

The Gamified UK Behaviour Change Model

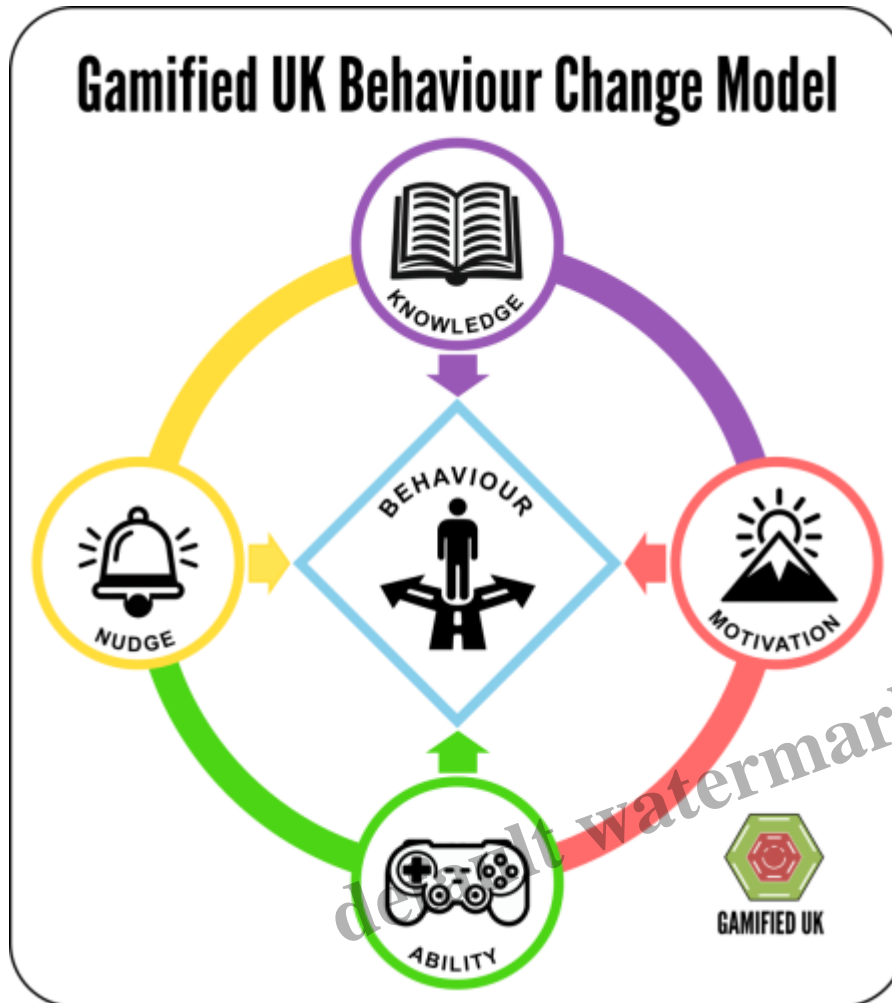
Description

Yeah, a bold title – but AI told me it was true and ok to use!

Over the years I have looked at various behaviour change models and have used them in varying degrees. Early on, if you look at my blog and books I used [BJ Fogg](#) a lot. These days it is referred to as B=MAP; Behaviour = Motivation * Ability * Prompt. It used to be B=MAT – T being trigger. I think prompt is better as it covers more ground.

More recently I have been using [COM-B](#) model for behaviour change. This was created by Susan Michie, Maartje M van Stralen, Robert West. I liked this model because there was a lot more behind it and it introduces capability and opportunity, splitting out ability into “Can you personally do it” and “Is it possible to do”. I then adds this to motivation to create a flexible model.

However, I have increasingly found myself mixing these two together to create a model that fits my needs better when I discuss behaviour change with clients. That is where the Gamified UK Change Behaviour Model has come from (I could call it MANK-B, or KNAM-B I suppose, but I won't!)



Gamified UK Behaviour Change Model

The Model

Let's break this down first, then talk about how it all comes together.

