

✱ Click

A No Bull\$h!t
paper

A manifesto for Effortless Culture Change.

A new approach for bold HR leaders
who want longer lasting impact for less
time, money, and effort.



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Short on time? Here's a summary.

The industry is in a rut. The same initiatives are rolled out, but don't create long-term impact. Frustrated by this, we returned to the drawing board to find better ways to change culture.

In this manifesto, we share five beliefs that underpin a new method for creating longer lasting impact for less time, money and effort.

BELIEF 1:

The culture change industry sucks.

Most businesses suffer wasted productivity, heightened attrition, and sky-high absenteeism. They invest huge amounts of time, energy, and money in culture. Their efforts create short-term momentum, but not long-term change.

The impact? Senior leaders think you can't change culture. HR aren't respected. Budgets and resource are cut.

BELIEF 2:

We must oversimplify culture to shift it.

Culture consists of intangible psychological parts (i.e., values, attitudes, and beliefs) and concrete behaviours. Most efforts target both.

But targeting the intangible psychological parts is a high risk, low reward strategy. Values, attitudes, and beliefs are deep-rooted and stubborn. And, even if you change what people think, you probably won't change how they act.

In contrast, we can change behaviour – often quickly, dramatically, and cheaply. And the visibility of behaviours creates a ripple effect.

We must therefore oversimplify culture change to focus on shifting behaviours, and less on influencing values, attitudes, and beliefs.

BELIEF 3:

Motivation and capability are overrated.

Traditional methods aim to upskill and motivate. The assumption? People will change how they behave if they want to and have the right skills.

But this isn't how human beings behave. We find behaviour change hard because it requires attention and willpower. And both are limited resources.

This is why traditional efforts only create short-term changes. Once willpower and attention run out, things go back to the way they were.

BELIEF 4:

To last, culture change must be effortless.

The behaviours that stick are those we can perform without willpower, attention, or effort. The behaviours we can maintain even when we're busy, stressed, and tired.

It turns out, long-term change is less about maximising motivation and capability. It's more about minimising the effort needed to do the right thing.

We can achieve this by applying behavioural science built at the world's best universities. A science that's already been successfully applied in many other contexts. It's just barely been applied to change behaviour and culture at work, until now...

The name of this new approach and methodology? *Effortless Culture Change*.

BELIEF 5:

We must nurture 3 conditions in 3 systems.

The goal is to create the conditions that make the right behaviours effortless. Behavioural science shows this happens when the conditions around people make the behaviour the obvious, easy, and rewarding option.

We can purposefully nurture these three conditions at three systemic levels:

- 1. Organisational.**
Business and HR leaders can design shared systems that minimise friction with the right behaviours.
- 2. Team.**
Managers can create an environment that makes the right behaviours the easiest, most appealing options.
- 3. Personal.**
Leaders, managers, and colleagues create their own systems needed to maintain the change.

After reading, you have a choice.

You can return to the old ways. You'll enjoy short bursts of momentum, but not lasting impact. The alternative is to make culture change effortless. If you do, you will:

- 1.** Create longer lasting impact.
- 2.** Save time, money, and effort.
- 3.** Reduce reliance on sceptics.
- 4.** Build respect and credibility.

Got questions? Let's chat.



Speak to Matt.
(friendly chat, not a sales pitch)

What are Click's No Bull\$h!t papers?

The short answer?

Like a white paper, but more practical and provocative.

The longer answer?

Bull\$h!t is everywhere.

Especially when exploring abstract concepts like culture. It creates unhelpful noise where it's impossible to tell facts from fiction.

We wanted to cut through this noise. The answer? Our No Bull\$h*t papers.

We write our papers to be:



Pragmatic.

We outline actionable steps that make a genuine difference.



Scientific.

We share hard evidence on what really works.



Engaging.

We don't waffle or just repeat what everybody else says.

**“Your assumptions are
your windows on the
world. Scrub them off
every once in a while, or
the light won't come in.”**

Isaac Asimov,
American Writer and Biochemist

Why do we need a manifesto?

It's normal to hold assumptions deeply.

The problem comes when our assumptions stop us from seeing clearly. When we mistake them as the only option.

This is the current state of the culture change industry. Our profession has been operating on autopilot for too long, rolling out the same stale initiatives with little evidence of long-term impact. According to the most comprehensive review available, only 1 in 5 culture change efforts are successful.¹

The industry is in a rut. And it needs to get out.

