

Behavior change strategy cards

The cards in this deck will help you generate concepts aimed at changing people's behaviors.

The cards can be used for both individual and group brainstorming. They don't have to be used in order.

To use the cards

Identify a behavior you'd like the change. Read the strategy statement and the short description on the front of a card, then flip the card over and use the "How might we...?" prompts to begin generating ideas.

Not all of the cards will be applicable to every project

If you get stuck on a card and can't come up with ideas, move on.

To facilitate a group brainstorm

Read one card out loud, and invite people to sketch and share their ideas with the group as they come up with them. Encourage people to build upon each other's concepts. After 5 to 10 minutes, or when the idea generation slows, move on to another card.

For a variation on the group brainstorm

Have people take turns selecting an interesting card from the deck and leading the brainstorm. You may want to pass out a few cards to each person before the brainstorm begins.

Give yourself an added challenge

Try using two cards at once. Attempt to come up with solutions that address both strategies simultaneously.

Assembly Instructions



1: print single sided



2: glue and fold



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Make it personal

Cards 01-06

- 01 Put the user in control
- 02 Encourage a sense of ownership
- 03 Get the user to make an argument for the desired outcome
- 04 Make the desired outcome align with the user's identity
- 05 Highlight visceral or personal stories
- 06 Call attention to relevant social norms

01

Put the user in control.

Making active choices helps people feel more ownership over a decision, and makes them more likely to follow through.

Flickr user SAN_DRINO



How might we put users in charge of the decision at hand?

How might we encourage users to take responsibility for this choice?

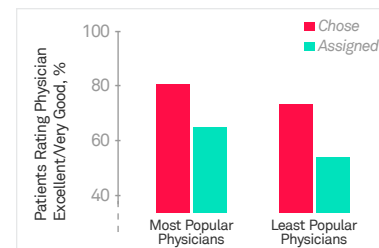
How might we help users realize that they're in control?

Consider this...



Eat your vegetables

In one school cafeteria experiment, some students were given a choice between vegetable options (carrots or celery), whereas other students were just given carrots. Students who made the choice themselves were more likely to eat more vegetables.¹



Doctor satisfaction

When patients are given a choice about which physician they want to see, as opposed to being assigned to a physician, they are more likely to be satisfied with their physician and recommend him or her to others - even if they chose a poorly rated or less popular physician.²



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[1] Just, D. R., and Wansink, B. (2009). Smarter Lunchrooms: Using Behavioral Economics to Improve Meal Selection. Choices: The Magazine of Food, Farm, and Resource Issues, 24(3). [2] Schmittiel, J., Selby, J., Grumbach, K., Quesenberry, C. (1997). Choice of a Personal Physician and Patient Satisfaction in a Health Maintenance Organization. JAMA. 278(19), 1596-1599. Images: salad bar by Flickr user NatalieMaynor; physician rating chart reproduced based on Figure 1 in [2].

02

Encourage a sense of ownership.

When people feel ownership over something they tend to attribute more value to it and go to greater lengths to avoid losing it.

Flickr user adamfarnsworth



How might we help users feel a sense of ownership over the desired outcome?

How might we encourage users to take ownership over a portion of the desired experience?

Consider this...



Ownership and eBay

When people have the highest bid in an online auction, they tend to experience a pseudo endowment effect. Although they haven't won the item yet, they already begin to feel ownership over it. They're more likely to continue rebidding, and ultimately pay more for the item, to avoid losing it.¹



How much for that mug?

Some students in a class were given mugs, while other students weren't. The students were then invited to sell the mugs to each other. On average, the sellers tried to sell the mugs for much more than buyers were willing to pay. The median asking price was \$7.00, but the median price buyers were willing to pay was only \$3.50!²

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[1] Bramsen, J. (2008) A pseudo-endowment effect in internet auctions. MPRA paper, unpublished. <http://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/14813/> [2] Kahneman, D., Knetsch, J. L., and Thaler, R. H. (1990). Experimental Tests of the Endowment Effect and the Coase Theorem. The Journal of Political Economy, 98(6), 1325-1348. Images: eBay logo from ebay.com; mug by Flickr user Naval History & Heritage Command.

03

Get the user to make an argument for the desired outcome.

People are more likely to agree with persuasive arguments when they're forced to actively make the argument themselves.

