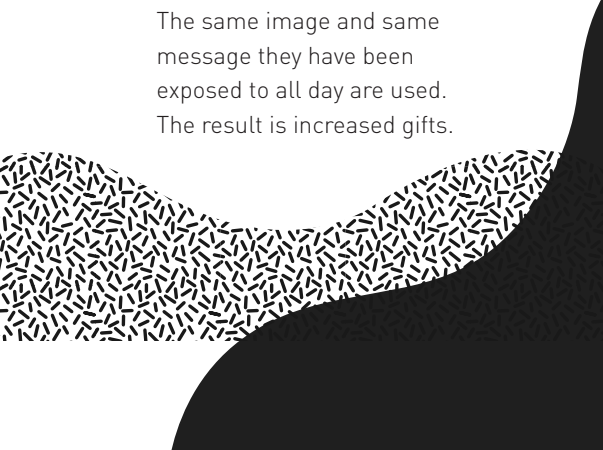within the first month.

Implications

- **Match the stimulus:**
research shows that the
best priming tools are the
ones that match the activity
using a visual priming cue
on fundraising sign, or an
auditory priming cue for
a face-to-face ask, will
yield better results. (For
example, instead of having
an important number spoken
by someone on a video in
an email appeal, have the
number written in a stand-
out colour instead).

- **Plant the message:**
Once you've identified th
priming message, plant it
across as many stages as
you can. A great example is
the UK Zoo that gives visitors
a badge with an animal
image when they sign up
for gift aid on their entrance
fee. The badge says,"I'm a
conservation supporter." This
image is repeated throughout
the zoo. And as visitors leave,
they are asked to consider
supporting conservation.
The same image and same
message they have been
exposed to all day are used.
The result is increased gifts.

MINDSPACE

What is it?

As humans we share some basic emotions. (Affect is simply another, more technical word, for emotions.) There's no definitive list of emotions but a common cluster would include fear, disgust, anger, happiness, surprise and sadness. Emotions are not considered, they are normally automatic, instinctive and super-fast. We never really have a neutral reaction to anything – anyone who has tried to name a baby, or a pet will have seen their own, and others, visceral and often irrational emotional reaction to names.

Emotions can be helpful. Facts and data can sometimes overwhelm us when our System 2 brain starts asking 'How do I know is this true?' Emotions can be one of our greatest assets as fundraisers.

Emotions are contagious – our brains have specific neurons that literally mirror emotions we see someone else experiencing. (This ranges from 'contagious' yawning to wincing when we watch someone stub their toe.) Empathy – the ability to share *and* understand the feelings of others is a key motivator for altruistic acts. Audiences, especially theatre audiences, will often 'get' empathy. We need to build on that.


How to apply

Emotion is what makes us take action. Music, dance, opera, paintings – move us. They make us cry, smile, question and surprise us. We need to connect our supporters with these emotions in our appeals. There are two key learnings from decision science here:

As fundraisers we too often appeal to the rational part of our supporters' psyche and explain the size and scale of a problem. This may be accurate – e.g. "70% of young people can't afford to attend theatre," and might work for institutional donors. But for individual supporters we would be better to appeal to their emotional side – which reacts quickly and automatically. It is this emotional charge that stimulates gifts.

A specific proposition works better for individuals. It is more vivid and tangible. The implication is it is more effective to tell the story of one young artist who, with a scholarship, might break through. Or a specific person with a disability denied access to your venue. (This is technically called the identifiable victim effect.) Supporters connect emotionally with the individual, and they can see the potential impact of their gift on that person. This is technically called agency.
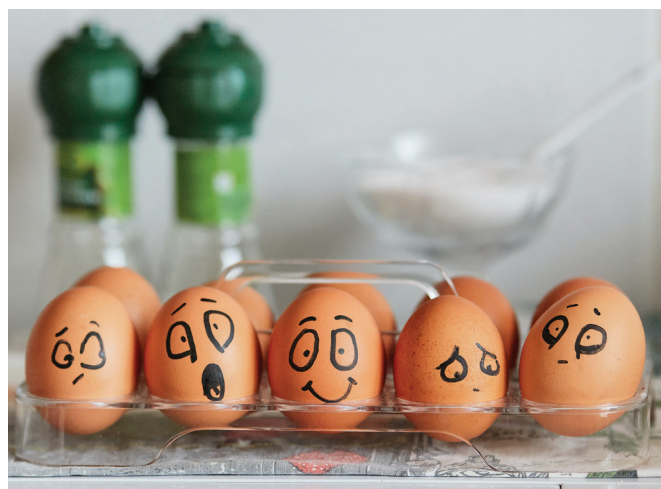
Supporter mood is influenced by every interaction with you, not just the artistic ones. If the event was great but the toilets a disgrace and the café staff surly, supporters are not going to be as receptive to your message.

The emotional response needs to be clearly linked with the action you want people to take. It is no use provoking outrage about lack of arts provision in a town without giving a supporter a mechanism to make a change-making a gift, signing a petition to the council, offering to be a volunteer. And remember the same thing may provoke different reactions in different people – for some a lack of arts provision makes them unhappy, for others it makes them angry. We need to use emotions carefully.

LINKED TO

Priming: our mood affects our reactions – being in a good mood primes good actions. You can use emotionally significant information to prime your audience positively. ("Do you remember the first time you heard an orchestra play? The shock the first time you saw a Picasso? The excitement of the community play?") Good priming questions help stimulate empathy.

Incentives: emotional and symbolic incentives are the key to activating System 1. Be careful when, for example, developing a membership scheme not to activate logical System 2. That may lead supporters to see the membership as just a transaction. ('Is this worth it?') You want to keep in System 1 ("How emotionally connected do I feel?")