Big businesses across sectors repeatedly tell us:

- ➔ "Behaviour change never seems to stick."
- ➔ "Our values aren't lived day-to-day."
- ➔ "Our culture hinders our performance."
- ➔ "HR isn't truly respected and valued."

We refuse to accept it must be this way. We believe there are smarter, better ways to shift culture. Methods built using the strongest, latest research on how human behaviour really works. And, of course, how to change it.

So, we went back to the drawing board.

We collated the results of reviews and meta-analyses on culture and behaviour change. And, in the depths of our research, we realised that the industry is making colossal mistakes.

Thankfully, we also found a better way to develop company culture. A method that creates longer lasting impact, whilst also saving you time, money, and energy.

Here is our manifesto for a new approach to culture.

Written for the HR leader who refuses mediocrity, our manifesto is built on five beliefs:

1. The culture change industry sucks.
2. We must oversimplify culture to shift it.
3. Motivation and capability are overrated.
4. To last, culture change must be effortless.
5. We must nurture 3 conditions across 3 systems.

BELIEF 1:

The culture change industry sucks.

We face a culture crisis.

Stale culture has become the hallmark of big businesses. Globally, 51% are seeking new jobs and 77% globally aren't engaged at work.² Dysfunctional cultures are estimated to cost organisations over \$8 trillion globally through wasted productivity, heightened attrition, and sky-high absenteeism.²

Colossal time, money and effort are invested in improving culture.

Culture has become a key topic for most top leadership teams.³ Equally, organisational design and employee experience are currently two of the three top priorities for HR leaders.⁴

The most common methods to develop culture include comms campaigns, leadership development, culture champions, soft skill training, and survey platforms.

But current efforts are failing to create long-term change.

Traditional methods often receive positive feedback or bursts of momentum in the short-term. But very few create lasting change.¹

Even industry leading case studies celebrated in the *Business Culture Awards* lack convincing evidence for long-term change.² Despite being positioned as the crème de la crème, many only share anecdotal feedback and very few report pre- and post-intervention changes in business metrics.

This creates a vicious cycle for HR leaders.

Despite investing great sums in culture, the lack of clear impact makes it increasingly difficult to gain future investment. Often, HR are not seen as genuine enablers of performance. Culture becomes viewed as this ethereal thing that slips through your fingers. Something that's impossible to change, so why bother wasting even more money on it?

But we refuse to believe it must be this way.


A SHORT STORY:

We recently spoke to a large telecoms business who has rolled out many training programmes over the years. They told us, "We need this time to be different. New behaviour must stick."

Gently prodding, we asked whether more training was the right way to go. But they felt it was too late. They had already gone through the lengths of getting sign off from senior leaders.

Will this time be different? It's too early to say. But we doubt it.

This beautifully captures the status quo. The industry has become aware that current approaches don't work, but hasn't yet found better ones. It's stuck making marginal tweaks to old methods, instead of returning to the drawing board to find new, better ways to shift culture.

A full-page background image of a person in a red jacket and dark pants walking up a steep, snow-covered mountain slope. The person is leaving a trail of footprints in the snow. The mountain is rugged with dark rocks visible in the upper sections. The sky is overcast and misty.

**"If you always do
what you've always
done, you'll always
get what you've
always gotten."**

Jessie Potter,
Educator and Counsellor

BELIEF 2:

We must oversimplify culture to shift it.

Culture is abstract – it isn't obvious what to focus on.

Despite lacking a widely accepted definition of culture, most agree it broadly refers to shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviours.

With something so abstract, it isn't obvious where to begin. Many respond with efforts to change what people think, believe, and value. But this is the first mistake.

We can't change people's values.

Values are deep-rooted and stubbornly held. There are fewer changes in people's values over time than their personality.⁶

And asking someone to swap their personal values for your company values is futile. Let's get real: have you ever dropped your personal values because your employer has asked you to adopt their ones? Probably not.

Targeting attitudes or beliefs is high risk, but low reward.

Many use methods like comms campaigns to influence people's attitudes and beliefs. This sometimes works,⁷ but efforts often backfire by strengthening pre-existing beliefs.⁸

Psychologists use the term Belief Persistence to describe how our attitudes are stubborn, even when faced with opposing evidence.⁹

But let's be optimistic. Let's assume you successfully change people's attitudes and beliefs. Let's imagine you get them to fully buy into a new way of behaving.

The challenge now is the remarkably large gap between our attitudes, intentions, and behaviours.¹⁰ Even if you change what people think, you probably won't change how they act. See the 5-a-day case study on the next page for a powerful example of this.

To summarise then, changing people's attitudes and beliefs at scale is a high risk yet low reward strategy.