Flickr user VFS Digital Design



How might we help users role-play the opposing viewpoint?

How might we get users to communicate the logic behind the desired behavior to someone else?

How might we encourage users to advocate for another position?

Consider this...



Persuading others to quit

In one experiment people were asked to act like they were convincing a friend to stop smoking. Participants either role-played the persuader or the friend. Those who played persuaders, and actively argued against smoking, were more likely to change their own attitudes about smoking as a result.¹



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[1] Elms, A. (1966). Influence of fantasy ability on attitude change through role playing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 4(1), 36-43. Image: man smoking by Flickr user zoetnet.

04

Make the desired outcome align with the user's identity.

People generally behave in ways that reinforce their personal identities. When an behavior conflicts with a person's sense of identity, they can experience unhappiness and unease.

Flickr user aldenjewell



Jeep Wagoneer Limited. The Ultimate Wagon. 
FROM JEEP CORPORATION

How might the desired outcome reinforce or reflect the user's existing sense of identity?

How might we incorporate or acknowledge relevant aspects of cultural, religious, or social groups that the user associates with?

Consider this...



Choosey moms choose JIF

With its slogan, "Choosey moms choose JIF," JIF peanut butter emphasizes that if you're a mom and you care about what your children eat, you should be buying their product.



Identifying with a desired trait

People were asked to display a small sign that said, "Be a safe driver," in their window. A few weeks later, they were asked to put up a large safe driving sign in their front yards. Those who were already displaying the small sign were more likely to comply. Researchers hypothesized that displaying the small sign may have led individuals to view themselves as the type of people who promote safe driving.¹

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[1] Freedman & Fraser. (1966). Compliance Without Pressure: The Foot-in-the-Door Technique. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 4(2). Images: lady with JIF by Flickr user Elizabeth/Table4Five; cars by Flickr user epSos.de.

05

Highlight visceral or personal stories.

People are more likely to recall and respond to emotional stories that highlight a specific person's experience - rather than stories that focus on facts or numbers.

How might we emphasize personal stories related to this behavior or decision?

How might we call attention to an individual's experience?

How might we use storytelling instead of facts and numbers?

Consider this...



Cambodia4Kids

Charity organizations frequently encourage donations by telling the personal and often sad stories of specific children and families in low-income communities. These stories put faces and names with otherwise abstract facts about living conditions and mortality rates.



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Image: child's photo and story from Cambodia4kids.org.

06

Call attention to relevant social norms.

People tend to behave in accordance with real or perceived social norms, and generally don't like to behave in ways that go against what's socially acceptable.

How might we highlight or expose relevant social norms?

How might we establish new social norms within a user group?

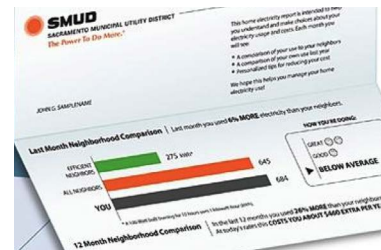
How might we draw upon the social norms of a similar group of people?

Consider this...



A line in the shopping cart

Placing a strip of tape in grocery carts, along with signage asking consumers to put fruits and vegetables in front of the line, increased fruit and vegetable purchases by 102%. The tape implied that fruits and vegetables *should* make up a certain portion of purchases - that it was the norm.¹



Unlike thy neighbors

Giving households feedback about how much more energy they use than their neighbors has been shown to decrease energy usage. But for households who use less energy than their neighbors, calling attention to the norm can increase usage. However, adding an element of social approval or disapproval to the report, such as a smiling or frowning face, can combat this boomerang effect.²

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[1] As reported in Nudge Blog, <http://nudges.org/2010/08/13/grocery-cart-choice-architecture/>. [2] Schultz et al. (2007). The Constructive, Destructive, and Reconstructive Power of Social Norms. *Psychological Science*, 18(5). Images: shopping cart by Flickr user Polycart; energy bill from The Christian Science Monitor.

Tip the scales

Cards 07-13

- 07 Emphasize gains to encourage a behavior
- 08 Increase present gains
- 09 Break large gains into multiple smaller gains
- 10 Use surprise to increase the pleasure of gains
- 11 Emphasize losses to discourage a behavior
- 12 Reduce or delay present losses
- 13 Combine small losses into one larger loss

07

Emphasize gains to encourage a behavior.

