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Behavioral Insights Global


The Client

Behavioral Insights Global
Behavioral Insights Global conducts research advisory services on global issues, such as climate change, sustainability, and health, which go beyond traditional national boundaries. BI Global partners include the United Nations, World Health Organization, private partners, and other institutional partners. In addition to research, they offer training, advisement, and behavioral expertise for policymakers, professionals, and the general public. Behavioral projects often take on many different forms, and each research question and project team is unique. For this reason, they work with partners to assess costs, identify solutions, conduct rigorous behavioral research, and implement findings in a streamlined process while building both community and capacity.

The Project

Behavioral Change in Energy Consumption
One of the most recent applications of behavioral insights has been to the energy sector due in part to the rise of renewables, such as solar power, electric vehicles, and home-based smart technologies. For example, behavioral features such as attention, memory, and self-control have been targeted with in-home displays to visualize energy in real-time (both aggregate data and for specific appliances) and through home energy reports, which leverage social norms by comparing one’s consumption to one’s neighbor. In large measure, these have been successful, with average savings of up to about 10% for in-home displays and 2% for home energy reports. At the same time, it is known that energy reduction is “sticky” for many subgroups, and many of the most effective nudges have been conducted by utilities or retailers, leaving consumers to their own devices, in order to identify which products and services will save them money and energy. The exciting advances in technology that allow consumers to control, set, and monitor their own energy, create the potential for misuse or further overconsumption of home energy. There are a host of energy devices on the market to effect behavioral change that now engender choice overload for both consumers and businesses who wish to manage their energy.

Energy consumption is an important topic for behavioral science. More than other domains, the value-action gap between what one intends to do (System 2) and what actually occurs may be larger because energy consumption habits are pervasive and nonconscious (System 1). Many want to save energy, at least for financial benefits, but they often do not know where to start. In the consumer market for energy-saving products, it is not yet obvious which devices are most effective, nor is it well understood how social factors interact with financial considerations. There is evidence that price sensitivity decreases and energy usage increases in direct response to the size of the household and high income. To address high-income users, social-based nudges, such as social norms, social recognition, and public disclosure, have become more important. In turn, those who are most able to afford market-based solutions, such as energy efficient and smart technologies, may be less sensitive to price and consume more than the average user, creating a puzzle: Why should those who can afford devices to reduce energy
invest in them if price does not matter, and what should the rest of the consumers (for whom financial considerations are important) do to decrease energy? Are cheaper energy-regulating devices worth the investment?

Behavioral Insights Global seeks research support for experimental work on the behavioral economics of energy efficiency. To better understand how nudges affect low and high-income populations, as well as test responses to innovative products, we are using behavioral and choice experiments online and in the field. This intensive practicum will build on research in behavioral energy to engage with the behavioral energy community on multiple levels:

- Conduct a literature review of the top players in home-based energy technology who are integrating behavioral science into energy efficient products and programs
  - Identify the business models of the companies and organizations
- Meet with small and large businesses in the energy sector to define and outline common problems and solutions relevant to behavioral science
- Analyze behaviors involved in behavioral energy to design and complete a behavioral analysis from the existing literature
- Provide recommendations for private and public partners on energy reduction efforts based on common company profiles – what are the themes, trends, and opportunities to add value?
- Design and launch a behavioral or choice experiment in partnership with researchers to better understand a commonly targeted behavior and to address market misperceptions (e.g., attention, perception, or memory)
2. Motivating Consumers to avail of their air travel rights

The Client

The Commission for Aviation Regulation (CAR) oversees the implementation of EU regulations with regard to air travel from Ireland.

Working with the CAR has a number of advantages:

- CAR implements a European regulations in Ireland so implications of findings can be applied to a European context
- It is an area that has received a lot of media attention in the last year
- Behavioral Economics has not been applied to the work of CAR previously
- Small team that can allow for direct access to key figures and a lot of statistical information.

The Project

Passengers are entitled to specific rights in the event of flight delays or cancellations. Despite large advertising campaigns the public remains largely unaware of these rights. Consumers are also entitled to compensation from airlines in certain circumstances. However, the numbers applying for compensation remains low and many people never pursue this right.