AFFECT

Our emotions can powerfully shape our actions

1

Help John – one as an example of many

Tea, Cake and Art is a series of creative workshops for isolated older people run by **Newlyn Art Gallery. and The Exchange** in the South West. They focussed one behaviourally-informed version of their Christmas email campaign around John – a beneficiary who comes to the Gallery for creative workshops – and his testimony about the impact of the project on his life. The copy and images show John and the Gallery's Curator working together. The focus here is on the importance of empathy and the difference the individual supporter could make to John, as a typical beneficiar , being able to enjoy taking part in the workshops. The rational implication is that there are many people who might benefit. But the ocus was on one 'identifiab e victim.'

2

There'll be bluebirds over...

This **National Trust** used an appeal with a strong emotional connection to supporters: the fear of losing a national icon – the White Cliffs of Dover. The Trust explained to members it had the opportunity to purchase the land before developers could bid: it used scarcity and fear of missing out as **Incentives.** Following the call out to members, they received heartfelt postcards detailing supporters' stories – from early childhood memories of seaside holidays to stories of parents or grandparents who had been stationed nearby and fought in WW2. You could also 'buy' a piece of the cliffs and safeguard it with your image. The campaign raised over £1m in three weeks.

CASE STUDIES

1

2

White cliffs of Dover appeal raises £1m in three weeks

More than 17,500 people made donations to help National Trust buy 700,000 sq metres of clifftop land

▲ The white cliffs of Dover. Photograph: John Miller/National Trust/PA

A public appeal has raised £1m in three weeks to help the National Trust protect the future of the white cliffs of Dover.

Implications

- **What do you want people to feel? What is the emotion?** Excited? Inspired? Fearful? Disgusted? How does that match with the action you want them to take?

- **How can you prime people emotionally to have the most helpful philanthropic frame of mind?** Describing the excitement of the orchestra warming up as they play your new commission? Creating concern with the image of a precious artwork decaying if not conserved? The pleasure of feeling a book that will go into the library you supported?

- **How can you use as many senses as possible to evoke the emotion?** What sounds can you use – the actor's voice/the new violin being played? What smells – the props workshop/the backstage tour makeup scent? What touches – the fabrics in the costume store/the printed copy of the score they commissioned?

- **Which stories can you share about individuals impacted by your work to make a difference?** How did you enhance their agency? For example, can you share case studies of the individual impact of a gift on a specifi participant?

- **Can you build on people's desire to gift to others?** For example, add a "This donation is in honour of…" option to your proposition?

MINDSPACE

What is it?

With friends, family, in our public life or on our social media – we all seek to give a clear and consistent message about the decisions and actions we take. How often have you gone to the theatre show premiere or exhibition opening night even if you didn't really want to, but felt it would be inconsistent if you weren't there? Our own commitment to our consistency, and to be seen to be consistent, can be a powerful tool to drive action, particularly in relation to supporting cultural causes.

Our brains want to make sense of the world, to look for patterns. ('How did I handle this situation or a similar one before?') This bias towards consistency makes the world easier to understand. This same principle also applies to our perception of ourselves: we hate to be confronted with evidence that seems contrary to our sense of self. Experiments show that once we have made a choice, even about something relatively arbitrary, we then start to become more loyal to that choice, inventing all kinds of backward-looking rationalisations and explanations for it.

Regular giving or membership schemes can be an effective tool for establishing long term commitment and consistency in behaviour from supporters. Many of the most significant supporters of the arts such as Sainsbury's Family Trusts or Oglesby Charitable Trust have seen this commitment to giving run through generations of family members – that is how much we commit to being consistent.

Reciprocity is also an important principle when it comes to consistency and commitment. We are biased to return favours and pay back debts. So when someone offers us help, it creates a sense of obligation that we feel obliged to repay in our next interaction with them. This sense of obligation can be a powerful tool in fundraising, especially at fundraising galas or events where entertainment and gifts are being offered to supporters throughout the night (goodie bags full of donated pieces can be especially useful here).

These 'gifts' from the organisation create a nice environment but also a sense of obligation. The favour is most often returned by attendees through financial pledges and donations to the cause.

How to apply

- **Are you clear about what the consistent action is that you want?** Be clear on what the behaviour is you want and where you can match it to a connected behaviour by the supporter.

- **Can you indicate what the negative consequences might be of the person being inconsistent?** This will help you understand what emotions are driving the behaviour (positive or negative) and enable you to use those in your communications.

- **Who are they committing to?** Is the behaviour a commitment to your beneficiaries, our organisation, to themselves, or to other important people in their life? This information can help you decide who is best placed to remind them of their consistent behaviour.

- **How do they commit?** Be clear about what you are asking for at every point, and ensure you have a fundraising mechanism that enables a long-term commitment (such as a monthly / annual giving scheme, or a legacy scheme). Otherwise you might miss on the opportunity to reinforce the commitment going forward.

- **How can you set up the reciprocal commitment for the future, rather than the past?** Robert Cialdini, author of **Pre-Suasion**, expresses it well. When you have done something that you'd like a reciprocal gift for, make sure you say "I'm sure you will do the same for me if the situation is reversed in the future" rather than "I'm sure you would have done the same for me." The past framing could absolve that person of feeling as though it should be a future obligation.

LINKED TO

Social norming: when others remind us about our consistencies or we share them with peers, it can act as a more powerful way to ensure we are consistent with our actions.

Ego: our consistencies, or perceived consistencies, link directly to our sense of self and identity. We like to feel we are generous

COMMITMENTS

We seek to be consistent
in our actions

CASE STUDIES

①

Loyalty in the face of adversity

Lots of arts agencies are trying to connect to their audiences as supporters in the 2020 Covid-19 outbreak. This online appeal from touring company, The Handlebards, was exceptionally successful, raising £10K+ in two weeks, using decision science techniques.

