

Embedding Behavioural Science in the Business

The first part of this book focussed on the theory of behavioural science and its relevance to commercial issues. The second half describes how to put this theory into practice. How can behavioural science be used in a business? What type of business activities is it best suited to? And what are the challenges of introducing this new discipline into organisations that have well-developed ways of doing things?

Chapter 5 explores the integration of behavioural science into business and how companies can overcome resistance to its introduction and use. It is a case study of how behavioural science was introduced into an established business, what the challenges were to its integration, and what lessons were learned. The chapter highlights the potential fears, concerns, and confusion that must be addressed to ensure successful integration. It describes how behavioural science is not suited for all challenges and how the organisation needs to be clear about where and how it adds value. It explains the need for behavioural-science ‘champions’ within the organisation and the importance of a credible, experienced team leader, who can explain why this approach to understanding human behaviour is more valuable than more conventional methods.

Chapter 6 describes how to make behavioural science work in multidisciplinary teams. Not only is behavioural science effective as part of a multidisciplinary team, its applications are so wide ranging that it is more likely than many disciplines to be used in this way. Many functions touch on the way people interact with each other and with products and services. This chapter provides a brief overview of the academic literature on the

benefits and challenges of working in multidisciplinary teams and describes a case study of how this works in practice. It lays out guidelines for making multidisciplinary teamworking effective. These guidelines include how to build trust, manage professional identities, cope with different communication styles, manage uncertainty, deal with complexity, assess quality, deal with time pressures and availability, and the role of the leader.

Chapter 7 is a case study of using behavioural science in practice with Southwest Airlines. It shows how behavioural science was applied to improve the boarding experience at the airport gate in ways that satisfied the needs of passengers, employees, and the business. This chapter describes how the principles for applying behavioural science described in Chap. 4 were used to address the challenge. It summarises the activities that enabled the development of a model of passenger behaviour and shows the application of the five-step approach to intervention design. It ends by revealing some of the solutions that were devised and describes the results of a testing programme in a US airport.

Chapter 8 discusses the ethical risks for behavioural science. It describes the power of the behavioural science approach and why there should be guidelines to ensure that it is used ethically. The chapter outlines the debate about the ethics of nudging in the public sector where, despite being used to promote good behaviour, it has been accused of ‘soft paternalism’ and the removal of free choice. It argues that, although people are suspicious of its use in the private sector, there is a precedent for self-regulation and good use. It explains why behavioural science in the private sector does not have to be deceitful, covert, or manipulative, and how the consumer–company relationship differs from the citizen–policy-maker relationship. It suggests five guidelines to help practitioners make better, more ethical decisions.

Chapter 9 is about the value of applying behavioural science in the private sector. It describes how managers in consumer-facing and business-to-business sectors can get value from its application, and how students of psychology and business can learn to apply behavioural theory to real-world problems. This chapter reprises the main themes of the book. First, if businesses apply the scientific method to understanding consumers and customers, they are more likely to know what is really driving behaviour, and hence be able to design products, services and interventions that better meet people’s needs. Second, using a structured, evidence-based

approach helps to navigate complexity and saves time and money in the long run. Finally, incorporating behavioural science into a commercial organisation can be highly beneficial if the company is clear about how it will add value and has a plan for how to introduce it.