People enjoy experiencing gains, especially in the present. When an option or outcome is framed in terms of its associated gains it becomes more appealing - and people rarely stop to consider associated losses.

How might we emphasize gains associated with this behavior?

How might we call attention to gains the user may not be aware of?

How might we describe existing choices so that the desired outcome represents a relative gain?

Consider this...



Special K

Special K adopted this approach with its campaign, "The Special K Movement." It reframed weight-loss to be about what you gain by losing weight (a feeling of achievement, confidence, etc.), rather than about what you have to give up by dieting.



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Image: "What will you gain when you lose?" from Special K advertisement.

08

Increase present gains.

Gains that occur in the present are more pleasurable than gains that occur in the future. The further into the future gains occur, the more people discount their value, and the less pleasurable they seem.

Apple



How might we introduce new gains in the present, associated with the desired behavior?

How might we amplify existing gains that occur in the present?

How might we call more attention to present gains?

Consider this...



Get points for signing up!

Credit cards frequently offer new members points just for signing up. Amazon, for example, gives people \$50 when they sign up for an Amazon Rewards Visa. These sign-up gifts function as a present gain for an experience (signing up for a credit card) that usually doesn't have one.



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Image: Amazon Visa offer from Amazon.com.

09

Break large gains into multiple smaller gains.

Experiencing separate, smaller gains is often more pleasurable than experiencing them simultaneously as one large gain.

Flickr user MrDaniel



How might gains associated with the desired behavior be broken apart into distinct, smaller gains?

How might gains that occur simultaneously be conceptually separated or individually highlighted?

Consider this...

Your Discounts
Your Progressive Direct Rate Includes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sign Online - a one-time discount for signing your documents online today (discount only available month policy term)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pay in Full Today (does not apply to monthly payments)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internet Discount (for originating your quote online)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paperless Discount (receive bills/documents via email)

Progressive Car Insurance

Progressive Car Insurance breaks down a customer's savings into dozens of individual discounts, like the "Multiple Policy Discount," the "New Car Discount," the "New Student Discount," and the "Senior Adult Discount," to increase the pleasure of getting a good deal.



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Image: Progressive insurance discount summary from Progressive.com.

10

Use surprise to increase the pleasure of gains.

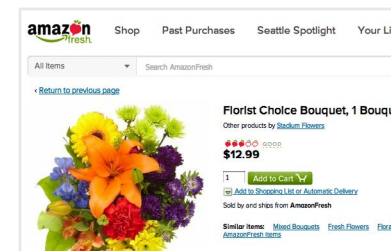
People experience more pleasure from surprise gains than they do from expected gains.

How might we associate unexpected gains with the desired behavior?

How might we exceed the user's expectations about the desired outcome?

How might we incorporate surprises into the existing experience?

Consider this...



Amazon Fresh flower delivery

Amazon Fresh delivers a surprise bouquet of flowers with each customer's first grocery order. This special little gift contributes toward customers' positive view of their first interaction with the Amazon grocery delivery service.



11

Emphasize losses to discourage a behavior.

People dislike experiencing losses, especially in the present. When an option or outcome is framed in terms of its associated losses it becomes less appealing - and people rarely stop to consider the associated gains.



How might we emphasize losses associated with this behavior?

How might we call attention to losses the user isn't aware of?

How might we describe existing choices so that the undesired outcome represents a relative loss?

Consider this...



Two energy campaigns

If you want to decrease energy usage, which language should you use with your customers? Option 1: "If you use energy conservation methods, you will save \$350/year" or Option 2: "If you do not use energy conservation methods, you will lose \$350/year." It turns out framing the campaign in terms of a loss is more effective.¹

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[1] Thaler, Richard H., and Cass R. Sunstein. Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008. 37. Image: thermostat by Flickr user midnightcomm.

12

Reduce or delay present losses.

People go to great lengths to avoid losses. However, the further into the future a loss occurs, the more people tend to discount its impact. As a result, future losses often seem less daunting than present losses.

Flickr user Images_of_Money



How might we minimize or remove present losses associated with the desired outcome, such as money, time, or effort?

How might we delay present losses so they occur in the future?

Consider this...



