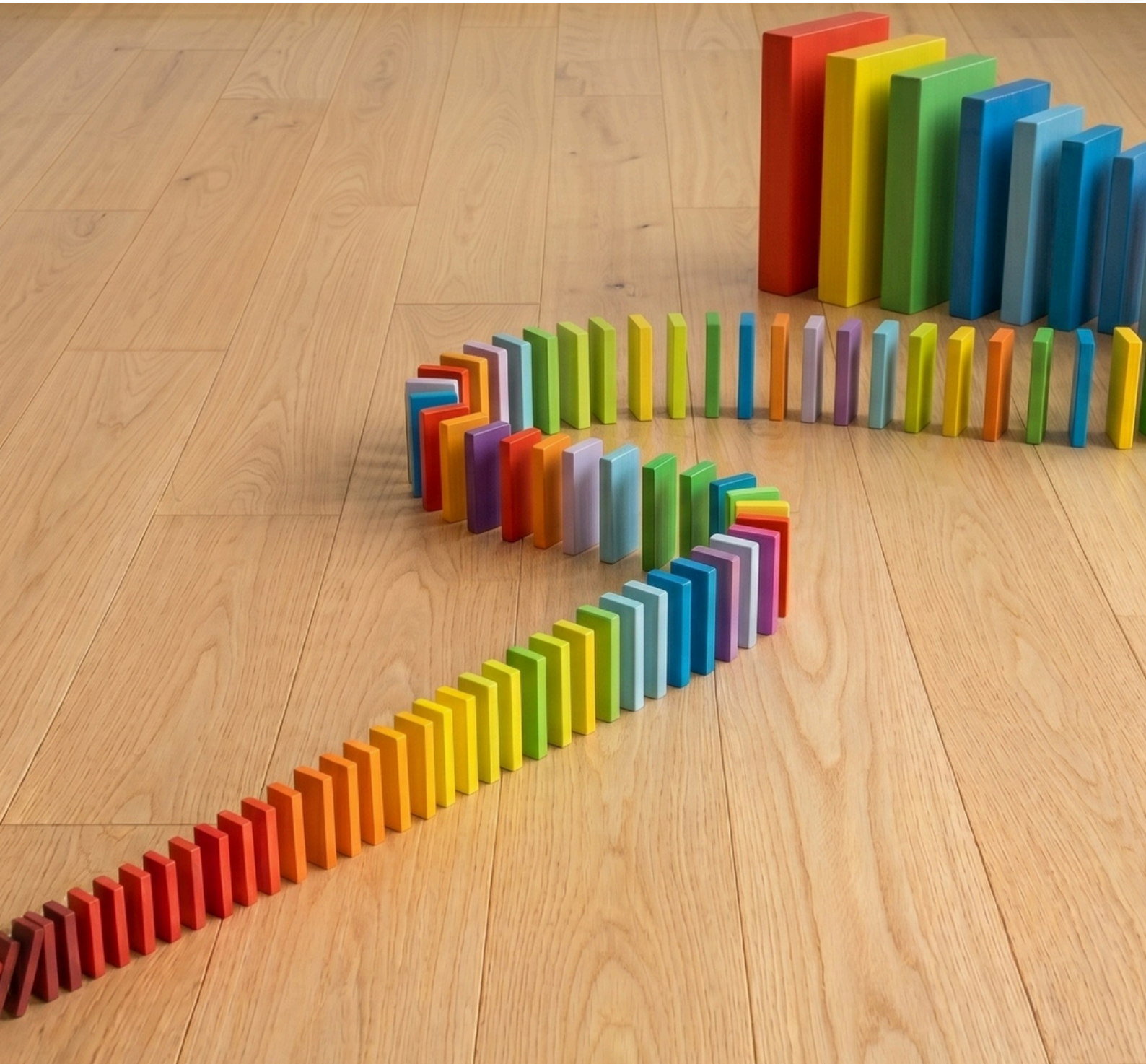
EDITION 2026

COMPANY CHALLENGES

A COMPANY CHALLENGES PAPER

# The Habit Design Framework

*How to turn strategic intent into daily behaviour at scale.*



01 · THE PROBLEM

# Transformation doesn't fail from lack of intelligence. It fails from lack of repetition.

You have seen this before. A new strategy launches. Or a new tool rolls out, a training programme is delivered, an e-learning lands in everyone's inbox. People nod. People attend. People go back to their desks.
And then nothing happens.
Three months later someone asks, quietly, whatever happened to that initiative. Or nobody asks, because it has been forgotten entirely.
This pattern repeats across industries, countries, and organisation sizes. The reason is always the same: we treat change as information transfer. But information is not behaviour. A presentation is not a habit. An e-learning is not a habit. A Slack message from leadership is not a habit.

