

# Applying Behavioural Science to the Private Sector

Helena Rubinstein

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Decoding What People Say and What They Do

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To Brian, Ilana and Nadia

## PREFACE

The idea for this book came from a discussion with a Principal Scientist and Research Fellow at a global pharmaceutical company. He told me that his organisation might benefit from using behavioural science, but he didn't know where to start. *"I have heard about nudging. Is that the same as behavioural science? I don't know enough about it or how to find someone who is really good at it. I've received lots of emails from people who claim they do behavioural science but how do I know what is good or what is right for us?"*

He was making a point I had heard many times. Behavioural science has become unusually high profile and many businesses are exploring how to use it. However, it is a relatively new discipline and there are not many guides for how to use it well in a commercial setting.

At Innovia Technology, where I manage a team of behavioural scientists, we have been working with global corporations on their behavioural challenges for many years. The team comprises practitioners from across the psychological sciences including social psychologists, health psychologists, experimental psychologists, cognitive neuroscientists, behavioural economists, public health specialists, and sports psychologists. We all come from an academic background and have been applying academic theory in a way that is well-suited to the faster pace of the commercial sector to design better products, services and interventions.

This book is the result of these experiences. It is intended to help students know how to use behavioural science theory and apply it in business, and help managers know how and when to use behavioural science, as well as overcome the challenges to incorporating it in their businesses.

People believe that they understand human behaviour because they are human. However, it's almost impossible to intuitively know how people will behave. People say one thing and do another. It is hard to predict human behaviour and even harder to change it, but if we use a structured and rigorous approach, we can get better at understanding why people don't always do what they say they do.

Cambridge, UK

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I am also grateful to my clients for allowing me to work on so many fascinating challenges. I am especially indebted to Heather Figallo at Southwest Airlines and Allie Kelly at The Ray for their helpful comments on the case studies.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is divided into two parts. Part I focuses on the theory and principles of behavioural science and Part II describes how this theory can effectively be put into practice in commercial organisations. Case studies are used to illustrate major themes.

The aim of Part I is to describe the *underlying theory and principles* behind the discipline. I outline the history of behavioural science, discuss why behaviour is hard to predict, and explain how behavioural scientists use theories and models of behaviour. In the last chapter of this section, I show a process for how theory is applied to design products, services and interventions.

Part II is about *practice*. Much of this section is based on case studies or interviews with practitioners. I discuss the challenges of integrating behavioural science into an established organisation and suggest how and why to use behavioural science in multidisciplinary teams. In Chap. 7, I use a case study to show how the process described in Part I was applied to improve the boarding experience at the gate for Southwest Airlines. I also consider the potential for misuse of behavioural science and suggest ethical guidelines that could be used in the private sector. Finally, I discuss the value of applying behavioural science to business and propose how best to realise its potential.



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Helena has extensive commercial experience and has held senior positions in advertising and communications. She was managing director of the global brand consultancy for Leo Burnett and a partner at Brunswick Group.

She is married with two children and lives in Cambridge.

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