The allure of credit cards

Credit cards are especially appealing because they allow us to experience gains in the present (a new shirt!) and push losses into the future (next month's bill). Discounting future losses means we're more willing to incur losses in the future over equal-sized losses in the present.



Pre-washed and pre-cut vegetables

Pre-cut and pre-washed vegetables available in grocery stores remove present losses usually associated with eating vegetables. Buyers no longer have to cut and wash the veggies themselves, and that small reduction in associated time and effort makes purchasing vegetables more appealing.

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Image: shopping bags by Flickr user SidewaysSarah; prepared food by Flickr user davidthiel.

13

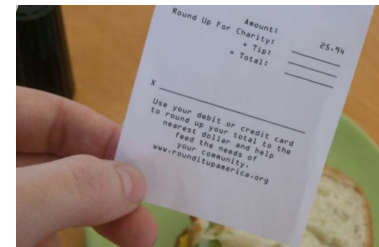
Combine small losses into one larger loss.

Losses that are experienced together, as one large loss, are less painful than smaller losses that are experienced separately.

How might we lump together the losses that go along with doing the desired behavior?

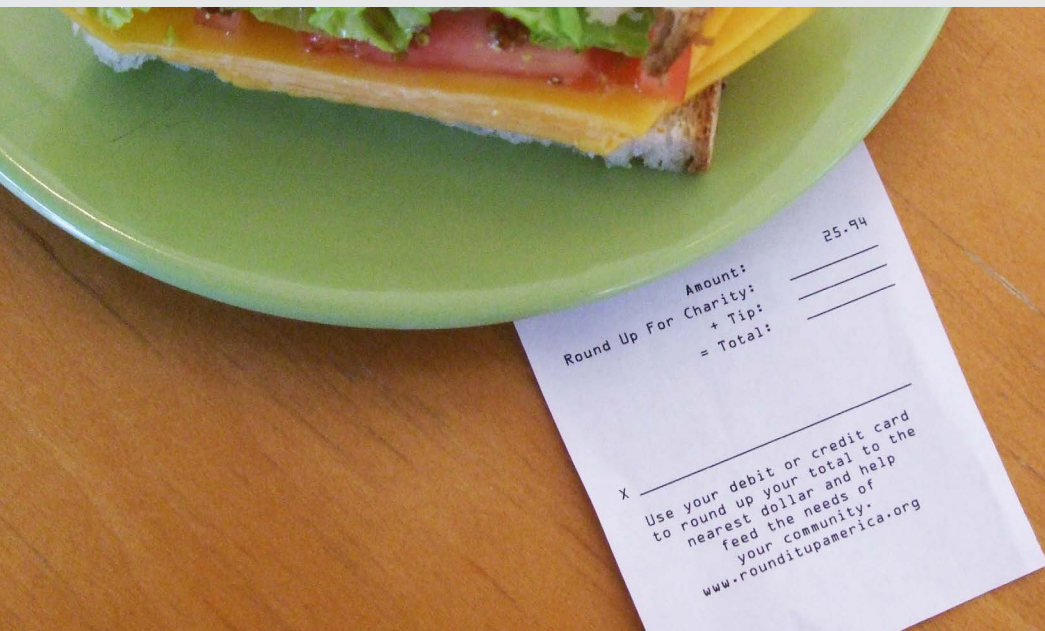
How might we remove distinctions between multiple small losses associated with the desired outcome?

Consider this...



Round It Up America

Round It Up America encourages donations to charity by asking restaurant patrons to simply round up their bill to the nearest dollar and donate that amount. Patrons are faced with a small loss added to an existing loss, rather than being faced with an unrelated request for donation that would feel like a new loss altogether.



Craft the journey

Cards 14-17

- 14 Help the user make a commitment in advance
- 15 Establish positive expectations
- 16 Introduce a peak and end on a high note
- 17 Provide immediate and ongoing feedback

14

Help the user make a commitment in advance.

People tend to make less rational choices when they're in "hot" states - like when they're hungry or emotional. Deciding in advance, in a "cold" state, makes preferable outcomes more likely.

How might we help the user make a decision in advance, when they're not in the heat of the moment?

How might we help the user commit to an outcome beforehand?