CASE STUDIES

(2)

Let me help you help the bees

A great example of commitment and reciprocity from **Friends of the Earth** is their Save The Bees campaign.

Thematically, they reminded readers about their commitment to the bees by setting up a feeling of our obligation to bees for the active role they play in keeping our gardens and environments beautiful and fruitful.

They also incorporated reciprocity into the giving itself - by donating, the reader was gifted with a pack of seeds to sow, continuing the cycle of commitment to the bees themselves.

Implications

- **Identify the behaviour:** at every opportunity, find a way to tell the supporter what behaviour – *renewing* membership, *continuing* support for young artists, making the *annual* Christmas gift – is the one they usually take (This can be beyond the fundraising itself – volunteering, their appearances at your venue, the types event they like etc). This reinforces the behaviour as consistent, meaning they are more likely to commit.

- **Create opportunities for reciprocity:** kind and meaningful compliments, small gifts and 'I just thought of you' moments, as well as long-term stewardship of donors will all create opportunities for reciprocity by your existing and potential supporters. And of course, *you* need to be consistent!
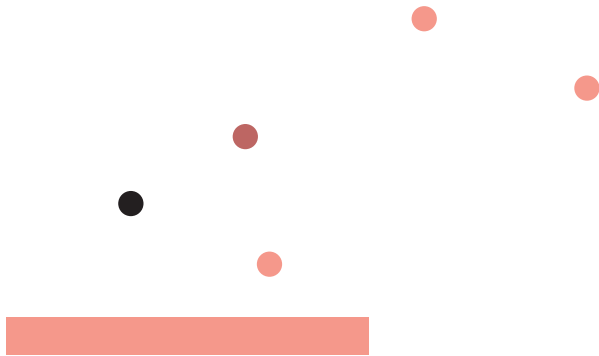
- **Be consistent:** in order to reward consistency in your supporters, *you* need to act consistently too. You need to practice stewardship – reporting to your donors on how you have used their money and the impact they have had.

- **Practise donor love:** many agencies are now moving beyond stewardship to what is called 'donor love.' Put simply, this means making sure that supporters feel fully engaged in the work of the agency, and making sure they feel their contribution is fully valued. Harvey McKinnon, fundraising guru, expresses the idea well, "Remember they're not *your* donor – you're *their* charity."

MINDSPACE

What is it?

By and large we will choose to act in a way that supports or reinforces a self-image – ego – that is positive and consistent.

For example, we will often ascribe to ourselves higher than average scores on positive qualities such as intelligence, attractiveness, and even generosity towards charitable causes. This desire to support a positive self-image means that we will often buy or show interest in products or services that support that self-perception: eco-friendly cleaning materials, food stuffs labelled as healthy – even if they're not – and companies

that demonstrate a strong values base or brand image we agree with. (Consider the powerful appeal of the Dove 'Real Women' campaign showing images of women of all sizes, shapes, ages, and colours rather than idealised models.) It also means that we like to 'virtue signal' – let others know about our sense of self. Think how difficult it is if you find yourself without a poppy on Armistice Day or a red nose on Comic Relief day.

We also respond directly to how others support our sense of self. Face-to-face fundraisers working in the street or door to door who are seen as attractive will tend to secure more sign ups

How to apply

- **How can you establish and build on our supporter's or prospect's sense of identity?** How do you make the idea of 'generous' part of that sense of identity?

- **What small steps can you get them to take?** How can you get then involved in support so you can then build on this to convert to a higher gift level

- **How can you give supporters a sense of agency?** What can you tell them their gift will do? How do you make that gift salient and relevant?

- **What kind of rewards or recognition might you give them that will reinforce their sense of self?** Should the rewards be metaphoric – like TripAdvisor 'levels'– or real? Your name on a building?

LINKED TO

Social norms: we are herd animals and want to act as the group does. There's a neurological basis to this. In a fMRI scanner we can see social rejection activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain – so not going with the herd is painful.

Halo effect: here one salient characteristic (attractiveness, good presentation skills) has an overly positive impact on perception of other characteristic (kindness, integrity), or using a popular celebrity as a goodwill ambassador to make your cause seem attractive or normal.

EGO

We act in ways that make us feel better about ourselves and reinforce our self-perception

CASE STUDIES

①

Three Versions of the Ask

Susannah Bleakley, the fundraising savvy CEO at **Morecambe Bay Cultural Partnership** ran the same free community performance event three times with different fundraising approaches. At each event she had roughly 50 similar people. And each time she was appealing to different aspects of people's egos.

#1: She left donation envelopes on tables, and people could choose to pick them up and make a gift as they left. **Result: £37.50**