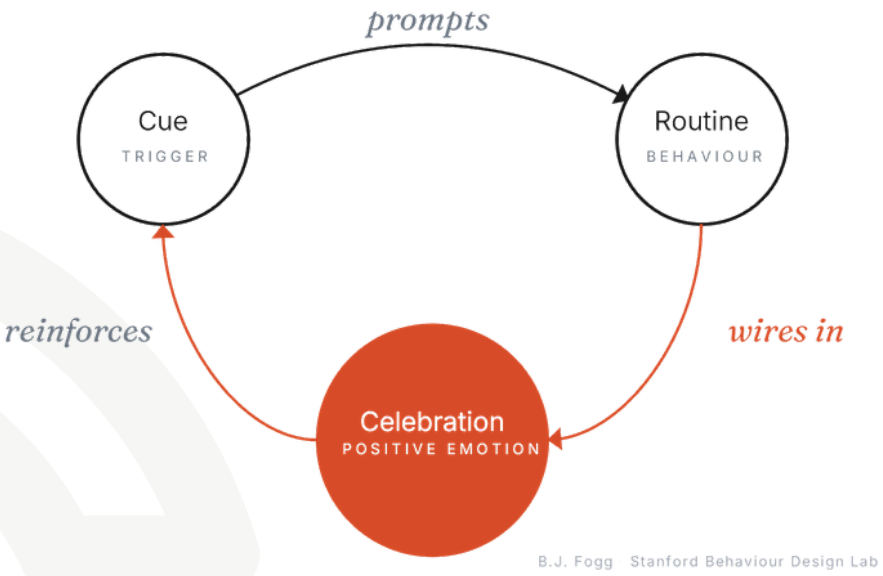
> ***"A habit is a small action, repeated until the brain stops noticing it is doing the work."***
> — *Jaspar Roos*

That is what this document is about.

02 · THE MECHANISM

# Small actions, repeated, until the brain stops asking permission.

Habits live in the basal ganglia. That matters because the basal ganglia don't negotiate. Once a behaviour is established there, it runs without asking the prefrontal cortex for clearance, which is why brushing your teeth doesn't feel like a decision and checking your phone rarely does either. This is also why willpower is a bad strategy. The prefrontal cortex is the brain's most energy-intensive system. It tires under stress, load, and fatigue. The basal ganglia does not. Anything you want people to do consistently has to migrate out of conscious effort and into the automatic system. That migration is what habit design is for.




> ***"You cannot change behaviour in a workshop. You can design a system that changes it over time."***
>
> — *Michiel Ykema*

That is the work. Everything in this document is about how to do it on purpose.

# Seven principles of habit design.

Each principle earns its place by explaining a specific design choice, and each traces back to primary research in behavioural science, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience. No filler, no lore. Together they form the architecture behind every habit system we build.

### *Minimum viable action*

**B.J. Fogg**

The single biggest predictor of whether someone adopts a new behaviour is not motivation. It is the size of the first step. Behaviour happens when motivation, ability, and a prompt converge at the same moment. Shrink the ask and add the right trigger, and you beat any amount of persuasion. Start absurdly small. Competence builds. Motivation follows behaviour, not the other way around.

### *Implementation intentions*

**Peter Gollwitzer**

Saying "I will use this tool more" achieves roughly nothing. Saying "when I open my inbox on Monday morning, I will try this first" substantially increases follow-through. Behaviour change is not about willpower at the moment of action. It is about attaching the new behaviour to an existing trigger before that moment arrives.

### *Peak-end rule*

**Daniel Kahneman**

Ask someone how their holiday was and they won't give you an average. They'll give you a memory shaped by the best moment and the final one. A meta-analysis of 174 studies confirmed the effect is large and robust across contexts. For programme design the implication is concrete: engineer peaks and make sure the programme ends strongly. Flat programmes leave no residue.