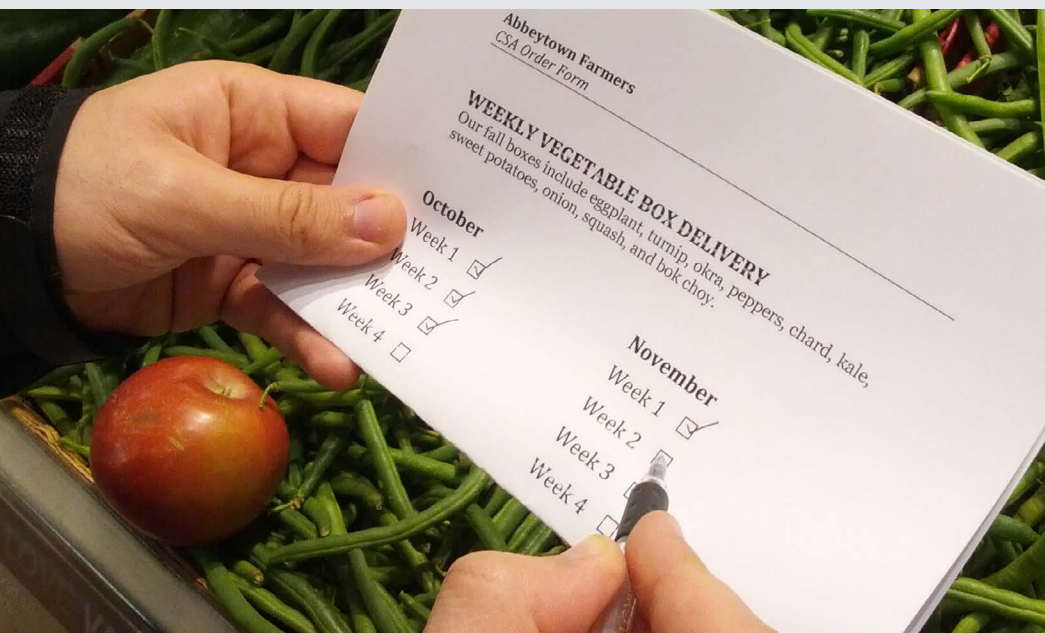
How might we help people pre-commit to a desired behavior?

Consider this...



Is online shopping better for you?

When shopping for groceries online people have been shown to make up to 66% fewer impulse purchases - possibly because they are ordering the food in advance and aren't making decisions in the heat of a hungry moment.¹



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[1] Kacen, J. (2003). Bricks & Clicks and the Buying Impulse: An Investigation of Consumer Impulse Buying Behavior in an Online and a Traditional Retail Environment. European Advances in Consumer Research. 6, 271-276. Image: Walmart checkout by Flickr user Walmart Stores.

15

Establish positive expectations.

A person's expectations about an event or product have the power to change the way they actually experience it.

How might we setup positive expectations for the experience?

How might we give users a preview of the benefits beforehand?

How might we modify existing negative or neutral expectations?

Consider this...



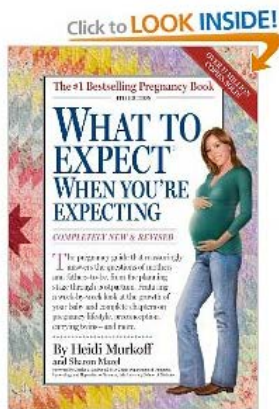
Beer with a hint of vinegar

Balsamic vinegar was added to beer. In a blind taste test, 59% of people preferred the vinegar brew. But when told about the vinegar beforehand, only 30% of people preferred it. Expectations about what it would be like to drink beer with vinegar in it actually changed people's experiences.¹



What's in a name?

When food has a more descriptive label (e.g., Belgian black forest double chocolate cake) people tend to feel more satisfied and perceive it as being more delicious than when the same food has a less descriptive label (e.g., chocolate cake).²



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[1] Lee, L.; Frederick, S.; Ariely, D. (2006). Try It, You'll Like It: The Influence of Expectation, Consumption, and Revelation on Preferences for Beer. *Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1054-1058. [2] Wansink, B., van Ittersum, K., Painter, J. (2005). How descriptive food names bias sensory perceptions in restaurants. *Food Quality and Preference*, 16, 393-400. Image: beer from Flickr user Lee Coursey; cake comic from MindlessEating.org.

16

Introduce a peak and end on a high note.