#2: She left donation envelopes on tables and politely announced from the stage that if people had enjoyed the show she would be delighted if they felt able to donate. **Result: £78.10** – twice as much by asking in person **plus** mentioning her emotions and theirs.
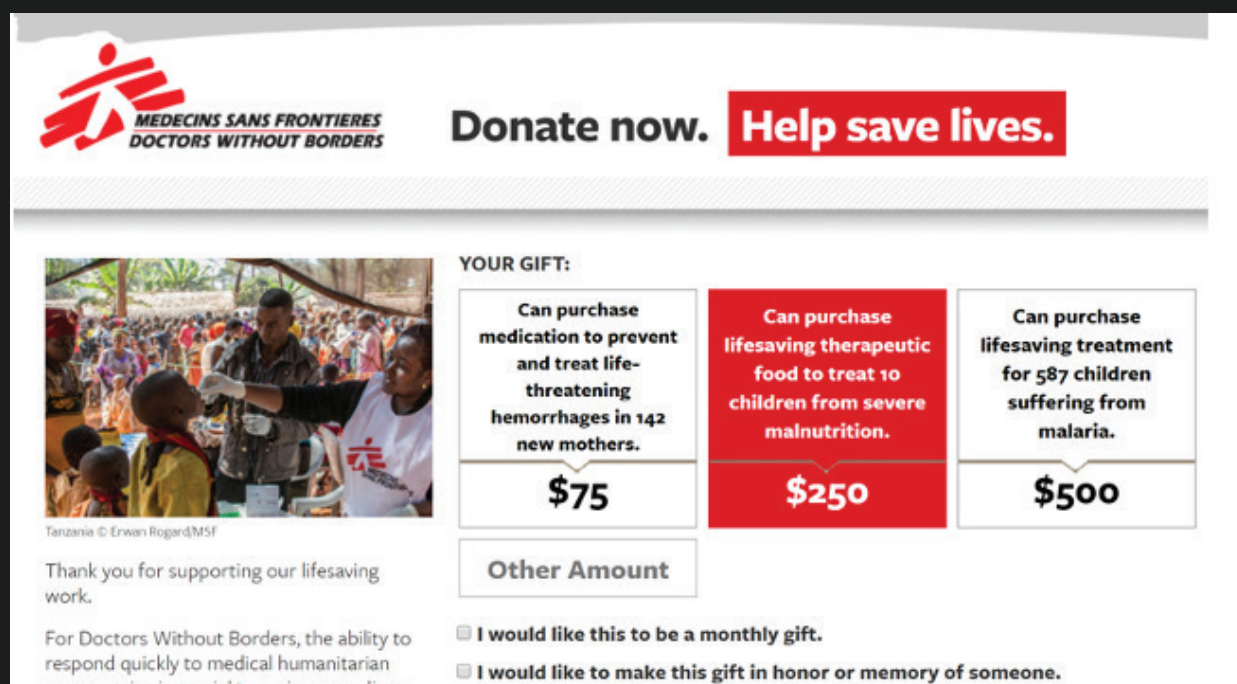
CASE STUDIES

#3: On the third night she had donation envelopes on the table, she asked politely as before. But added that she was so heartened that so many people had given yesterday and the amount they gave. She appealed to their EGOs. Finally she anchored gifts by mentioning that she'd received an anonymous £50 to the offi e earlier in the week. **Result: £121.67**. Almost x4 the unprompted result!

Decision Science isn't just for big mass campaigns. It can work in a small room too.

2

Make the Call to Action about THEM

In the example below Doctors without Borders combine a number of techniques: they ask you to take action, at a certain common level, in order to achieve the outcome of saving lives. They also highlight the Goldilocks middle option.

Implications

- Be clear on who your target market is and what their key sense of **identity** is and what you'd like it to be. Do they see themselves as philanthropists, or as social investors? Are they keen on the arts or on 'social' provision for their town. Do they see themselves as responsible parents?

- Create a sense of **agency.** Make sure that you frame your request in terms that make sense to supporters. Telling me you have a fundraising target of £2M or that you'd like me to contribute £40 a month makes no 'sense.' Tell me instead that for the price of a coffee and cake once a week – £10 – I could make sure a young person can attend monthly dance class – and I get it. Be aware that a major donor may seek more agency in exchange for a larger gift.

- Enable people to act **consistently.** We like to feel we are consistent and congruent. Begin by asking with a small commitment and then build on that. For example, ask people to sign a petition 'to increase local authority support for cultural provision to our town.' And then ask them for a gift to support your campaign. People are more likely to give if they feel this would be consistent with their petition position – the desire to fit their self-image. ("I did *that* so doing *this* makes sense to me.")

- Link your cause to your supporters' **goals**. We all have goals that we use behaviour to achieve. Famously: "no one wants to buy a drill, they want to make a ¼ inch hole." Do you know what your supporters' goals are and how you can help achieve them? This applies not just to individuals – but also to corporate and foundation sources where they often have specific explicit goals expressed in policies. Make sure you reference these goals when you are presenting a proposal: "here's how we can help XYZ ltd achieve your four key CSR objectives by supporting the local library."

DECISION SCIENCE
KEY IDEAS

This is a glossary of key ideas, some covered in MINDSPACE, some taking you wider in the area of decision science. Do please explore.

A

Agency: the idea that people want to feel they have some control or power in a given situation.

In fundraising the idea that your gift, no matter how small compared to the overall target, will make a difference.

Anchoring: the use of a stimulus – usually a number – to influence people's perception and behaviour. When people have no clue about a value (e.g. how many people miss out on theatre, how much others donate, etc.) any figure given can act as an anchor.

The first number in a gift string will influence the donor's reaction: a £30 ask is perceived differently if included in a £10, £20, £30 string compared to a £20, £30, £50 string.

B

Behavioural economics: the body of research that explores how people *actually* make decisions, including their systematic biases, not how they *should* make those decisions.

Fundraisers need to study actual behaviour not attractive theory.

Bias: the weighting to a particular view or behaviour. Unlike an error which might be random, a bias is regular and predictable. Common biases are confirmation (we seek information reinforcing what we believe and ignore that which contradicts it), present (we put more value on the present than the future), and optimism (we think the future will be rosier than facts justify).

Being aware of such biases is essential in fundraising.

Bystander Effect: the tendency for individuals to not get involved in a situation when others are present and, conversely, to intervene when there is no one else around.

We need to make the supporter believe their donation, no matter how small, will make a difference. They need to know someone else, e.g. the Govt/HNWI/etc, isn't taking care of it.