### *Distributed practice*

**Ebbinghaus, Cepeda et al.**

Spacing is the most replicated finding in the science of learning. Skill retains better when practice is spread across days than crammed into hours. A one-day workshop followed by nothing is almost perfectly engineered to be forgotten. Cepeda's meta-analysis of 317 experiments confirmed that distributed practice produces 10–30% better retention across all study types and age groups. Daily micro-actions across several weeks work with how the brain consolidates memory during sleep.

### *Prediction error*

**Wolfram Schultz**

Dopamine does not simply signal reward. It signals the gap between what you expected and what you got. Neural recordings show dopamine spiking when outcomes exceed expectations, and staying flat when rewards are fully predictable. This is why a challenge with variation generates engagement that predictable routines cannot. The brain pays attention because it doesn't fully know what's coming.

### *Social proof*

**Robert Cialdini**

People look sideways before they decide. Not in theory, in practice, and often without realising it. Observing peers performing a behaviour is one of the strongest drivers of adoption, particularly when the peer resembles the observer. Visible participation matters more than private compliance, and collective moments accelerate habits in ways individual nudges cannot.

### *Friction*

**Wendy Wood, Richard Thaler**

Context shapes behaviour more reliably than intention does. Reduce the friction between a person and a desired behaviour and they are significantly more likely to perform it, without additional motivation, persuasion, or reminders. The physical artefact on the desk is not a gimmick. It is friction design: the desired behaviour one small action away, persistent, visible, impossible to archive.

04 · FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE

# This is how the science becomes a programme.

The seven principles are not a checklist. They are a lens. Every design choice in a programme — the size of the first assignment, the timing of a live session, what sits under a scratch card — traces back to one or more of them.

One element runs through all of it: playfulness. Not as decoration, but as mechanism. When an action feels rewarding in itself, resistance drops before it forms. Enjoyment is not a nice-to-have. It is what gets people back tomorrow.

Most providers pick one layer and optimise it. We combine them because different people are reached by different things. Not because people learn differently — that claim does not hold up — but because context, role and generation shape what lands. A notification works for some. A physical object works for others. A live session pulls in people neither reached. No single layer does the work alone. That is why every layer matters — and why the choice between them is a design decision, not a default.

> ***Playfulness is not the wrapping.***
>
> ***It is the mechanism.***

05 · THE DIFFERENTIATOR

# Why digital alone rarely works.

Apps get ignored. You already know this. The adoption curve of every standalone corporate platform looks roughly the same: enthusiastic launch, a fortnight of activity, and then a long quiet slope into irrelevance.

The reason is not that the apps are bad. The reason is that push notifications are competing against every other notification the brain has learned to filter. Digital cues are cheap, abundant, and trivially dismissed. That is a problem the platform cannot fix by adding features.

| *Digital only* | *Digital + physical* | *Digital + physical + live* |
|---|---|---|
| Push notifications compete with hundreds of others. Modules are completed but not absorbed. Engagement peaks at launch and fades by week two. The platform becomes another thing nobody opens. | A physical artefact on the desk is persistent, tactile, and escapes digital habituation. A small motor action creates a micro-commitment. Variable content triggers prediction error. Colleagues see it, and participation turns social almost on its own. | A live moment pulls people back in when energy drops. A kick-off sets the tone. A contest carries a real question from inside the organisation. A closing event makes the programme end on a peak. The habit becomes shared, not just personal. |

> ***A notification competes with hundreds of others.***
>
> ***A physical object on the desk does not.***
>
> ***A live moment pulls people back when nothing else does.***



Each layer is a design choice, not a given. Where the physical layer earns its place, it does work the

06 · SELF-DIAGNOSTIC

# Do you have a habit problem?

Most organisations don't know whether they do. They assume they have a knowledge gap, a training problem, or a strategy that hasn't landed yet. These eight questions are a first cut — drawn from our Behavioural Gap Scan — to find out what's actually going on.

Answer honestly, not optimistically.