People tend to remember and evaluate past experiences based on the highest or lowest point, and the end. People are more likely to fondly recall and repeat experiences that have a notable high point and end on a high note.

Flickr user randychiu

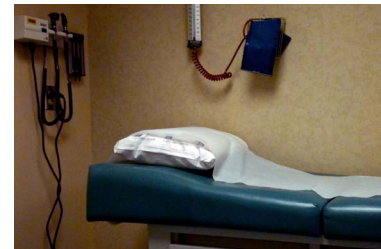


How might we introduce a positive peak into the experience?

How might we reduce any extreme negative aspects of the experience?

How might we ensure the experience ends on a high note?

Consider this...



Coming back for future colonoscopies

Researchers gave patients one of two colonoscopy exams. One group of patients received a slightly longer colonoscopy where the probe was left in longer, but resulted in a less painful end to the experience. Despite having a longer colonoscopy overall, these patients were more likely to rate the whole experience as less unpleasant, and were more likely to return for future exams.¹

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[1] Redelmeier, D A., Katz, J., and Kahneman, D. (2003). Memories of a colonoscopy: a randomized trial. Pain, 104(2003), 187-194. Image: hospital bed by Flickr user D'Arcy Norman.

17

Provide immediate and ongoing feedback.

When outcomes occur in the future it can be difficult to make the connection to the actions that originally caused them. More immediate feedback can help people better understand the consequences of their actions.

How might we provide ongoing feedback about the consequences of the user's actions or behaviors?

How might we help users understand future consequences more tangibly in the present?

Consider this...



How did I drive?

The Toyota Prius gives drivers an Eco Score, out of a possible 100 points, to indicate how environmentally-friendly their recent driving was. Drivers also get feedback on how much fuel they're using. This immediate data can help drivers make real-time adjustments to their driving behaviors to ideally conserve resources.¹

Nike



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[1] "Prius C Toyota's Affordable Hybrid." (2012) <http://www.stuff.co.nz/taranaki-daily-news/lifestyle/6929534/Prius-C-Toyotas-affordable-hybrid/> Image: Prius eco score from http://www.motortrend.com/roadtests/alternative/1203_2012_toyota_prius_c_takes_on_the_high_sierras/photo_12.html.

Set up the options

Cards 18-21

- 18 Call attention to the desired option
- 19 Make the default option the desired outcome
- 20 Make the desired outcome a mid-range option
- 21 Reduce uncertainty associated with the desired outcome

18

Call attention to the desired option.

People are more likely to select the option that they pay the most attention to. The longer a person looks at a visual representation of an option, the more likely they are to choose it.

How might we draw the user's attention to the desired option or outcome?

How might we make the desired option stand out?

How might we de-emphasize undesired options?

Consider this...



Attention-grabbing packaging

When deciding between two snacks, people are more likely to select the product with the more colorful and brighter packaging. This is especially true when people are making quick decisions, when they don't have strong preferences for either product, and when they are overwhelmed.¹



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[1] Milosavljevic, M., Navalpakkam, V., Koch, C., Rangel, A. (2011). Relative visual saliency differences induce sizable bias in consumer choice. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. 22(1), 67-74.

Make the default option the desired outcome.

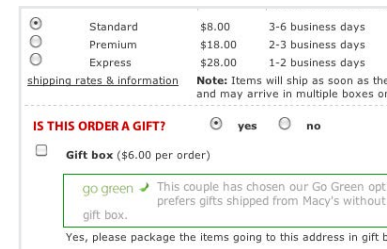
People are more likely to go with a default option when one is present, since it doesn't require any extra effort or action on their part.

How can we completely eliminate any effort required to select the desired option?

Consider this...



Changing AIDS testing for pregnant women in Zimbabwe from opt-in to opt-out increased testing rates from 65% to 99% over a six month period. Making testing opt-out meant that having the test became the default option.¹



Eco-friendly packaging

The wedding registry at Macys.com allows couples to indicate that they'd like to be environmentally responsible when it comes to their gift packaging. When a gift-giver purchases an item, the "Gift box" option is explicitly not selected by default.



[1] Chandisarewa, W., Stranix-Chibanda, L., Chirapa, E., Miller, A., Simoyi, M., Mahomva, A., Maldonado, Y., & Shetty, A. (2007). Routine offer of antenatal HIV testing ("opt-out" approach) to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV in urban Zimbabwe. Bulletin of the World Health Organization. Images: blood vials by Flickr user Neeta Lind; Macy's screenshot from Macys.com.