CAR wants to engage with consumers to ensure they know their rights but now needs to understand the barriers to them heeding this information. CAR would also like to see greater numbers availing of compensation and needs to understand why many passengers do not do so despite much initial anger when a flight is cancelled.

This is a key part of the work of the CAR and it has a crucial role to play in influencing the behavior of airlines and their response to consumers. In order to be truly effective CAR needs to see an uplift in the numbers availing of the information and following up on their entitlements.

The website outlining flight entitlements run by CAR is www.flightrights.ie.

The objective is to empower consumers by making them aware of their rights and to ensure they can take action. However, understanding the barriers to communication is essential to delivering on this. It requires consumers to firstly take note of and heed information on their rights and secondly to act upon that advice where the response of the airline is not satisfactory.

Many solicitors and other private advisers have recently been entering the market but charging consumers for a service that CAR provides for free. This is an unsatisfactory position but underlines the lack of awareness and confusion that consumers feel in this space.
3. Ensuring community buy in for land use projects

The Client

Coillte manages forestry on behalf of Ireland. It has a growing timber business that represents its core activity.

Working with Coillte has a number of advantages:

- Large organization with an international reach
- Growing industry with many new projects in the pipeline
- Important policy area for government in order to secure buy in from public
- Well-resourced team with and a lot of information available from media and community organizations.

The Project

Coillte is responsible for large tracts of land and some of these are no longer suitable for forestry. Coillte has a land solutions business to ensure these areas of land are put to good use in the future and continue to drive profit for the taxpayer. These projects range from tourist facilities like hotels to wind and solar farms. However, the public reaction to projects differs greatly. Some projects are welcomed, while others, such as wind farms in particular are strongly resisted. Community buy in for such projects is essential not only for Coillte but also for the government as many of these are key infrastructure that is necessary to deliver on energy and other targets.

Coillte needs to engage with communities to ensure that they understand the need for land use projects. Coillte also needs to ensure that the importance of such projects to local regions is understood.

It is important for Coillte to understand what drives communities to like one project but dislike another. Understanding the barriers to communication on some projects and how to overcome negative perceptions will be key factors in the success of future plans. It requires communities to understand the work of Coillte, the benefits to their area and the greater needs for development.

Other countries have successfully implemented such plans however, an understanding of local factors driving the Irish market is necessary. Coillte also needs to develop an approach to such engagement that breaks down barriers with communities and ensures that information is clearly received. This cannot happen without a firm understanding of what is driving negative reactions first.
4. Engaging the Small/Medium Enterprise (SME) community to interact with and implement CCPC policy

The Client

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is responsible for all aspects of competition and consumer protection law in Ireland. It has a responsibility to enforce regulations but also to inform and assist both consumers and business.

Working with CCPC has a number of advantages:

- Key regulator in Ireland
- Broad range of applications across multiple areas
- Strong economic and social profile for the outcomes of work
- Large volumes of data and accessible information for research purposes

The Project

In order to be effective the CCPC needs to proactively engage with business, particularly the SME sector. It is important that this audience comes to CCPC for advice before problems arise and works with CCPC as a partner rather than an adversary. There are many areas of competition and consumer law that such businesses are not informed enough on and often infringe rights due to this lack of awareness. The CCPC needs to understand how to engage this audience and how to overcome the ‘trust’ issues that cause the business to avoid talk to CCPC or clarifying a situation with them first.

CCPC needs to ensure that SMEs are aware of the benefits of competition for all rather than seeing it as a threat. They also need to ensure that business clarifies consumer rights and seeks out advice rather than making an incorrect decision. In order to have full impact CCPC needs the SME sector to engage at a much deeper level to improve knowledge and streamline service.

It is important for CCPC to understand what drives SMEs in their interaction with them. There is a need to identify ways that the SME can be ‘nudged’ to approach CCPC and seek advice. SMEs must also be actively encouraged to interact with CCPC policy and the current barriers to this happening are not fully understood.
City of Tacoma, WA

5. Incorporating Behavioral Insights in the City of Tacoma's Outreach to Citizens

The Client

The City of Tacoma’s (COT) Continuous Improvement Initiative was established with a mission to help departments identify problems and implement solutions while developing citywide capacity for problem solving and continuous improvement. We are a City Manager initiative focused on improving internal and external service delivery. Continuous Improvement uses data process improvement frameworks, training and other tools to maximize the value provided to both customers and the public. The initiative is staffed by analysts housed within the Office of Management and Budget, but independent from typical budget functions.

