

METHODOLOGY

USING EXPERIMENTS TO ASSESS BEHAVIOR CHANGE INTERVENTIONS

Shift

THE METHOD

Using Randomized Control Trials that integrate the perspectives of affected stakeholders to assess company-driven behavior change interventions.

The on-going relationships that a company, its suppliers or other business partners have with potentially affected stakeholders are a product, in good part, of the way those business actors behave in their interactions with those stakeholders. This is why many companies invest time and resources into promoting – for example via training, guidance, incentives or even workplace signage – specific behaviors of company management or employees.

Experiments – specifically the application of “Randomized Control Trials” – that integrate stakeholder voice can determine whether and to what extent such behavior change interventions and programs lead to intended outcomes. Experiments are widely used in business, typically in traditional commercial settings such as enhancing consumer experiences, improving marketing and increasing engagement and sales. Their use in building an evidence base for how to practically improve relationships with affected stakeholders is, while underdeveloped, potentially powerful.

Companies can use experimental approaches to measure the impact of behavior change interventions and programs in rigorous and scientific ways, and analyze if observed impacts can be attributed to the company’s intervention. This, in turn, can support business leaders in:

- Focusing resources on interventions that work and abandoning initiatives that do not deliver improvements from the status quo, especially when making decisions about whether to replicate programs across multiple operational contexts; and

USE THIS METHOD TO



ANALYZE and OBSERVE if desired behaviors are being practiced and if they can be attributed to a company’s intervention.



FOCUS RESOURCES on interventions that work and abandon initiatives that do not deliver improvements from the status quo.



Credibly COMMUNICATE about the effectiveness of company interventions and programs to external and internal stakeholders, including senior management.



- ◉ Credibly communicating about the effectiveness of company interventions and programs to external and internal stakeholders, including senior management.

IN PRACTICE

Experiments involve several steps. The critical ones are as follows:

- ◉ **STEP ONE: Identify experimental and control groups.**

Before the program is implemented, stakeholders from the target group (e.g. executives, managers, supervisors and contractors) are randomly assigned into at least two groups:

- ① an **experimental group**, whose members will be part of the intervention [right side of diagram]; and
- ② a **control group**, whose members will not, and so serve as a comparator [left side of diagram].

