

Intentional Influence: Tactics for Overcoming Barriers to Action

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Introduction

Ultimately, solving social problems requires that we influence the actions of others in an intentional way, and incorporate influence as an element of an overall strategy.

Our Stanford Social Innovation Review blog series, “[The Value of Intentional Influence](#),” lays out an approach for intentional influence by framing five questions leaders should address. These questions help leaders determine who can play a role in solving the problem, what actions they want individuals to take, what barriers (either motivation or ability) need to be overcome, and how they might move people to action.

Much of the research around influence asserts that for people to take an action, they have to believe that it is worth it (they feel motivated) and that they can do it (they feel able.) This understanding provides a framework for thinking about potential barriers to action—either motivation or ability—and potential ways to address them. This supplement offers examples of diverse change agents using intentional influence tactics to confront and overcome the barriers that keep people from taking action. Designing an effective influence approach often requires a combination of multiple tactics to move people to act.

Intentional influence

The practice of moving likely and unlikely stakeholders in an ecosystem to take the actions required to solve a problem at the magnitude it exists.

Five Questions for Intentional Influence

1 Understanding Stakeholders

Who can help solve this problem, and where do we begin?

2 Understanding Assets

What assets can we leverage to move others to act?

3 Identifying the Desired Actions

What is the action we want others to take?

4 Understanding the Barriers

What are the barriers to the desired action?

5 Designing an Approach

How do we move people to take the desired action?



Overcoming Motivation Barriers

Ways to Overcome Motivation Barriers

Create relevancy

Connect the action you want to what matters to people who you want to influence

Leverage influencers

Enlist the help of those who influence others

Change incentives

Develop incentives and rewards to motivate

Create accountability

Develop enforceable standards that redefine success

CREATE RELEVANCY

Share Our Strength

Create a connection that matters.

Share Our Strength understood that while teachers are critical stakeholders in solving childhood hunger, they lacked the motivation to add the additional responsibility of feeding breakfast to children to their already-full plate. In its efforts to end childhood hunger in America, Share Our Strength conducted a study that showed a correlation between children who eat breakfast and higher math scores. This finding created relevancy and motivated teachers to support offering breakfast to kids during the first period of the school day. Share Our Strength has embraced this concept of “breakfast after the bell” as part of its No Kid Hungry campaign. Subsequently, it has seen teachers and school districts embrace this concept. In states with No Kid Hungry campaigns, the average number of low-income children eating school breakfast on a given day rose by 220,697 in 2013.

NOKIDHUNGRY.ORG

LEVERAGE INFLUENCERS

The Truth Campaign

Know that people follow other people.

The state of Florida’s “truth” campaign shifted anti-tobacco messaging to teenagers from the standard health-based frame of instructing teenagers on proper health behaviors to empowering teens to fight back against manipulative tobacco advertising that targets them. Engaging teens themselves helped create a norm among teenagers that smoking is not acceptable and created opportunities for teens to influence each other. TV and print ads, a robust Internet presence, and an annual “truth” summer bus tour featured teens, and celebrated rebelliousness and independence as a means to say *no* to tobacco. One year after the campaign’s launch, smoking among Florida middle school and high school students had declined by 19.4% and 8%, respectively. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that this was “the largest annual reported decline observed in the nation since 1980.”

THETRUTH.COM



Overcoming Motivation Barriers (*cont.*)

CHANGE INCENTIVES

Good Schools: Making the Grade

Offer incentives or rewards.

The Detroit-based Skillman Foundation's launch of a multi-million-dollar education initiative, Good Schools: Making the Grade, is a great example of using rewards to drive action. This initiative is designed to help schools focus on academic achievement. The foundation's goal is to encourage all Detroit schools to provide excellent educational opportunities for students. National educational advisors and community members developed criteria for assessing school performance. Based on these criteria, the foundation recognizes schools in four categories: high performing, improving, aspiring, and honorable mention. Schools apply for funding to maintain or attain standards. The Good Schools: Making the Grade initiative is helping to change the education conversation in Detroit to one of quality. The focus is now on educational and academic excellence vs. poor resourcing, and inspiring community members and school leaders to take new actions to achieve academic success.

SKILLMAN.ORG

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

The Affordable Care Act

Create enforceable accountability.

While a politically charged issue, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is an example of creating enforceable accountability and ultimately getting individuals to take an action. The goals of the ACA are to increase the quality and availability of health insurance coverage, reduce the number of uninsured Americans, and reduce the collective costs of healthcare. To achieve these goals, the ACA created a system in which accountability—from insurance companies to individuals—is mandated by the government. The law requires that all Americans, with very selective exceptions, carry health insurance, and includes tax penalties for a failure to do so. Insurance companies also face increased accountability in the way that they distribute and administer benefits, with new rules regarding nonprejudicial coverage and rates, regardless of preexisting conditions or gender. As of May 2014, approximately 20 million Americans had gained health insurance coverage under the ACA, and the percentage of uninsured Americans dropped from 18% in 2013 to 13.4% in May 2014.¹

HHS.GOV/HEALTHCARE

¹ Blumenthal, D., Collins S.R. (2014). "Health Care Coverage under the Affordable Care Act—A Progress Report," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 371:275-281