The Project

By applying Behavioral Insights research to COT letters to the community, we hope to achieve several goals, including:

1) Improved communication to non-English and ESL speaking citizens of Tacoma
2) Reduced number of nuisance violations resulting in faster code compliance
3) Timely tax and utility payments resulting in reduced late fees and penalties.

This project has two components under which an MPP student can participate to fulfill the PAE. The first project is targeting repeat offenders of nuisance code, which is currently underway and managed by a Continuous Improvement (CI) project team. The COT’s Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) department enforces nuisance complaints. A nuisance repeat offender is an individual that has two or more nuisance cases filed within one-year period. In 2015, NCS issued fines to 164 nuisance repeat offender; 2016 NCS issued fines 315 nuisance repeat offenders; and in 2017 NCS issued fines to 111 nuisance repeat offender. The COT’s communication with repeat nuisance code violators has been ineffective in recent years. After review, the CI project team found the letter to repeat violators to be difficult to understand, long, and without clear direction on next steps. The project team has developed a one-page insert that summarizes next steps for the repeat violator, and also includes language that warns of incremental penalties using BI techniques, supported by existing literature on the subject. Students have the opportunity to use data from this implementation to demonstrate the effectiveness (and statistical significance) of the insert, and recommend best practices for reimplementation the following year.

The second component of this project allows the student to engage in the process of incorporating BI techniques from the beginning. Component 1 described above was unable to scope direct changes to the actual letter (it only included an insert), and only include repeat nuisance violators. This component would address ALL nuisance violations (10x the sample size). There is ample opportunity to make changes to the letter using BI techniques. The CI project review team found that the existing letter includes legal language (even citing RCW code multiple times), which was found to be confusing and even of no little to no utility. The letter is also very long, and also found to be intimidating to some subsets of the population. This second component of the project would allow the student to undertake the project from start to finish, with end-of-year occurring before data would become available.
FrancesWestCo

6. Analyzing C-Suites thinking and behavior on hiring people with disabilities that can lead to progressive and differentiation for fueling the Future of Work

The Client

FrancesWestCo is a technology consulting firm founded by Frances West, IBM’s first Chief Accessibility Officer, works with institutional clients around the world to achieve value differentiation, talent acquisition, and marketing expansion through technology based digital inclusion policy, governance, workplace innovation strategy, best practices, and diversity in technology consulting.

The Project

In 2016, 17.9 percent of persons with a disability were employed, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In contrast, the employment-population ratio for those without a disability was 65.3 percent. Presently the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is more than double that of the general population and has not progressed in the last 25 years even with the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

There are many reasons contributing to this. One hypothesis is that without the explicit commitment and support from the highest ranking officers, such as the CEO, the disability employment outcome will not change. One study recently conducted by the Kessler Foundation, has concluded that “When there is commitment from upper management, and effective practices are in place, all employees and their supervisors achieve success, and businesses reap the benefits of their diverse and productive work force.” Roger DeRose, CEO Kessler.

Given the shortfall in qualified individuals to fill STEM-related jobs, this untapped source of labor should not be ignored. Moreover, people with disabilities tend to possess very creative minds as they have to in order to navigate life and the world around them. We are beginning to see some innovative companies’ CEOs using their platform to uplift this topic as a strategic imperative. For example, Tim Cook’s 2017 Commencement address talked about how Apple’s focus on accessibility (technology to enable people with disabilities’ participation of the digital world is one of Apple’s highest objectives. Microsoft’s new CEO, Satya Nadella, recently transformed Microsoft’s culture, programs and hiring practices and disclosed his personal connection with disability.

The intent of this project is to study the thinking behind the highest level of decision making executives to see if and how behavioral science can influence their understanding and actions towards inclusive employment. The end goal is to inform the design of substantive, sustained new government policies and innovative business strategies so that Purpose and Profit can be integrated.
Town of Milford, MA

7. Increasing turnout in local elections

The Client

The Town of Milford’s election working group was appointed by the Board of Selectmen to study how to improve the town election process, especially related to increasing voter turnout in the annual town elections.