C

Cocktail Party Effect: at a party having a conversation, we tune out background noise. But if our name is mentioned, we tune in to that. We are the most important person to ourselves.

A prospect will be more attentive if we connect our message to them.

Commitment and consistency: people are more likely to do something after they've committed to doing it, verbally or in writing, and if it fits with their pre-existing values.

Affirm supporter values – "As a lover of books, we hope you'd like to support the library…"

D

Decision architecture: the way supporters make choices can be affected by the sequence of elements – images, data, interaction, questions etc.

Consider where the museum collection box is positioned in a visit or how the website design works.

Default: people very commonly 'default' to inaction – so the option you assign to defaults is crucial. This is why 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' are such important aspects in audience response.

Consider offering default options to ease the donor's decision. Be aware of the Goldilocks effect

E

Emotions: emotions are bodily sensations subconsciously triggered by external stimuli – usually in fractions of a second.
Humans are a goal-seeking species. Emotions tell us if we are on track. They are feedback mechanisms that prompt action.

Give supporters emotional feedback on what they did – not just objective impact reports.

Empathy: empathy is the ability to recognise the emotional state of another person and identify with it.

People are more likely to help if they can see themselves in a similar situation, if not physically then psychologically (afraid, worried, anxious, etc.) Work to help supporters understand the situation of a beneficiary

Endowment effect: we ascribe more value to things because we own them, even for a short period. This links to loss aversion, where the pain of losing something is stronger than the pleasure of gain.

You can attract supporters by giving them a sense of ownership, via membership cards, or access to privileges they will not want to lose.

Evolutionary psychology: aspects of our attitudes and behaviour that are 'hard-wired' as a result of learning through generations. For example, we learned early in humanity to be loss averse – 'don't pick that up it might be a snake not a stick.'

We all use a 200,000 year old brain to process ideas. This is more important than generation differences.

F

Fluency: the ease by which our brain handles information – perception, processing, and retrieval. Fluency helps us make decisions quickly.

Ensure information is conveyed at the appropriate fluency level, usually the easier the better.

Focussing effect: when we put more emphasis on one attribute compared to others.

Emphasise your competitive advantage: impact, quality, originality, diversity, etc. Do it in a salient way.

(Re-) Framing: styling communication to audience needs and interests: e.g. a treatment feels different to the patient if framed as "90% success rate" vs. "10% risk of failure."

Re-framing can be done by changing measurement unit for example from

DECISION SCIENCE
KEY IDEAS

annual gift to daily amount or 'for the price of a cup of coffee.'

fMRI: functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging: a technique for measuring brain activity. It detects changes in response to neural activity – when a brain area is more active it consumes more oxygen. fMRI can be used to produce activation maps showing which parts of the brain are involved in specific mental process such as generosity.

G

Goldilocks effect: the need to find the optimum point in a range – often perceived as the middle choice. Notice Starbucks always represents drink choices in threes.

Donors are more likely to choose the middle of three suggested gift amounts. This can be nudged by making the middle amount the default option.

H

Halo effect: a characteristic of a person (e.g. handsomeness) that positively influences perception of others (e.g. kindness, or intelligence). A laundry detergent with a pleasant perfume is perceived to clean better than one without.

Partnering with a passionate tennis player might have a positive 'passion' halo effect on a brand.

Heuristics: the mental short cuts people use in assessing things, developing views, and making decisions.

We perhaps have 150 of these of which 8-10 are really useful in fundraising; endowment; loss aversion; IKEA effect etc. Use these short-cuts to enable the donation decision.

Hyperbolic discounting: we have a particular attitude to time/payoff: 'I feel less pain if I'm asked to pay £100 three months from now, than if I have to pay it today.'

Choose the timing and method for a gift based on prospect's attitude to time.

I

Identifiable victim effect: sympathy and support are often concentrated on a single 'victim' even though more people would be helped if resources were spent widely.

Thinking of a single person – "help this young artist succeed" – suggests the supporter's contribution will have more impact than thinking about hundreds or thousands of people who need help – numbers we don't deal with in our daily lives.

IKEA effect: valuing anything we have been involved in making or shaping. Assembling furniture, we feel proud having put together the desk, even if the quality doesn't match ready-made furniture.

Engaging supporters as volunteers, or companies in co-creating, will increase their commitment.

Influence: causing a change in others' behaviours or attitudes. In his classic book *influence,* Cialdini outlined six tools:

Reciprocation: people feel obliged to give back to anyone who gives them something – a gift a favour, or a free sample.

Offer a 'gift' upfront, encouraging prospects to reciprocate by donating. The gift should be symbolic and

inexpensive (e.g. a wristband or a badge) ideally given by another donor/sponsor.

Social proof: when people don't know what to do, they imitate others – people like us, people we aspire to be like, etc.

Reference to other's positive behaviour can influence prospects to do the same.

Authority: people respect and follow those with authority, or the appearance of it. Authority may come from power, technical knowledge, or experience.

Referring to experts or academics influences donor behaviour.

Scarcity: the less something is available, the more valuable it is, or so it seems. Belonging to, or supporting, something scarce adds to our self-worth.

Make supporters feel they belong to a special group. Offer scarce benefits e.g. 'behind the scenes' visits.

L

Liking: people respond positively to requests coming from those they like or find attractive.

Use goodwill ambassadors, or corporate partners with a positive brand image to encourage donations

Least effort law: individuals tend to look for the quickest and easiest solution.

Make it easy to give. Default options is one way. Reducing the number of clicks to a donation is another.

M

Mental accounting: people seem to have mental budgets for different activities – socialising, rent, phone etc.