Overcoming Ability Barriers

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Ways to Overcome Ability Barriers</h2> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Incentivize trial</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Use incentives to get people to try an action and realize they are capable</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Enable with tools, training, products & services</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Give people what they need to successfully engage in the action</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Change the environment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Alter the physical environment to increase the likelihood of the action</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Offer new choice constructs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Change the choices or how they are presented to encourage the action</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">■ INCENTIVIZE TRIAL</p> <hr style="border: 2px solid yellow;"/> <h2 style="text-align: center;">California’s Farm-to-Table Movement</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Show people they can take action.</p> <p>California’s farm-to-table movement launched “California Thursdays” to encourage children to learn to appreciate nutritious foods. More than 15 school districts statewide began participating this fall. They are engaging students in trying new foods in the classroom, learning about sustainable farming practices and its economics, and informing school menu options. Many school districts encourage participation by offering “taste tests” in which students can vote on their favorite foods, ultimately informing school menu options. The program not only introduces children to a variety of fresh foods through trial, but it also teaches them that through their participation, they can influence food options for a given population.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BIT.LY/1SJSEI7</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">■ ENABLE WITH TOOLS</p> <hr style="border: 2px solid yellow;"/> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Healthier Tennessee</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">Make changing behavior easy and accessible.</p> <p>Tennesseans face an epidemic of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and other preventable chronic diseases. Healthier Tennessee is an innovative collaboration between the public and private sector, joining forces to provide Tennessee residents the tools they need to make easy changes and improve their health. One of the programs, “Small Starts,” arms individuals and workplaces with tools and tips to take healthier actions related to exercise, food, and tobacco. Small Starts are easy, manageable things that people can do every day, offered via a variety of methods to make getting healthier easy. Online tools include a website and a mobile app. Small Starts @ Work is an interactive wellness toolkit with tips, ideas, and actions to help employees get healthier and help businesses attract talent and attention. To date, 73 businesses and institutions have been recognized as Healthier Tennessee Workplaces.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HEALTHIERTN.COM</p>
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Overcoming Ability Barriers (*cont.*)

■ ENABLE WITH TRAINING

Project ECHO

Teach and support change-makers.

Recognizing that a significant number of people who were battling Hepatitis C lived many miles from the care they needed, and were often critically ill by the time they reached treatment, Dr. Sanjeev Arora developed Project ECHO. The goal of the program is to deliver the medical training required to change the quality of care for patients in rural areas, where access to a specialist is rarely an option. To succeed at battling Hepatitis C, the Project ECHO team shares cutting-edge knowledge with general practitioners and health professionals who often lack the experience to treat the disease and are often hundreds of miles away. Using innovative techniques including videoconferencing, collaborative care, and patient tracking, Project ECHO initially trained healthcare professionals at 21 remote sites across New Mexico. A 2011 New England Journal of Medicine study showed that healthcare providers at those sites achieved slightly better outcomes for their patients than their peers in the state's urban care centers. This finding suggests that the combination of Project ECHO's training combined with high-touch care is positively impacting patients and providers in rural communities.

ECHO.UNM.EDU

■ ENABLE WITH PRODUCTS & SERVICES

San Francisco's Kindergarten to College Program

Create and innovate to fill gaps

The Kindergarten to College initiative is a product offered by the city of San Francisco to make the goal of postsecondary education achievable for all children. The program establishes a \$50 College Savings Account (CSA) for every kindergartener in San Francisco public schools. Often established at birth, CSAs are long-term, asset-building accounts typically used to finance higher education. Children, alongside their families, can contribute to the accounts while learning about the importance of savings and education. The Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) found that children in all income brackets with savings accounts have a more positive outlook on their future, and are more likely to envision themselves at college. One study found that children with accounts as small as \$3,000 are more likely to graduate high school than those without accounts. In 2012, every incoming San Francisco public kindergarten student (a total of over 4,500 students) received a college savings account with a \$50 deposit, and the opportunity to receive bonus incentives. With more than 13,000 open accounts, this product is redefining standards of success and motivating children to take action toward going to college.

SFOFE.ORG/PROGRAMS/K-TO-C



Overcoming Ability Barriers (*cont.*)

CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT

KaBOOM!

Provide an environment that fosters the behavior.

In an effort to promote balanced and active play among our nation's children, KaBOOM! is working to inspire cities to incorporate play-inspiring aspects (e.g., equipment, etc.) into Laundromats, bus stops, and health clinics, increasing the likelihood that children will play as they are stuck waiting in these settings. Changing city environments to incorporate “playability” in unexpected places has the power to drive much greater adoption of play, not only because children will have more opportunities to play, but because parents will increasingly appreciate play as a central component of everyday life.

KABOOM.ORG

OFFER NEW CHOICE CONSTRUCTS

Organ Donation

Restructure choices to change outcomes.

Studies have found that having to opt out of a behavior helps to create the belief that the action is an accepted practice. Furthermore, this tactic removes the need to act, making “doing nothing” equate to taking the desired new action. Organ donation is an example of how presenting choices differently can affect outcomes. While in the U.S., citizens must opt in to organ donations, citizens in many other nations are required to opt out of organ transplant donation as opposed to explicitly choosing to take part. As a result, those nations that require people to opt out have a significantly higher rate of organ donation. In Belgium, one country that utilizes an opt-out model, only 3–4% of the population makes the choice to opt out, with 96–97% participating in the organ donation system. By contrast, only 30% of U.S. citizens opt in to organ donation. On this particular issue, offering the “path of least resistance” is contributing to a higher rate of participation in a potentially lifesaving program.

[NYTI.MS/1HVCKUD](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/14/health/organ-donation.html)

Learn more about Intentional influence and join the conversation:

[The Value of Intentional Influence](#), *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2014

[Strategy's Missing Link](#), *Amy Celep and Sara Brenner, Community Wealth Partners*

[Redesigning Higher Education Through Intentional Influence](#), *Jamie P. Merisotis, Lumina Foundation*

[Integrating Intentional Influence into Your Strategy](#), *Amy Celep and Sara Brenner, Community Wealth Partners*

[Intentional Influence in Action](#), *Kathryn E. Merchant, Greater Cincinnati Foundation*

[The Importance of Letting Go](#), *Amy Celep and Sara Brenner, Community Wealth Partners*

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