But behaviour change is possible and powerful.

There are examples where we have changed people's decisions and behaviour – often quickly, cheaply, and without changing people's attitudes.^{11, 12}

Public policy provides many examples of this. In one instance, simply moving the salad bar closer to children at breaktime led to a 71% increase in visits.¹³ In another, pension enrolment increased by 36% by simply changing the default option on the forms.¹⁴ Tiny changes, but big impact.

And unlike intangible values, attitudes, and beliefs, the visibility of behaviours creates a ripple effect. Groundbreaking studies at Yale uncovered how the actions of people around us subconsciously influences what we eat,¹⁵ if we smoke,¹⁶ and even how happy we are.¹⁷ Behaviours at work are no less contagious.

The soft stuff changes when behaviour changes.

Behaviours not only have a ripple effect on other behaviours. They also influence shared values, attitudes, and beliefs.

The behaviours and decisions we see around us send signals about what's truly valued. For example, you won't truly believe 'integrity' is a shared value until you see the business turn down a profitable, yet dishonest client.

To summarise then, the industry has the equation the wrong way around. Typically, the strategy is to what people think to change what people do. But the research suggests we should focus on behaviours first. Shared beliefs, attitudes, and values will follow.

So, we must oversimplify culture change to behaviour change.

Factually speaking, culture isn't just about behaviour. But in practice, we must oversimplify it and predominantly focus on changing behaviour.

To use a metaphor, consider the London tube map. Whilst it isn't a factual representation of the city's layout, we use this simplified map as a pragmatic way of getting from A to B.

The million-dollar question then becomes, "How do we shift behaviour?" This is where the industry makes its next mistake.

CASE STUDY:

5-a-day campaign¹⁸

In 1991, the US rolled out the Five-a-day Campaign. The goal was to get the public to eat more fruit and vegetables.

The good news? Before the campaign, only 7% of the US population knew they should eat 5 a day. By 1997, this had tripled. People felt 5-a-day was the right way to go.

The bad news? Actual consumption of fruit and vegetables didn't change.

This is a classic example of how new knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs often don't change behaviour.

"Any intelligent fool can make things more complex. It takes a touch of genius – and a lot of courage – to move in the opposite direction."

Albert Einstein



BELIEF 3:

Motivation and capability are overrated.

Traditional methods target motivation and capability.

Think about traditional culture change methods – comms, training, leadership development, culture champions, and so on. They all focus on giving people new knowledge or skills, motivating them to change their behaviour, or both.

There's an implicit assumption that people will act differently if they have the capability and motivation to change. But here's the thing...

Knowing better doesn't mean doing better.

Hundreds of studies have reported a remarkably weak relationship between what we intend to do and what we actually do.^{19, 20, 21} So, even if we give people new skills and motivate them to act, it's unlikely to change their behaviour.

Our lived experience shows this too. How many times have you committed but failed to change your behaviour, after training or when making New Year's Resolutions? The barrier to behaviour change is rarely a lack of skill or motivation. So, what really stops us?

Often, the barrier to behaviour change is friction.

The right thing to do is rarely the easiest. This creates a type of friction that requires attention and willpower to overcome.

But willpower and attention are limited resources.^{22, 23} This is why traditional methods create short-term momentum, but not long-term change.²⁴ Their impact is reliant on willpower and attention, which always run out as soon as we get busy, tired, and stressed. This leads to the 'Triangular Relapse Pattern', shown and described on the next page.

Evocative experiences aren't the answer.

Many try to overcome this limitation by creating increasingly immersive, evocative, and one-of-a-kind experiences that inspire people to change. They believe that giving people a standout experience will evoke enough emotion and passion to create sustained behaviour change.

These efforts are admirable and will promise a good day out. But they usually suffer the same fate, as behaviour change still relies on limited pools of willpower and attention.

To use a metaphor, think about a wind-up toy. No matter how hard you twist, the momentum always fades.

We must face facts.

The truth is this: humans have limited willpower and attention. When we are busy, stressed, and tired, we're drawn to the path of least resistance. Rather than tirelessly fight against it, why not use it to our advantage?

THE STATUS QUO:

The 'Triangular Relapse Pattern'

Time and time again, studies show how traditional methods lead to the same relapse pattern:

1. Starting point.

We try to change our behaviour (e.g., protect our work-life balance, exercise more, or give regular feedback).

2. Short-term progress.

We use our attention and willpower to overcome friction and demonstrate the new behaviour.