Seek contributions outside the mental 'charity' budget. Using a mobile phone to donate doesn't feel like it comes from the charity budget.

N

Neuroscience: the study of how the brain responds chemically and physically to various activities. It can show us which brain parts are activated when exposed to certain stimuli.

Normalising/Norms. the more people have already joined a movement, the more others follow: social reference and peer pressure are key. From an evolutionary perspective, those who joined the group were more likely to survive than the loners. Cognitively, when you don't know what to do, a safer strategy is to imitate others. Norms are informal guidelines on what is correct or acceptable within society or a group. They change over time.

Referring to other's donation behaviour normalises it. The goal is to normalise your target audience offering support.

Nudge: a small change that results in a major behaviour change. This contrasts to incentives or fines. E.g. traditionally we encourage students to eat more vegetables and fewer desserts by reducing the price of vegetables (incentive) and/or increasing the price of desserts (penalty). In a nudge, you simply put vegetables first in the canteen.

You can change the perception of a proposal by changing the way it is presented, the sequence, the amounts asked for, default options, web-page design etc.

P

Peak-end effect: we assess experiences based on their most intense moment, and their end, not on the total experience. Once back from holiday, we won't remember every moment, nor have an average

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KEY IDEAS

assessment. We remember the parachuting or scuba.

A managed peak-end can help deliver a highly positive supporter experience. Goodie bags work at galas!

Present bias: the preference individuals have for a payoff delivered sooner rather than later. For example, we'd rather receive £100 today than £110 next week.

Consider time when asking for donation. A prospect might be willing to start regular donations in a month, but not today. When we pay cash, we feel pain immediately – with credit card, loss is delayed.

Primacy/recency effect: we are disproportionately influenced by the information that comes first and last. Strong communication should balance primacy and recency. Think of James Bond movies. They always start with an exciting scene and end in a climax.

Ensure the start and end of your fundraising message is powerful and memorable.

Priming: making people subconsciously ready or prepared before thinking or deciding, e.g. using specific imagery, story-telling, playing background music, to create a philanthropic feeling.

Prime to influence a donor's reaction. Money already in a transparent donation box is priming.

S

Salience: the ease of recall and rarity of information is important for credibility and traction. We're very aware of terrorist attacks – they are dramatic and scary so often top of mind compared to more deadly traffic

traffic accidents. But they are actually very rare.

Ask people to give when you have related heavy media coverage (e.g. ask for donations to support the arts centre after a damaging fire or a great publicised success).

Sensory nudges: We can be cued to action by all the senses. Consider the effect of music in films or on people's moods when partying; of smells such as freshly baked bread and coffee; of textures in fabrics, etc.

Explore the use of other senses in fundraising communication, e.g. texture of direct mail envelopes; the weight of a case for support...

W

Warm glow giving: fMRI testing shows charity giving activates the same brain region involved in the experience of pleasure.

Try and deliver a warm glow to supporters. Make sure you thank them personally and sincerely. A phone call generally beats an email.

RESOURCES

Guides and Frameworks

*Below are links to some
 wider resources*   *Books*

MINDSPACE
https://www.bi.team/publications/
mindspace/Behavioural Insights
Team.

   This large download outlines
how MINDSPACE was developed
and the wider social policy uses
it has. Some nice practical case
studies. Free.

EAST Framework
https://www.bi.team/publications/
east-four-simple-ways-to-apply-
behavioural-insights/ Behavioural
Insights Team, 2010.

   This is another practical tool for
policy practitioners to consider
applying behavioural insights in
their work. The EAST framework
is widely used in local government.
Free.

Behaviour Change Wheel
http://www.behaviourchangewheel.
com/ University College, London.

   A guide to designing behavioural
interventions based on a range
of frameworks. You can click on
various elements to discover the
key one. £18.99

Persuasive Patterns
https://shop.ui-patterns.com/
Anders Toxboe, Denmark 2019

   A set of 60 cards which can be
used to create behavioural design
patterns that can be easily used
and referenced as a brainstorming
tool. $59.00

EASIEST
https://decisionscience.org.uk
=mc consulting, 2020

   This framework was created for
the charity sector – fundraisers,
marketeers or campaigners. It
covers the key ideas you need to
create a behaviourally informed
communication. Free

There are lots of books on
the application of Decision
Science to behavioural change
generally. Only one has a focus on
fundraising – Change for Good.
The others tend to focus more on
either the decision science behind
marketing or sales. But they can
be readily adapted.

Here are our magnificent seven.
All are available through Amazon
– and to order through your
friendly local bookshop, which
would undoubtedly appreciate the
business.
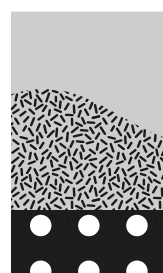
RESOURCES

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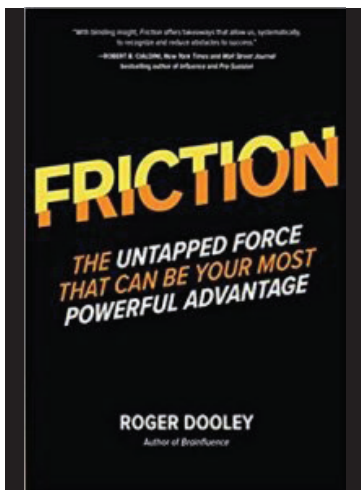
Friction: The Untapped Force That Can Be Your Most Powerful Advantage
*Roger Dooley (@rogerdooley)*

