



CHIEF BEHAVIORAL OFFICERS HAVE INFLUENCE DOWN TO A SCIENCE

You're about to sink into this thoughtful article. It's a promising read, and you might want to jot down some notes. Go ahead and grab a pen. Which hand did you use to pick it up? Of course, you used your dominant hand, and you didn't even think about it. You just did it.

Now consider how many times each day you do something, make a decision, or move a certain way, without giving it much thought. You've probably ordered lunch, bought a new laptop, or picked out a bottle of wine without hesitation. It turns out, though, that there's a science to all of that.

The science of consumers

Scientists love to ask what and how. Behavioral scientists concentrate the what and how questions on people and the decisions we make. Consumer psychology helps to both demystify and drive consumer behavior:

- What influences us to make decisions?
- What drives us to purchase a more expensive bottle of wine as a gift than we would buy for ourselves?
- How do dollar signs on a menu affect the price we are willing to pay at a restaurant?

The answer: behavioral science. It's the kind of valuable insight that a chief behavioral officer will bring to your organization. Chief behavioral officers are trusted advisors who study the evidence-based insights that influence behavior.

Picking up a pen seems like instinct. Establishing systems and policies for peak performance should seem just as intuitive. A chief behavioral officer facilitates behavior change.

The touchable Apple

Apple stores are designed with consumers in mind. You don't visit one; you experience it. Everything about an Apple store invites you to come in and play. It's modern, yes, but its appeal for many is more than aesthetic. It's hands-on. There's behavioral science at work here.

The tables that hold the devices are big and command attention. You will probably reach for a laptop without deliberate thought. Apple knows why. In fact, they're banking on it.

Apple's secret to influencing consumer behavior is all in the screens. Each laptop screen at an Apple store is set to a precise 76-degree angle. Behavioral science suggests people will want to adjust the angle of the screen to see the content on the screen. That's exactly what Apple wants. It's all about tangible engagement. Evidence-based insights derived from behavioral science shows that setting laptop screens at a 76-degree angle increases the likeliness that more people will engage with the laptops, which could lead to more purchases.

Wisdom starts with data

When you think about data, especially if you're not used to working with raw data, you might conjure up something out of The Matrix. Lots of random and intimidating 0s and 1s scrolling up and down, and they don't seem to mean anything. Yes, data is raw numbers, and the numbers could appear to be unfiltered. That can seem scary. A behavioral scientist teaches organizations how to understand the data and how to apply it.

Data in an organization can be found in any spreadsheet, point-of-sale system, or website analytics. Analyzing data leads to information. Information is great, and it's even better when it's applied with purpose. That's when knowledge is born. After knowledge is applied to strategic initiatives...we achieve wisdom.

Chief behavioral officers guide organizations to transform data into wisdom. For example, think of buying a book online:

- Where is the shopping cart? Usually in the upper right-hand corner.
- Why is that? Human eye tracking research suggests that's where our eyes are likely to first look when viewing a computer screen.
- What happens when you put the book into the shopping cart and don't immediately make the purchase? Consumers are likely to receive a personalized email about the book, the shopping cart, and their additional shopping behavior.

How to influence behavior

A chief behavioral officer's craft is to study, understand, and influence human behavior. For example, considering an organizational challenge to increase enrollment into a 401(k) program. Behold the nudge, sludge, and shove methodologies.

A nudge uses natural human behavior to create innovative choice architecture. Research suggests people with lower socioeconomic status are already less likely to voluntarily opt-into a retirement plan. People of a lower socioeconomic status are likely to keep money on hand for more immediate needs. If there are extra steps in an enrollment process, they are unlikely to participate. However, a nudge can be introduced, making automatic enrollment the default point of entry into a 401(k). Now, more people may be encouraged to enroll because the extra steps aren't required.

A sludge is an extra set of barriers that make a decision more challenging. For example, if the goal is to increase enrollment in a 401(k), a sludge would be inserting a more complicated obstacle to opt-in, such as completing several forms and requiring the individual to submit each form to a different person or office.

A shove is a concept researched and coined by Clicksuasion Labs to indicate forcible and undesirable behavior change. Many change agents believe they are changing behavior with the individual's or organization's best interest in mind; however, forcing behavior change, or influencing some behavior change could be counter-intuitive because changing natural human behavior is likely to receive significant resistance.

Behavior beyond marketing

Methodologies like these may seem like something right out of the marketing department. That's partly correct. Marketing might point the way toward a nudge, sludge, or shove, and a chief behavioral officer could guide a team towards above average returns. In other words, not every digital cart abandoner receives the same prompt. A messaging using behavioral science is likely to target personal shopping behavior. All that data analysis and behavioral science gets brought to bear. The chief behavioral officer knows with greater precision how to make the prompt more personal, relevant, and authentic. Both consumers and companies want to see more outcomes with those qualities.

Change management is the foundation of strategic initiatives with behavioral science. When it's time to restructure department functions, healthcare benefits, or physical office space, change should be intuitive and include employee buy-in. Insights from a chief behavioral officer who understands human behavior and how to change it are valuable.

Nonprofits work with chief behavioral officers to help with fundraising. Legal professionals gain insights from chief behavioral officers to help with jury selection. Elected officials also use chief behavioral officers to help with messaging content for speech writing and voter decision-making.

Public safety professionals can use behavioral science to help manage communities. For example, research shows hurricane names like Sandy and Harvey sound too nice. Everybody has heard of somebody named Sandy or Harvey, and they're not so threatening. Therefore, people don't heed warnings to evacuate as seriously as they would if hurricanes were named something slightly more terrifying, like Hellbender or Deathtron 3000.

How to engage your chief behavioral officer: Access without overhead

You know more about the business of behavioral science. You've seen some benefits of what a chief behavioral officer can do. Now, consider the many ways that working with a chief behavioral officer can impact your organization. It's very efficient to engage a chief behavioral officer on demand. They help seamlessly set up systems, campaigns, and programs, and they're also around to help direct the strategies and tactics to support them as needed. You have access to their insights and capabilities, and don't have to keep them as a part of in-house overhead.

When you're ready to engage a chief behavioral officer, here are three steps to prepare for what's next:

1. Keep doing what you're doing. The chief behavioral officer needs to analyze where you are now to help get to where you want to go and measure the outcome.
2. Have an open mind. Consider what you want to achieve, and consider that the answer may be completely different than what you thought at the beginning.
3. Be willing to act. Get ready to make some decisions based on data, and not on intuition, guesswork, or institutional history. It may seem uncomfortable to abandon a, "that's the way we've always done it," line of thinking. Remember innovation is born from action.