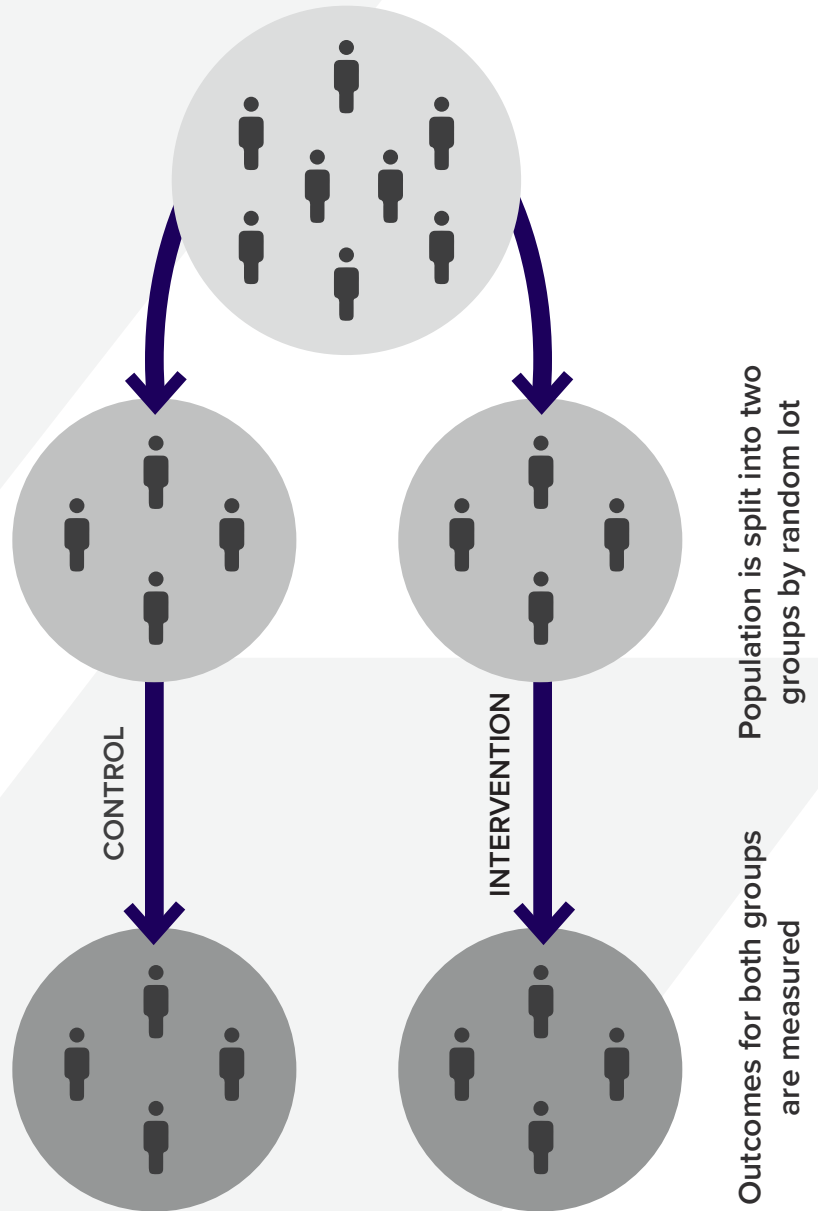
Experiments may be designed to test one or more interventions and so may have more than one treatment group.

TWO CONSIDERATIONS ARE KEY.

First, **the groups should have similar characteristics.** This helps to exclude the possibility that any changes are due to systematic differences between them – for example, if one group had more women than men. This allows us to attribute any observed differences between the groups to the program rather than other factors.

Second, **the allocation of people into control and treatment groups should involve “randomization.”** For example, some supervisors in a factory will participate in a training program and others will not; or one factory participates in a program and comparable other factories do not.

Once the appropriate population is identified, the selection of individuals or units/entities into a control or treatment group is random. For example, assigning people with lower levels of pre-existing knowledge or skills to the treatment group (with higher levels in the control group) before implementing a training program is not random and would skew the effects. Randomization ensures that any observable changes are due to the intervention and not other factors.



The basic design of a randomized controlled trial (RCT), based on original graphic by Behavioural Insights Team



● STEP TWO: Gather baseline data.

Baseline data needs to be collected before an intervention. For example, if a program's objective is to improve behaviors of local mine management towards a host community, the company should use internal data (e.g. related to grievance management) as well as seek perceptions from the community about how they are treated before and after the program.

● STEP THREE: Implement intervention.

The intervention is implemented with the treatment group(s).

● STEP FOUR: Collect end-line data.

After implementation, new data is collected to measure change. If the program's implementation period is long, a company may also select to gather mid-line data to enable a review of progress. It is important to use the same indicators as in the baseline study to collect comparable information.

● STEP FIVE: Analyze impact.

Data are then compared to measure the impact of the intervention. Comparing data between the groups shows whether any observed changes can be attributed to the program. Further, comparing the data within the experimental group allows a company to see trends or patterns underlying the change, including to see if the changes are distributed evenly among different stakeholder sub-groups, for example women, young workers or migrant workers with temporary contracts. Engaging participants using follow-up surveys or interviews can help companies to validate the data and better understand nuances.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO RUN EXPERIMENTS

This note focuses on how experiments can support the evaluation of the behavior of leaders and managers that routinely interact with employees, workers and community members. But experiments can also be used to assess interventions aimed at other actors' behaviors that are important to addressing business-related risks to people.