Friction explores the idea that Amazon, Netflix, Google, and Uber all have one thing in common: they've built empires on making every interaction effortless for customers. In today's world of instant connectivity and customer empowerment, the speed and efficiency of business transactions determines success or failure. Dooley explains how every business (or company, non-profit etc.) can gain a competitive edge by reducing those points of friction. The online examples contain real insights for any digitally savvy organisation.
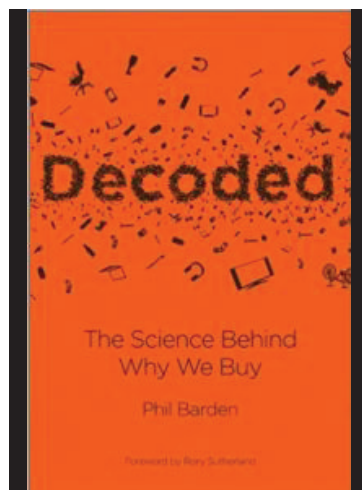
Decoded: The Science Behind Why We Buy
Phil P. Barden (@philbarden)

Barden's book uses decision science to explain the motivations behind consumer choices and show this can be valuable to marketing. Although there are few not-for-profit examples, the learning from commercial marketing is easy to apply. Barden deciphers the 'secret codes' of products, services and brands to explain how they influence our purchase decisions. Decoded is packed with case studies and detailed explanations, making it clear and easy to understand for anyone interested in understanding consumer behaviour.
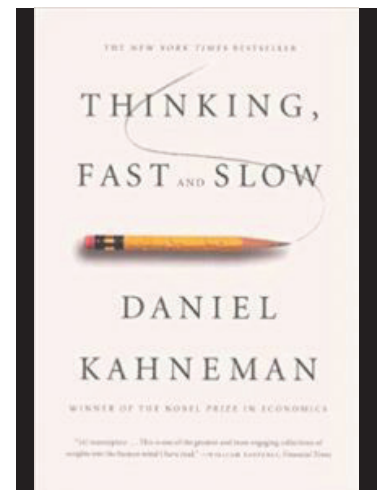
Thinking, Fast and Slow
Daniel Kahneman

Nobel Prize winning thinker, Kahneman explains how two 'systems' in the mind make decisions. One system is fast, intuitive and emotional. The second is slower, more deliberative and logical, but they work together to shape our judgements and decisions. This book exposes both the capabilities and biases of fast thinking and reveals the pervasive influence on our thoughts and behaviour. It then explores how to tap into the benefits of s ow thinking, to give a comprehensive explanation of why we make decisions the way we do.

RESOURCES

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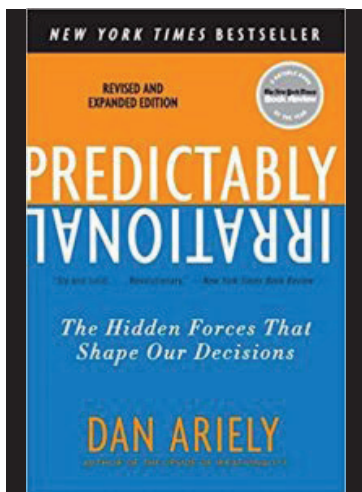
Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions
Dan Ariely (@danariely)

Why do smart people make irrational decisions every day? Dan Ariely cuts to the heart of our strange behaviour, demonstrating how irrationality often supplants rational thought. Ariely combines everyday experiences with psychological experiments to reveal the patterns behind human behaviours and decisions. This isn't exactly a marketing or business book, but these lessons will convince even the most sceptical arts manager, marketeer or fundraiser that non-conscious influences on decision-making are both real and important.
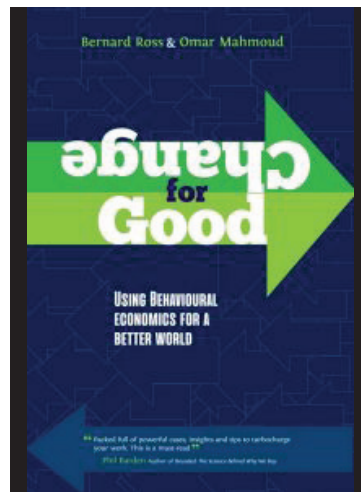
Change for Good: Using Behavioural Economics for a Better World
*Bernard Ross (@bernardrossmc) & Omar Mahmoud*

Drawing on a decade of research in behavioural economics, neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, Change for Good provides a powerful yet practical toolkit for everyone: from fundraisers and campaigners to policy makers and educators. It offers advice on how to raise more funds or help people improve their diets, showing how techniques commonly used in commercial settings can be adapted to social good including engaging supporters on the life of cultural organisations.
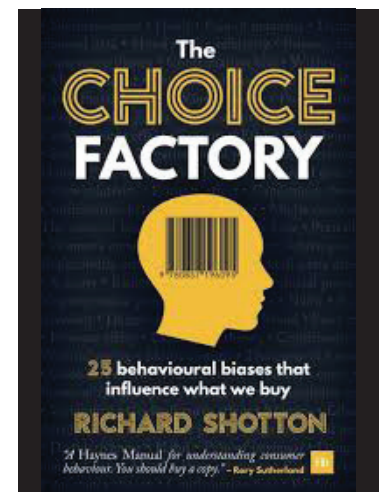
The Choice Factory
Richard Shotton (@rshotton)

The Choice Factory takes you through a typical day of decisions, from trivial food choices to life-changing career moves. It explores how people's behaviour is shaped by psychological shortcuts. It has 25 short focussed chapters, each addressing a specific ognitive bias and outlining easy ways to apply it to your own challenges. This is probably the easiest intro to the business implications of decision science. Shotton adds insights with interviews with some of the smartest thinkers in advertising, including Rory Sutherland and Lucy Jameson.