The Project

Like many Massachusetts towns, Milford holds an annual election every April to fill local government positions such as the Board of Selectmen and representative town meeting members. But turnout numbers are typically very low: since 2010, an average of 18 percent of registered voters participate in town elections, compared to 75 percent in presidential elections.

Behavioral science has been used to improve get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts in the context of specific campaigns (see, for example, Todd Rogers’s work). But to our knowledge, little to no work has been done on "neutral" GOTV efforts.

Students will survey Milford voters that participate in national and state elections (but not local elections) to understand what would motivate them to participate. Students will investigate the efficacy of various outreach efforts to see how the town can most efficiently spend its limited election budget. Students will also explore potential changes to make voting more accessible, such as changes to the election date, polling places, and absentee balloting.

The final product would be used by the working group, in conjunction with the town clerk’s office, to attempt to increase turnout at this year's town election (scheduled for April 2, 2019). More long-term recommendations would be brought before this spring's town meeting in the hopes of increasing turnout at future elections.
Aporta, Lima, Peru

8. Early Childhood Development Strategy for the Breca Group

The Client

Aporta is the NGO arm of the Breca Group. We work at the intersection of business and social needs, using human centered design and other innovation methodologies to generate solutions, strategies, or products that positively impact the communities where we operate. Volar is a transversal corporate social responsibility strategy for the Group that focuses on early childhood development and creating the necessary conditions for children within our areas of influence to have a chance at optimal development to be able to thrive.

The Project

Question:

What incentives/motivations/nudges (other use of BE) can we put in place that would move local officials to identify ECD gaps in their policies and plans, build an action plan to address them, and be incentivized to implement their plan at the municipal level? What BE tools can we use to ensure buy-in from elected officials towards a strategy that impacts the communities they represent? Who needs to demand action from the local officials to motivate them (message, channel)?

Background:

In 2016, Breca Group decided to analyze and find a topic that could transverse their various industries and business units and become a unifying corporate social responsibility area. In 2017, via Aporta, the Group developed a strategy around social impact in early childhood development (ECD). This strategy centers around creating a holistic, integral model that changes behaviors and perceptions around ECD in five areas that influence a child's healthy development: nutrition, health, security and protection, early learning, and responsive care. These areas have been extensively studied and came together in the Lancet Study 2016 to be named as "nurturing care". Our strategy includes one additional area: awareness amongst stakeholders, where stakeholders are those caretakers in direct contact with the child, its community and local government actors, and finally, regional and/or national agencies and other private sector actors who work on their behalf.

The work to be done in the "nurturing care" model will be developed alongside world class partners: ideas42, Sesame Street, and JPAL. We know there is a lack of understanding around early childhood development that extends from caretakers to elected officials, and must be approached from all angles to have success.

Issue:

Our initial districts for intervention are Antauta and Ajoyani in the Puno region. Elected officials struggle to use their full budget, usually have lower capacity for developing strategic plans, and cannot be reelected to their position which strains possible continuity for plans which can have a large scale impact. This is further exacerbated by the fact that these districts are part of the area of influence by our mining company. A PAE project could focus on how we might design and develop a clear plan for local and regional governmental officials to create policies or create...
integral systems within their directorates in favor of optimal child development and what incentives need to be in place for them to be executed.

The Final Product:

This final product would be the beginning framework for how we might engage the public sector from outset of the project and how to best help local government structures implement sound, sustainable policies for the protection of optimal early childhood development. The final product would include: some analysis or map the gaps of local government capabilities and where to focus BE interventions to help motivate and execute a strategic plan around ECD, clear actions with supporting evidence in way of research, theory, realworld examples, demonstrated impact, etc. Ideally moving into a detailed work plan and possible partnerships, leaders of thought, etc. in this field that could guide us to move forward. The most helpful final product is one that does not stay at the 30,000 ft level of good ideas but offers a clear plan of action and justification for our public sector stakeholders that achieves buy-in, policies, and a strategic plan for their community that includes ECD.