20

Make the desired outcome a mid-range option.

People tend to avoid extreme options (e.g., the cheapest or most expensive, smallest or largest). They're more likely to choose an option that feels like a compromise between extremes.

Flickr user sylvar



How might we introduce a more extreme option so that the desired choice feels like a compromise?

How might we reduce costs, features, or effort required so that the desired option is conceptually in the middle of the set?

Consider this...



A better bread machine

Williams-Sonoma was having difficulty selling a \$275 bread machine. When they introduced a more expensive option, sales of the original machine increased. The more expensive option made the original machine seem reasonably priced by comparison.¹



Compromising on a toothpaste

When people were presented with two toothpaste options - one low price, low quality and one high price, high quality - they were more likely to select the cheaper option. But when a more expensive and higher quality third option was introduced, they were more likely to select the middle option - a compromise in price and quality.²

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[1] Simonson, Itamar. (1993). Get Closer to Your Customers by Understanding How They Make Choices. California Management Review. 35(4): 68-84, as cited in Ariely, Dan. Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions. 2008. [2] Müller, H. (2011). To Be or Not to Be Price-Conscious: A Segment-Based Analysis of Compromise Effects in Market-Like Framing. Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg Working Paper 2/2011. Images: bread machine by Flickr user edvvc; toothpaste shelf by Flickr user Frankie Roberto.

21

Reduce uncertainty associated with the desired outcome.

People tend to avoid options that have ambiguous or uncertain outcomes, preferring instead options that are clear and certain.

How might we highlight factual information about the outcome?

How might we incorporate stories about other people's experiences to increase the user's confidence?

How might we decrease ambiguity about what's going to happen?

Consider this...



Knowing what to expect

Healthcare provider Swedish helps decrease patient fears about upcoming surgeries by giving them detailed descriptions about what to expect on surgery day. E.g., "When you are transported to the Operating Room itself, small electrocardiogram pads will be placed on your chest..."^[1]



Keep it simple

Cards 22-23

22 Don't overwhelm the user

23 Minimize decisions to reduce decision fatigue

Don't overwhelm the user.

When facing an overwhelming amount of information, people may shut down and stop paying attention. In the face of extremely scary information, people may engage in unhealthy self-soothing behaviors.



How might we reduce the amount of information we're presenting to the user?

How might we progressively reveal information to the user over time?

How might we avoid information overload?

Consider this...



Health warnings that increase smoking

In some cases, graphic or detailed warnings on cigarette packages that emphasize morbidity have been shown to have an unintended outcome - they can increase smoking!¹



Too many choices

In one experiment, researchers gave grocery shoppers samples of jam. Shoppers were more likely to buy the jam when there were 6 options on the sample table, rather than 24 options to choose from.²

23

Minimize decisions to reduce decision fatigue.

Making many decisions in a row can lower a person's willpower and cause them to subsequently make more "irrational" decisions.

Flickr user epSos.de



How might we reduce the number of difficult decisions a user is forced to make?

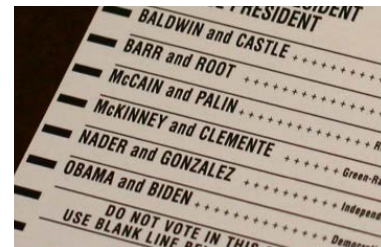
How might we minimize the number of decisions a user encounters during this experience?

Consider this...



Poverty and decision fatigue

People in poverty tend to face more decisions that require making difficult trade-offs than people who are affluent. This can deplete willpower and lead to poor subsequent choices. Researchers believe poor decision making may thus be a consequence of poverty, rather than a cause.¹



Ballot position

As people work their way down a ballot, making decision after decision, they become more fatigued and more likely to vote "irrationally" - like picking the candidate who is listed first without giving it much thought.²

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[1] Tierney, J. (2011). Do you suffer from decision fatigue? The New York Times, August 17. [2] Augenblick, N., Nicholson, S. (2011). Ballot Position, Choice Fatigue, and Voter Behavior. Working Paper, University of California, Berkeley. Images: houses by Flickr user mikecogh; ballot from Flickr user Muffet.