Motivation

Motivation is the first and probably the most important “pillar” of behaviour change. It's about understanding your “why”—the underlying reason for wanting to change. A strong motivation can make up for gaps in other areas. For instance, if your ability or knowledge is low, a strong sense of motivation can push you through challenges. Conversely, if your motivation is flagging, you might need to boost your ability or knowledge to keep moving forward.

Knowledge

Knowledge empowers you to make informed decisions and strategise effectively. It's about knowing what to do, why it matters, and how to do it well. If your motivation is high but your knowledge is lacking, focusing on learning and preparation can bridge that gap. Similarly, if you're less motivated,

having a clear understanding of what's required and why it is important can make the task less daunting and easier to start.

Ability

Ability refers to the physical, cognitive, and emotional resources needed to perform a behaviour. If your ability is low, you might need to compensate by increasing your motivation or knowledge to push through. For example, if exercising feels physically challenging, breaking down the activity into smaller, more manageable steps—or learning techniques that make it easier—can help you keep going. It is worth noting that sometimes, no matter the levels of motivation or knowledge or anything else – if there is a true reason for the ability not being present, the behaviour will likely never be possible.

Now matter how motivated it is, a fish can't be a rabbit.

Nudge

This one is a little more nuanced. Nudges act in a slightly different way to the other 3 pillars mentioned here. Nudges are subtle cues in your environment that guide you toward the right behaviour without forcing your hand. Think of them as boosts or multipliers. While a nudge alone might not carry you through a challenge, it can tip the scales when things are balanced. For example, if your motivation, knowledge, and ability are in place but you're struggling to stay consistent, a well-timed nudge—like a reminder notification or a supportive message from a friend—can give you the extra push you need.

Bringing it all together

As you can see, I've basically simplified the language and mashed Fogg and COM-B together. There is a good reason though and it is based on practical experience using both over the last 10 or so years.

COMB-B separates knowledge and ability, which I think is extremely important for conceptualising behaviour change. However, Fogg includes Prompts, which I feel is missing in COM-B as a highlighted concept. I went with nudges as I think that can cover more ground when thinking about behaviour, as prompts conjure up images of phone notifications and buzzing fitness watches. Nudges can be much more subtle, or just as in your face when thinking about them in solution design.

Balance and Examples

The image shows a circle connecting the four pillars together, with arrows pointing to behaviour. This is not just a design element, it is central to how all of these come together to help with behaviour change.

It is not about just having one element, you need all of them working in harmony (the circle), especially Motivation, Ability and Knowledge. The arrows then depict that these all then go towards changing the desired behaviour.

As I say in their descriptions, you can balance them out by increasing one where others may be low. For example. I want to get fit, but I am over weight and can't run very far (which is true). So my ability is low. However, my knowledge about why I need to get fit is high and my motivation is somewhere in the

middle. So right now, I am not tipping the balance. I can't really increase my knowledge, and ability is contingent on me actually changing the behaviour. So I need to increase my motivation. In my case, getting out of breath climbing the stairs, not fitting my clothes and having fatty liver disease! Yeah – that should do it.

However, even then, it is not easy. Time is against me, I work, I have kids, I gig. So when I want to do exercise, it may not be the right time. This is where nudges help. It could be a well timed reminder, at a point where I am not doing other things, to just do some press ups. It might be the kids saying “Dad, shall we go for a walk” when I am sat watching TV. The nudge acts like a multiplier, boosting the motivation in this instance.

Another example could be adding products to cart on a website. You have a client who has low add to cart on mobile and is wondering why. When you look at it, their motivation is high by then (they made it to cart). They obviously had the knowledge needed to get them to cart. So it must be ability or timing of reminders to finish their cart journey. You look and the messages come out at a great time of day – so it has to be ability.

When you dig into it and go through the user journey – you discover that on mobile devices with certain screen dimensions – the add to cart button does not display! So they don't have the actual ability to add the product to cart no matter how motivated they are!

As ever, I welcome your thoughts and comments! I hope this has been interesting and let me know if you want to know more about it.

Oh, also a little shout out to my youngest for helping me with the colours for this ?

Category

1. Gamification

Tags

1. behaviour
2. behaviour change
3. bj fogg
4. bmap
5. bmat
6. comb-b
7. fogg

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