01 Has a strategic initiative launched in the past twelve months that has already gone quiet?
Y / N

02 Do you know whether people are actually using the tools you rolled out, or only whether they logged in once?
Y / N

03 Did the adoption curve of your last digital platform flatten after week two?
Y / N

04 Are you measuring activity (logins, completions) or habit (consistency, depth, repetition patterns)?
Y / N

05 Are the desired behaviours attached to existing triggers in the working day, or floating as good intentions?
Y / N

06 Are there visible moments where colleagues see each other performing the new behaviour?
Y / N

07 Do your programmes end on a peak, or do they dribble out?
Y / N

08 Are participants investing visible effort, or consuming content?
Y / N

*If you answered "no" to four or more, you don't have a training problem. You have a habit problem. Training builds knowledge. Habits build behaviour that sticks. Those are solved differently, and we know how.*

07 · CLOSING

# Every quarter you wait, the gap between strategy and behaviour grows.

Most transformation budgets are spent on the first part of the journey: announcing, training, informing. The rest — which is repetition, reinforcement, and social visibility — is left to chance. That is why so much investment lands softly.
Company Challenges builds that rest. Digital platform, physical artefacts, live experiences, and behavioural science woven into a single programme that runs for you rather than adding to your team's workload. A programme people actually enjoy turning up for.

***~ 65 percent** sustained engagement across our programmes*

We take on a limited number of new pilots each quarter, because every programme is customised and we would rather do a few well than a lot adequately.

*Ready to find out what this would look like for your organisation?*
*Book a demo →*
*Request a behavioural gap scan →*

> ***"From compliance to ownership. From 'I completed the module' to 'This is how I work now.'"***
> — *Dr. Ilse Svensson - de Jong*

> ***"Dashboards don't change culture. Repeated behavior does."***
> — *Prof. John Bessant*

ABOUT COMPANY CHALLENGES

# How years of practice and knowledge became a method.

Company Challenges grew out of years of running AI adoption, innovation, and culture change programmes and building the physical tools, games, and playbooks that made those programmes work. In parallel, founders Jaspar Roos and Michiel Ykema ran a research programme on humour and play as drivers of engagement and adoption. Company Challenges is the distillation of that work, built within Limpid & Co, the transformation consultancy they founded together.

It started in 2022 with a single client and a problem no existing platform could solve: how to deliver proven physical methods asynchronously, at scale, without losing the mechanics that make people act. That first programme ran in the Netherlands. Participants have since joined from more than 40 countries, across programmes spanning 13 time zones. The scale changes. The mechanism doesn't.

08 · EVIDENCE BASE

# Where this framework comes from.

This framework was built where science and practice meet.

***From our research***
**Michiel Ykema & Jaspar Roos.**
**People Centric AI Adoption. Leading with AI (2025).**

## RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

***Behaviour design***
B.J. Fogg. Tiny Habits: The Small Changes That Change Everything (2019). Stanford Behaviour Design Lab.

***Memory and learning***
Hermann Ebbinghaus. Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology (1885).
Nicholas Cepeda et al. Distributed practice in verbal recall tasks: A review and quantitative synthesis (2006).

***Goal pursuit***
Peter Gollwitzer. Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans (1999). American Psychologist.

***Reward and prediction***
Wolfram Schultz. Predictive reward signal of dopamine neurons (1998). Journal of Neurophysiology.

***Experience and memory***
Daniel Kahneman. Thinking, Fast and Slow (2011).
Barbara Fredrickson & Daniel Kahneman. Duration neglect in retrospective evaluations of affective episodes (1993).

***Social influence***
Robert Cialdini. Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion (1984, revised 2021).

***Habit research***
Philippa Lally et al. How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world (2010). European Journal of Social Psychology.

***Friction and context***
Wendy Wood. Good Habits, Bad Habits: The Science of Making Positive Changes That Stick (2019).
Richard Thaler & Cass Sunstein. Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness (2008).

***Further reading***
Charles Duhigg. The Power of Habit (2012).
James Clear. Atomic Habits (2018).
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Flow (1990).

EDITION 2026

COMPANY CHALLENGES

A COMPANY CHALLENGES PAPER

# From intention to repetition. From repetition to practice.

*We build the daily habit of learning and changing. Digital platform, physical artefacts, live experiences, and behavioural science, designed as one programme.*

***Built to be taken seriously. Designed to be enjoyed.***