3. Relapse.

Inevitably, we run out of willpower or attention. Our behaviour goes back to how it was before.

This pattern explains why businesses keep investing in training, year after year, without ever getting behaviour to stick.



BELIEF 4:

To last, culture change must be effortless.

Long-term change can't rely on willpower or attention.

If it does, people will revert to old behaviours as soon as they get busy, stressed, or tired. To last, culture change must can't rely on these limited resources. It must become as effortless as possible. So, how do we do this?

We must learn from behaviour change efforts that do stick.

In 2024, academics at the University of Pennsylvania published the biggest ever review of behaviour change efforts.²⁵ They compared the average impact of different methods. The ones with the greatest effect sizes were:

1. **Access.** Giving people the resources they need to do the behaviour.
2. **Habit change.** Helping people to change their autopilot response when they're not thinking.
3. **Social support.** Getting support from others to do the behaviour.
4. **Material incentives.** Receiving a reward for the behaviour.
5. **Descriptive norms.** Seeing the new behaviour as a norm.

What these methods have in common? They all focus on making the behaviour easier or more appealing. They aim to reduce friction, instead of motivating or upskilling people to overcome it.

Our goal must be to make change effortless.

Culture change is less about maximising motivation or capability. It's more about minimising effort required to do the right thing.

For change to last, we must reduce friction with the right behaviours so they can be maintained even when people are busy, tired, and stressed. It's less about making us better when we're at our best; it's more about making us better at our worst.


We must shift our focus away from people-focused interventions towards the systems and conditions around people. If we change the tracks, the train will follow.

We must apply behavioural science to shift culture.

The best news is that behavioural science shows us the conditions under which behaviour change becomes inevitable. This science has been built at universities like Havard, Yale, and Cambridge.²⁶

Even better, this science has already been proven in other contexts. It's been applied to successfully shift behaviour in public services, lifestyle apps, and consumer marketing. It's just barely been applied to the culture change industry, until now.

We bottle this science in our *Effortless Culture Change* methodology. The final belief shares the first principles of this approach.

A person is skateboarding down a paved road that curves through a dense forest. The person is seen from behind, wearing a light-colored t-shirt with the word 'POPE' on it, dark shorts, and a backpack. Their arms are raised in a 'V' shape, signifying achievement or freedom. The road is flanked by tall evergreen trees and some autumn-colored foliage. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

"You do not rise to
the level of your
goals. You fall to the
level of your systems."

James Clear

BELIEF 5:

We must nurture 3 conditions across 3 systems.

First, we need clarity on the behaviours or culture needed.

The first step is to define a shared cultural vision. This outlines what you stand for and what this looks like in behavioural terms. This then becomes the North Star for culture efforts.

Behaviours become effortless when 3 conditions are met.

We can intentionally design the conditions needed to make the right behaviours inevitable. Behavioural science shows that behaviours become almost inevitable when three conditions are present.^{26, 27, 28} The behaviour must be:

1. **Obvious.**
There is a clear trigger that grabs attention and consistently sparks the behaviour.
2. **Easy.**
The behaviour requires little attention, willpower, or effort to do.
3. **Rewarding.**
The behaviour is an appealing, enjoyable, and rewarding thing to do.

We can purposefully nurture these conditions at three systemic levels: organisational, team, and personal. And collectively, these systems minimise friction with the desired behaviours, making them easier to maintain over time.

LEVEL 1:

Organisational.

The first level of conditions spans teams, regions, or departments. These are the conditions that, if tweaked, will impact the greatest number of people.

Some systemic conditions explicitly sit in HR's control, such as the touchpoints across the employee lifecycle. Many HR teams wisely embed their values in these touchpoints to automatically drive them. For example, values are often assessed in recruitment and performance management processes.

But we must also remember that behaviour isn't just influenced by these processes. Wider business systems also shape culture, including goals, processes, technology, and governance. HR leaders must work with other business leaders to shape systemic conditions in a way that reduces friction with the right behaviours.

LEVEL 2:

Team.

Research from 5,983 teams at one large tech firm found a wider range of experiences *within* the company, than *between* companies.²⁹ The reason? Our experience of work is shaped most by those with whom we work most frequently.

So, whilst systemic conditions influence our behaviour, our immediate team environment is even more critical.

Team conditions are shaped by meetings, huddles, rituals, processes, 1:1s, charters, and storytelling amongst other things. By intentionally designing these touchpoints, managers can cascade the values and behaviours in your Culture Blueprint.

LEVEL 3:

Personal.