Experiments are already used in many relevant areas such as diversity and inclusion. A recent experiment sought to understand how best to nudge employers to offer flexible working (which in turn leads to more applications from women) when posting job adverts online. Compared to the business-as-usual control group, the treatments led to a 20% increase in the number of jobs advertised as flexible. This led to up to 30% more applications for these positions.

In 2020, as part of its Valuing Respect project, Shift partnered with Warwick Business School on an experiment to ascertain how best to nudge consumers to make choices regarding delivery options for online purchases that reduce pressure on couriers.

Behavioral Science experiments have also been run to evaluate interventions to: i) increase the quantity of grievances received from workers on construction sites; and ii) increase the diversity of type of grievances received such that less trivial and more serious issues are surfaced.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

When designing experiments to understand whether and to what extent interventions aimed at improving respect for human rights are achieving their aims, companies should consider the following factors:

- **The ethics of experimentation.**
Withholding programs that might benefit affected stakeholders in the control group may be considered unethical. Scientists overcome this challenge through the principle of “ equipoise,” which emphasizes that experimentation should only occur where there is a genuine lack of evidence for the benefits of a given treatment. Further, and in particular where timing is not a critical factor, this dilemma can be addressed by ensuring that the program is extended to all stakeholders if its efficacy is proved.
- **Sample sizes.**
Experiments require sufficiently large numbers of participants to be effective and credible. It can be difficult to detect, measure or attribute changes in experiments with small sample sizes and may lead to incorrect conclusions. Larger sample sizes overcome this challenge, and can generate more information about the nuances and complexities of interventions on the targets of behavior change and outcomes for affected stakeholders.
- **Spillover effects.**
It is challenging to isolate real-world experiments from outside influences, as is possible in a laboratory. It may be difficult to keep control and treatment groups from sharing information about the intervention. This may in turn change the behavior of the control group and skew the results. Careful experimental design, potentially using shorter term experiments and different approaches to randomization, can limit these effects.
- **Expert skills and knowledge.**
Qualified experts with relevant statistical skills can help to design and implement effective

experiments and appropriate analyses. This may be useful for making challenging decisions, for example concerning sample sizes, participant drop-out and sensitive data collection.



This is one of five methodologies focusing on quality of relationships developed by Shift as part of the Valuing Respect project. To access other resources in this series, visit valuingrespect.org.

ABOUT SHIFT

Shift is the leading center of expertise on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Shift’s global team of experts works across all continents and sectors to challenge assumptions, push boundaries and redefine corporate practice in order to build a world where business gets done with respect for people’s dignity. We are a non-profit, mission-driven organization headquartered in New York City.

 shiftproject.org

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ABOUT VALUING RESPECT PROJECT

Valuing Respect Project is a global collaborative platform, led by Shift, to research and co-create better ways of evaluating business respect for human rights. Our aim is to develop tools and insights that can help both companies and their stakeholders focus their resources on actions that effectively improve outcomes for people. Valuing Respect is generously funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norges Bank Investment Management.

 valuingrespect.org



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Behavioral Insights, *Test, Learn, Adapt: Developing Public Policy with Randomised Control Trials*
- Valuing Respect Expert Roundtable on Business, Human Rights and Behavioral Science: *A Summary Report*

ALSO READ

CASE STUDY
ASSESSING WHETHER BEHAVIOR CHANGE TRAINING CAN IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SUPERVISORS AND WORKERS
 December 2020

This is a case study of how Best Buy assessed the effectiveness of a factory training program designed to address certain behaviors of supervisors that were impacting good quality relationships with workers. Specifically, the program sought to improve how supervisors manage other things, managed conflict with workers, listened to them, and dealt with workplace stress. Companies often use knowledge tests to assess training activities. However, measuring how the newly-acquired knowledge affects the everyday practices and behaviors of participants requires more innovative and deliberate techniques. In this case, the company:

- used a **randomized controlled trial (RCT)** to evaluate whether any improvements in supervisor awareness and behavior could be attributed to the training program; and
- built in worker voice** – in the form of worker surveys and interviews – to measure the change in how supervisors interacted with workers.