RESOURCES
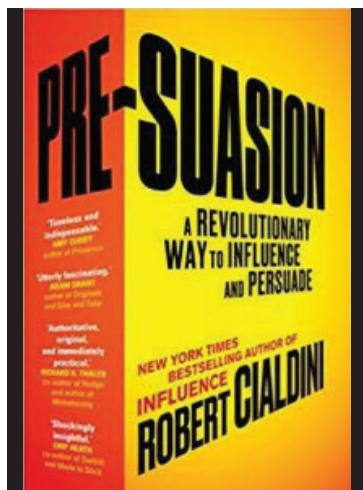
Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade *Robert Cialdini (@RobertCialdini)*

Three decades after writing his bestselling *Influen e*, Cialdini delivered a sequel that extends that classic work in several ways. He offers new insights into the art of winning people over: it isn't just what we say or how we say it that counts, but also what goes on in the key moments before we speak. Cialdini reveals how to master the world of 'pre-suasion', where subtle turns of phrase, tiny visual cues and apparently unimportant details can prime people to say 'yes' before they are even asked.

Agencies to help

There are several agencies who can help you implement decision principles in your fundraising or marketing work. Three that have done great work in the cultural charity sector are:

Ogilvy Consulting, Behavioural Science Practice

Part of the global Ogilvy marketing and PR network, they mostly undertake commercial work but have also undertaken interesting charity work for Christian Aid, Great Ormond St and others in the fields of fun raising, healthy eating and crime prevention. **www.ogilvy.co.uk/agency/behaviour-change**

Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)

Known unofficially as the "Nudge Unit", BIT is a social purpose organisation that generates and applies behavioural insights to inform policy and improve public services. BIT works in partnership with governments, local authorities, non-profits, and busine ses to tackle major policy problems. Most likely to help with research info on their website **www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk**

DecisionScience

A specialist team within **=mc consulting** devoted to helping ethical organisations apply decision science to a range of projects – especially fundraising through supporter engagement. Clients include Doctors without Borders USA, UNICEF, Barnardo's, Edinburgh Zoo, and the many agencies in the world's largest arts and cultural fundraising experiment supported by **Arts Council England**. **www.decisionscience.org.uk**

ABOUT THE EXPERIMENTS

This booklet is one of a series of outputs from a six-month project exploring the potential to improve income among arts and cultural agencies in England using. With eleven agencies participating the project became the world's largest fundraising experiment.

There were two main drivers for the project. First was the need for cultural organisations to increase the support they get from private sources- especially individuals. Second, the recognition that commercial agencies and the major charities are already drawing on decision science to drive success in a range of ways. In a commercial context these techniques and frameworks are used to sell products or services by everyone from Uber to John Lewis. Charities like UNICEF and Doctors without Borders are using them to encourage people to become back campaigns, take advantage of health advice and, of course, fundraise.

The Arts Council of England supplied financial support, matched by support from three private consultancy agencies. The project explored practical ways in which arts and cultural agencies could learn to use decision science techniques to improve their fundraising and income generation.

The project was led by =mc consulting and the National Arts Fundraising School with generous assistance and advice from Maddie Croucher, Senior Consultant Ogilvy Consulting, and Omar Mahmoud, Global Head of Insight at UNICEF International.

The world's largest arts fundraising experiment

Eleven arts and cultural agencies around England took part. The agencies were selected to illustrate different artforms and operating at a variety of sizes. They came together several times over the period to receive training and advice and operate as a shared Learning Hub.

The partners developed a range of carefully constructed experiments to explore the potential to use decision science effectively. These experiments used the RCT (Random Control Trial) methodology to ensure results are robust and replicable.

Each agency ran experiments in one or more key areas: e.g. design and positioning of collection boxes, web design for online donations, testing different legacy promotions, boosting retail sales, etc. The focus was on fundraising, but also looked at linked issues such as membership, ticket sales, etc.

The agencies involved are listed below. We are grateful for the courage and foresight each of the agencies showed in taking part. We're grateful also to the Arts Council England officers who supported the initiative: Helen Cooper, Clare Titley, and Francis Runacres.

Follow up

=mc consulting is applying decision science to projects with many of the world's largest not-for-profits: Medecins Sans Frontiers, UNICEF International, and IFRC. In the UK we are delivering on topics as diverse as promoting supporter engagement in conservation with Edinburgh Zoo; helping World Jewish Relief to persuade businesses to hire refugees; and working with The Trussell Trust to encourage people to give more to food banks To find out more contact us at **www.decsionscience.org.uk**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dana Segal

Dana Segal is Senior Partner Consultant at **=mc consulting** and Deputy Director of the **National Arts Fundraising School**. Her consultancy portfolio includes INGOs, NGOs and charities across the UK, Europe and Africa including UNICEF, World Animal Protection, Afrobarometer and Southbank Centre. She has delivered decision science training for fundraisers at organisations including Oxford University, RNLI and MSF International.

Marina Jones

Marina Jones is interim Head of Membership and Fundraising Appeals at the **Royal Opera House** and has 18 years' experience raising funds for arts and cultural charities including the Lyric Hammersmith, Polka Theatre and the Orange Tree Theatre. She is a member of the Institute of Fundraising Convention Board and Governor for Dr Pusey's Memorial Fund, and recently completed an MA with distinction in Philanthropic Studies with a dissertation on legacy giving.

Bernard Ross

Bernard Ross is a Director of **=mc consulting** and Director of the **National Arts Fundraising School**. He has written six award winning books on fundraising and social change. He has advised many of the world's leading INGOs on strategy including UNICEF, UNHCR, IFRC, ICRC and MSF. Recently he's raised money to refurbish France's most famous monument, for a museum to house the world's largest dinosaur in Argentina, and to save the last 800 great apes in Africa.