There's an acronym in the culture industry: EPIC (every person impacts culture). It makes sense then that the final step is to help leaders, managers, and colleagues take accountability for their behaviour.

Behavioural science has given us dozens of ways to proactively nurture the systems and conditions around us.³⁰ In doing so, we make the new behaviours more obvious, easy, and rewarding. It also shows us how to turn simple behaviours into automated habits, making them easier to maintain over time.^{26, 31}

We must use this science to influence how we design traditional methods, such as training. This way, we make sure that new skills translate into actual behaviour change.

You now have a choice.

You can put your head in the sand. You can go back to the same old methods. You'll enjoy short bursts of momentum, but you won't create lasting impact.

The alternative is *Effortless Culture Change*. This approach will help you:

- **Create longer lasting impact.**
Your impact won't rely on short-lived boosts of motivation or willpower.
- **Save time, money, and effort.**
You won't need to keep investing in short-term solutions, saving your time and budget for the other things you need to do.
- **Reduce reliance on sceptics.**
You won't need to try every trick in the book getting buy-in from the sceptics who want change, but won't invest effort.
- **Build respect and credibility.**
You'll avoid focusing too much on the 'touchy feely' stuff loathed by many.

Got questions?

Sure, let's chat. Just click the button below.



Speak to Matt.
(friendly chat, not a sales pitch)

Who are Click, anyway?

OUR PROMISE:

Behaviour change to drive your bottom line.

We identify and drive the most critical behaviours for business success. The result? We turn people and culture development from a nice-to-have into a need-to-have.

These behaviours usually link to areas such as:

- Accountability
- Change
- Collaboration
- Customer service
- Leadership
- Innovation
- Inclusion
- Sales

OUR CLIENTS:

We help commercial HR leaders create tangible business impact.

Our clients are medium to large businesses across diverse sectors. We typically work with HR leaders but have also worked with wider business leaders.

Compared with traditional methods for people and culture development, we help HR leaders:

1. **Drive the bottom line.** We identify and shift the behaviours that drive the bottom line (and use data to prove our impact).
2. **Create greater impact.** We use our Frictionless Change method to create more impact for less time, money, and effort.
3. **Become trusted advisors.** We target and prove business impact, so HR are seen as trusted, commercial leaders.

OUR APPROACH:

We apply behavioural science to change what people do.

If you want to make a tangible impact, what matters most isn't how capable or engaged your people are. You need to change their behaviour.

We're a behavioural science consultancy who specialise in people and culture development. We help you:

1. Identify and target the behaviours that will have the greatest possible impact on the bottom line.
2. Shift these behaviours by selecting and designing the most impactful change intervention.
3. Prove your impact by tracking changes in behaviour and business outcomes over time.

OUR METHOD:

We use three methods to shift behaviour and culture.

1. **Behaviour Strategy.** We uncover current behaviour, identify the behaviours you need, and co-create a strategy to get from A to B.
2. **Behaviour Sprints.** We apply the behavioural science method to turn the most critical behaviours into organisational habits.
3. **Behaviour Sessions.** We deliver bespoke sessions and programmes that help people embed critical behaviours in their daily work.



Speak to Matt.
(friendly chat, not a sales pitch)

Our impact.

We've impacted over
259,000 people in
15 countries across
8 sectors

100% of our
clients recommend
working with us

96% of session
participants recommend
our sessions.



[Website](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Get in touch](#)

"Click work at pace and deliver to a very high standard. They bring great expertise and have really helped us to create things that work for our complex, global organisation."

Adam Streeter

Head of Leadership and Culture, Primark

"Click showed an impressive understanding of our firm, its people, and its unique context. Their output has been a gamechanger. I highly recommend Click for their expertise, collaborative approach, and genuine commitment to excellence."

Nicola Elakel

Head of Talent & Leadership Development, BDO

"We've really enjoyed working with Click. We got such great feedback that we've been doing more work with them since. Massive shoutout and thanks to Click."

Linann Shaw

People and Culture Executive, DrDoctor

"FANTASTIC! And I really mean it... Practical, engaging, and truly thought-provoking."

Serkan Deveci

HR leader, Google

"We thoroughly enjoy working with Click. They dedicate time to understand our needs. They always receive positive feedback from our teams. They can work within short timeframes and provide valuable advice."

Amy Dicastiglione-Gray,

Head of People, Hollywood Bowl

"Love working with Click - credible, trustworthy and delivered above and beyond on every promise. They're incredibly passionate and knowledgeable and built a great partnership - I feel like they're now an extension of our team!"

Charlotte Richards

Development Lead, Primark

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