Having robust evidence about the success and challenges of the training program has allowed Best Buy to communicate the outcomes of its efforts to its stakeholders in a balanced way, and to identify improvements that can be put in place before scaling the program in other locations.

QUICK FACTS:
 SECTOR: ELECTRONICS
 COMPANY: BEST BUY
 COUNTRY: CHINA
 TIME FRAME: MAY 2018 - JANUARY 2019

DESIGNING SUPERVISORS' TRAINING FOR GREATER WORKER WELLBEING

In line with its commitment to operate consistently with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), Best Buy, the largest consumer electronics retailer in the United States, set itself an ambitious goal to engage directly with workers in its supply chain in China. The objective was to hear about workers' satisfaction and their experiences from the factory floor, which would go beyond data reported through audits. The 'Wickets Survey' ▶▶

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Our case study on how Best Buy assessed the effectiveness of a factory training program.

OTHER METHODOLOGIES IN THIS SERIES

METHODOLOGY
CULTIVATING VOICE IN RELATIONSHIPS
 OPERATIONAL METHODOLOGY IN SCALE TO TURN STRATEGIC EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION INTO ACTIONABLE DATA. Shift

THE METHOD
 This methodology is a process of listening to workers and their supervisors to understand their experiences and perceptions of their relationships. It is designed to be used in a variety of contexts, including in the workplace, in the community, and in the home.

USE THIS METHODOLOGY TO
 IDENTIFY AND LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF WORKERS AND SUPERVISORS.
 UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF WORKER VOICE.
 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE WORKER VOICE.

Cultivating Voice in Relationships

METHODOLOGY
USING WORKER VOICE TOOLS TO ASSESS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WORKERS AND THEIR MANAGERS. Shift

THE METHOD
 This methodology is a process of using worker voice tools to assess relationships between workers and their managers. It is designed to be used in a variety of contexts, including in the workplace, in the community, and in the home.

USE THIS METHODOLOGY TO
 ASSESS THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WORKERS AND THEIR MANAGERS.
 IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF WORKER VOICE.
 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE WORKER VOICE.

Using Worker Voice Tools to Assess Relationships

METHODOLOGY
MEASURING QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS USING ICMMS
 UNDERSTANDING COMPANY-COMMUNITY RELATIONS TOOLKIT. Shift

THE METHOD
 This methodology is a process of measuring the quality of relationships between workers and their managers using the ICMMS. It is designed to be used in a variety of contexts, including in the workplace, in the community, and in the home.

USE THIS METHODOLOGY TO
 MEASURE THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN WORKERS AND THEIR MANAGERS.
 IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF WORKER VOICE.
 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE WORKER VOICE.

Measuring Quality of Relationships Using ICMMS's Understanding Company-Community Relations Toolkit

METHODOLOGY
SENSEMAKER™ COMBINING STORIES, NUMBERS AND DATA ANALYTICS TO UNCOVER HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS. Shift

THE METHOD
 This methodology is a process of combining stories, numbers, and data analytics to uncover hidden dimensions of relationships. It is designed to be used in a variety of contexts, including in the workplace, in the community, and in the home.

USE THIS METHODOLOGY TO
 UNCOVER HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS.
 IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF WORKER VOICE.
 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE WORKER VOICE.

SenseMaker™: Combining Stories, Numbers and Data Analytics

In collaboration with business leaders, independent evaluation practitioners, worker voice innovators and non-governmental and advocacy organizations – Shift, through its Valuing Respect Project, captured five methodologies to measure a company's quality of relationships throughout their supply chains and operating contexts.

Each methodology profiles a different approach to gather, analyze and work with data to make tangible improvements in business practices and people's lives.