Additional Comments:

We can have a designated on the ground researcher to help the HKS team collect materials, data, or conduct interviews if needed within the area. It would be helpful if at least one person spoke Spanish or read Spanish at an intermediate fluency level.

9. Increasing adequate segregation in retailing operations.

The Project:

Urbanova is the real-estate Company of Grupo Breca, and has over 100 years of experience in the Peruvian market. In addition to managing the properties of the Group, Urbanova develops, designs, builds, leases and operates the buildings – Prima and Retail Offices. They have 16 office buildings (9 Prime - 5 LEED Green Building Certification) and 3 shopping centers.

Aporta is currently working on a project with Urbanova to address one of the main issue they face in the operation of the buildings: the reduction of waste generated by their operations. Currently, together all buildings generate 170 tons of waste per month (organic, recyclable and non recyclable), which are then disposed of in formal sanitary landfills. In this context, Aporta has been working on a pilot project, focused on rechanneling the waste (organic and recyclables) into other industrial processes, such as the production of food for livestock, thus creating circular economy cycles. Nevertheless, this process is difficult and costly, especially because the segregation process is not done correctly and organic waste is mixed with other recyclable material. We need to find innovative methods to improve / facilitate the segregation process, beginning with the communication of the different categories of waste disposal and motivating people (workers of the different sites and also visitors) to segregate correctly. How can we use behavioral science to help us tackle this challenge?

Ultimately, our objective is to reduce the amount of mixed waste, and increase the percentage of organic and recyclable matter in order to reduce the environmental footprint of Urbanova.

The Final Product:

Aporta would like to use the outcome of this project to:
1. To implement policies and processes
2. To communicate better with visitors and users
3. To redesign the signage system

Keep in mind that the final product will be used in the prime offices, as well as with the visitors of the 3 shopping centers.

Additional Comments:

As a side note, we would be also interested in exploring the challenge of how we could use behavioral science to reduce the use of water in building operations - bathrooms, restaurants, etc.
VoteTripling, Washington, DC

10. Integrating behavioral insights into voter turnout programs

The Client:

VoteTripling.org is a new PAC that helps Democratic campaigns implement a cutting-edge, social influence GOTV tactic that prompts people to get 3 friends to vote. We know campaigns are often stretched too thin for new projects or expenses. So, campaigns provide us with lists of likely Democrats in their district, and we do all the work: our volunteers text the campaign’s potential supporters, invite them to pledge to get three friends to vote, and we then send behavioral science-based SMSs before Election Day reminding these “Vote Triplers” to urge their three friends to vote. We do this all for free.

The Project:

We would like the assistance of an MPP2 in determining how we can best utilize behavioral insights in our voter turnout work. Specifics goals of this project are TBD and flexible based on the student’s interest.

This product will guide our partnerships with 2019 political campaigns.
Harvard University Administrative Nudge Portal

The Client:

Harvard University has awarded a small grant for the creation of a "Nudge Portal Project." Our goal is to encourage administrative innovations based on insights from behavioral economics and 'nudge' research. We hope to identify and promote low cost, evidence-based interventions around campus and share them with our 10,000 administrative staff. The project team has begun designing resources (a Nudge website/blog) and built a diverse community of Harvard staff who are interested in experimenting in their operational areas.

The Project:

Students will have the opportunity to meet with Director level staff who are involved with the Nudge Portal Project. This includes representatives from HBS MBA Admissions, HBS Marketing, HBS Alumni, HBS Human Resources, Harvard IT, Harvard Library, Harvard Office for Sustainability, etc.

Conversations with staff will explore current administrative procedures and problems that may be corrected through behavioral interventions. Students will propose interventions and help design tests for those interventions. Schedules permitting, students could help collect and analyze data from testing.

Additionally, students would have the opportunity to contribute to the Nudge Portal website & blog. This resource will include articles that summarize behavioral research which may be specifically relevant to Higher Education administrators.

Additional Comments:

Student contributions will crucial in the success of this project. The guidance we receive in intervention design and testing will help ensure that we achieve high-impact results. Success stories will be shared broadly throughout the Harvard community and provide inspiration for future discussion and testing. Administrative wins that come from testing will save Harvard time and money that can be spent elsewhere towards the mission.